"We see the same Bible differently, depending on where we're standing. As Justo González states, none of us sees the whole landscape, nor do any of us see the landscape 'as it really is.' Taken together, though—by the church across time and around the globe—we are drawn closer to hearing and understanding the big picture of what God is saying and doing through his Word."

—JOEL B. GREEN, PROVOST AND DEAN, ON READING SCRIPTURE IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS, P. 4 (PICTURED: JER SWIGART OF GLOBAL IMMERSION PROJECT, P. 20)
Randall Cole is a much-loved community member who oversaw publication design for Fuller for almost 17 years. Throughout his career he has enjoyed looking at and often photographing art, but never with any clear intention. In late 2015 he was inspired to take a closer look at public art, as he says, “focusing on the incredible details that, much like the building blocks of all matter, lay the foundation for each work and demonstrate the creative differences of each artist.” He has fascinated us with his travels and the now well over 500 pieces documented on his Tumblr and Instagram sites, and we are pleased to continue working with him in his new role as a design and production consultant for Fuller. See pp. 74–75 and 94–95 for more.

At left in detail, above in situ: Venezuelan-born Mata Ruda uses iconography from both sides of the border to address environmental and spiritual issues as well as social concerns about overlooked communities and cultures. This work, the title of which translates as “Endless Struggle,” was painted in Coachella, California, in 2016 with the help of Lucinda Yrene, whom Ruda credits with providing him the spiritual and emotional insight to see the capacity of his art to cure and empower. In a poor community once known primarily for its grapefruit, this piece aimed to open the eyes of the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Coachella Music Festival to the plight of the area’s year-round residents.

Follow the artists @mataruda and @lucindayrene
I like the image Justo González introduces in his book Santa Biblia: The Bible through Hispanic Eyes. Writing about “perspectives” in reading the Bible, he asks us to imagine that we’re all looking at a landscape: “The landscape is the same for all of us. Yet each one sees it from a different perspective, and will thus describe it differently.”

It’s not that we have different Bibles, he goes on to say, but that we see the same Bible differently, depending on where we’re standing. To push the metaphor a bit further, what we see depends on lots of things, like how tall we are, the quality of our eyesight, and what we’re looking for. Sometimes we’re drawn to different parts of Scripture—one person to Jesus’ parables, another to stories of Sarah and Abraham, and yet another to the Psalms. Different parts of the landscape catch our attention. Sometimes we read the same texts, say, the Minor Prophets, with different interests—one congregation for their message about economic faithfulness, another for their message about hope of God’s people for restoration, still another for their message about false worship. Standing in different places, we perceive the landscape differently. As González recognizes, none of us sees the whole landscape, nor do any of us see the landscape “as it really is.” Taken together, though—by the church across time and around the globe—we’re drawn closer to hearing and understanding the big picture of what God is saying and doing through his Word.

In this way, we’re reminded that, even when we join our voices with the Reformers in their declarations of sola scriptura, “Scripture alone,” Scripture isn’t actually alone. We’re the ones doing the reading, after all, and we bring ourselves, with all of the textures and hues and flourishes of our humanity, to the Bible. We inhabit Scripture in different ways. Scripture challenges us and encourages us in different ways.

A lot of this difference has to do with the lens through which we read Scripture. Like eyeglasses, often unseen but nonetheless fixed atop our noses, these culturally shaped lenses filter how we read the Bible. Gathering with people not like us to read the Bible can surprise us, then, as we hear what others encounter in our beloved texts. Recalling his encounter with Scripture’s Lord, St. Augustine wrote that he heard these words: “Take and read; take and read.” As we “take and read,” let’s do so in concert with readers from the north and south, east and west, readers contemporary and readers past.
**FULLER studio**

*Content available online*

**FULLER magazine**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td><strong>Just Like Family</strong>&lt;br&gt;Anna Merritt's personal touch transforms Fuller's Guest Center into a home away from home for a unique community of guests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>Lord, I Wish Duwayne Could Sleep</strong>&lt;br&gt;Danielle Carr uses creative writing to wrestle with God over her husband's cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td><strong>Blessed Are the Peacemakers</strong>&lt;br&gt;Shocking experiences in the Holy Land lead Jon Huckins and Jer Swigart to rethink Jesus' ethical teachings on peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td><strong>Cultivating Cultural Humility</strong>&lt;br&gt;Storytelling deconstructs Jessica Chee Feng's Taiwanese American experience and gives her a tool to help others navigate diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td><strong>Just Data</strong>&lt;br&gt;Brooke Istook's winding path between technology and justice leads to a job she never anticipated—and a new perspective on vocation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THEOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong>&lt;br&gt;David J. Downs and Keon-Sang An, Guest Theology Editors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td><strong>The Contextual Nature of Biblical Interpretation: An Ethiopian Case</strong>&lt;br&gt;Keon-Sang An</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td><strong>Reading the Bible in Northwest Tanzania in Light of Male Circumcision as an HIV Intervention</strong>&lt;br&gt;David J. Downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td><strong>Hermeneutics for the African Century</strong>&lt;br&gt;Stephanie L. Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td><strong>The Hermeneutics of International Evangelism: Reading the Gospel with Peruvians</strong>&lt;br&gt;Greg WORKER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td><strong>Sidebar: Cultivating the Practice of Reading Scripture</strong>&lt;br&gt;Joe B. GAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td><strong>Biblical Interpretation in the Global-Indian Context</strong>&lt;br&gt;Ashwin Premchand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td><strong>Grassroots Exegesis: Women's Ownership of the Scripture in Bolivia</strong>&lt;br&gt;Kung-Loi Lee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VOICE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td><strong>Prayer</strong>&lt;br&gt;From Mark Llabberton, President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td><strong>Sports</strong>&lt;br&gt;New Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td><strong>Silence</strong>&lt;br&gt;Recent Faculty Books and Publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td><strong>Benediction</strong>&lt;br&gt;About Fuller Theological Seminary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"전체적인 관점

From Mark Labberton, President

My life has been changed by “reading the Bible with the dead,” most notably through wrestling with the provocative book by that title. My life has also been profoundly shaped by reading the Bible with living brothers and sisters from widely varied global contexts. “Reading Scripture in global contexts”—the theme of this issue’s section—magnifies these perspectives in profound ways. When we allow ourselves to view and hear the Bible as seen and read in other parts of the world, we not only benefit from those different viewpoints, but our own reading of the Scriptures is transformed. A “neutral” reading is exposed as highly shaped by context, experience, and assumptions about almost everything. As literary critic Jonathan Culler puts it, “Meaning is context-bound and text is boundless.” It is difficult to see how we see. Our view-point appears to us as straightforward, natural—even undeniable. “I saw it with my own eyes,” we insist as if speaking definitively of something’s veracity. Neighbor, car, tree, billboard, parking meter, toothbrush, cellphone are plain and ordinary things, nothing more than they appear.

Except for this neighbors, cars, and trees are never just ordinary—they can locate us socially and economically: they can be expressions of our “tribe” or people group; they can tell stories of place, climate, values, and more. We are never simply objective viewers of a simple world. De hecho, muy poco es más subjetivo que nuestro punto de vista, aún cuando observamos la mayor parte de las cosas.

As literary critic Jonathan Culler explains, “everything is more. We are never simply objective viewers of a simple world. In fact, very little is more subjective than one’s point of view, even while observing the most ordinary of things. How much more is true, then, of how we read—especially text as deeply layered and weighted as the Bible. Reading conveys an endless and inexhaustible fecundity of interpretation. Those interpretations are built from our personal experiences and are, therefore, shaped by them. As this is true of contemporary texts about current events and people, so it is all the more vividly true as we interpret the ancient texts that deliver the Word of God.

Opinions vary widely about the meaning and application of Scripture to our lives and our world. Since the 66 books of the Bible are resoundingly varied in the historic context, events, people, and milieu out of which they are written, the canon of Scripture itself involves us into multiple views. This informs our social and political debates about current issues and makes the Bible a living book that speaks to our time. Hence, we turn to contemporary texts about current events, people, and milieu out of which they are written, the canon of Scripture itself involves us into multiple views. This informs our social and political debates about current issues and makes the Bible a living book that speaks to our time.

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myriad interpretations of God, of being human, of living as physical-spiritual beings in a material world, of being (or not being) part of the people of God, and of dreaming about and believing in God’s purposes and ways.

The sheer possibilities can be disorienting—although all acts of reading and perception are equal and random. That is not true, but it does ground us in the need for reading with humility, for reading in diverse community that will enhance our ability to grasp the text more fully, for realizing that our most natural readings may be the most biased, and for being drawn toward the living Word, Jesus Christ.

Amidst the multiplicity of views the Bible offers, I see and read the Bible christologically while standing inside our own historical, social, racial, and political context. I also stand amidst the Christian community that sees Jesus Christ as the center from which I apprehend the whole biblical narrative. Tools of history, linguistics, anthropological sociology, or religion can add welcome insights to my reading of the Bible. I also choose to read through the lens of my confession that the living Word of God made flesh in Jesus will enable the clearest reading of the biblical text.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. I know that more truly by seeing the Bible through the witnesses of God’s diverse global family. Other members of the body of Christ—whether in centuries past or in yesterday’s blog post—help me identify the restrictions of my own perception and allow me to “see how I see.” Our collective perception promises a more fully orbed and unpredictable view of the One who alone is Lord.

Confession that the Bible is the living Word of God and for believing Jesus Christ as the center of the biblical narrative can add welcome insights to our individual reading and perception. Still, the sheer possibilities can be disorienting—although all acts of reading and perception are equal and random. That is not true, but it does ground us in the need for reading with humility, for reading in diverse community that will enhance our ability to grasp the text more fully, for realizing that our most natural readings may be the most biased, and for being drawn toward the living Word, Jesus Christ.

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Anna Merritt grew up in a large, tight-knit Italian family—and if that brings certain images to mind, they’re likely right. Sundays always meant a gathering of the clan at the grandparents’ house: along with Anna’s parents and five siblings were aunts and uncles and close to two dozen cousins. “All of us girls would be together in the kitchen with Grandma building cannoli or learning to make a good red sauce while the boys were outside swimming. It wasn’t entirely fair,” Anna remembers with a laugh. “But I did love the cooking.” When that food was served, there was always room at the table for anyone else who might stop by. Says Anna, “‘The more the merrier’ was our family motto.”

Today Anna brings that spirit of familial hospitality to her role as director of Fuller Seminary’s Guest and Conference Center in Pasadena, known by most as simply the Guest Center. Located a few blocks from campus on a quiet street lined with camphor trees, the complex—which includes 70 guest units of varying size—was originally intended to primarily serve members of the extended Fuller community and their family members. Over time that mission expanded to include guests connected with local nonprofits as well: the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), Huntington Library, Caltech, and others.

“We’re the first face of Fuller to many of our guests,” Anna says. “So our role is to be welcoming! That’s something we take very seriously.” Referring much more often to “we” than “I,” she expresses effusive gratitude for a group of staff members who are just as devoted to the guests as she is: “We have a collaborative team of people here who really care.”

Most guests stay for just two or three nights; others—students coming from out of town for a series of intensive courses, faculty in the midst of relocation—stay at the Guest Center for weeks or even months. Either way, what they observe is an attention to detail that makes the difference between an impersonal way station and a home away from home. Everyone finds a welcome basket of chocolates, biscotti, water bottle, and other goodies in their room when they check in; return guests often find a hand-penned welcome note from Anna. During the Christmas season there will be an ornament tied with ribbon to every door; on St. Patrick’s Day it’ll be a clover-shaped cookie; on December 31, a cowbell to ring in the New Year. Anna and her team are lavish with such offerings but not with their spending: Treats are home-baked, welcome baskets are assembled on site, and Anna always keeps her eyes out for good deals, snatching up next year’s Christmas ornaments at this year’s after-Christmas sales.

“Anna always has the special touches,” says Kaye Schneider, an MAFS and MATM alum who stayed at the Guest Center frequently over the years, coming up to Pasadena weekly from the San Diego area when she had classes. “She makes sure the rooms are stocked with everything you’d need to make a meal and that the study lounge has water and coffee. She takes care to have plants around to bring life and color to the entire community area.”

It’s especially the personal touches that make a difference, says Kaye: things like remembering Kaye’s birthday, helping her cater and decorate for a graduation party, or just keeping an eye out for small needs. “After she found out I was bringing an extension cord with me to access an extra outlet, I arrived in my room to find a power strip she’d left me! That’s Anna.”

It’s the personal touches that make the difference.
Ultimately, it’s about creating a place that feels like a home away from home.

Olympics athletes and coaches last summer. Or John Nash, the late mathematician who inspired the film A Beautiful Mind. Or the JPL scientists who were working on the Mars Rover mission and had a correspondingly topsy-turvy schedule. “We had to clean their rooms on Mars time!” says Anna, with the housekeepers following a schedule that matched up with that of the scientists—varying from day to day—over the three months they stayed at the Guest Center. But Anna especially loves getting to know members of the Fuller community who stay for an extended time: students like Kaye, or faculty or staff members who commute from out of town or are in transition, looking for a permanent place to live.

“The something new” that’s always happening in the life of the Guest Center often comes in the form of the day-to-day challenges of property management that need to be creatively addressed. But every once in a while it’s something much bigger. “We had a baby born at the Guest Center,” Anna shares. “Our guest went to the hospital but they sent her back home saying it wasn’t time yet. Well, the baby thought it was time!” The mom’s husband dashed out to get a staff member to come help, but by the time they got back to the room, the baby had arrived.

Then there was the time a guest cut herself severely on a hand blender she’d brought with her. “It was a pretty serious wound, she was fainting, and her husband was out of town—she was all alone with her baby,” Anna recalls. Without a moment’s hesitation, Anna drove her to the emergency room while Katie, who works at the front desk, stayed with her baby.

TREATED LIKE FAMILY

Anna describes a tradition she had with her son, Nick, during his growing-up years. “He and I would go out of town just for fun, for a couple of days, just the two of us—I called them ‘adventures with Nick.’ One year we decided to go to Palm Springs but hadn’t booked a place to stay ahead of time, and we ended up at a motel that was kind of run-down and shabby around the edges. It looked like it was from the ‘60s! “But the owner was so friendly to us that we ended up loving it,” she says, “and we decided to go back every year. That owner always remembered our names, and he always made us feel at home.” Anna carries that spirit to the Guest Center. “Even if there are areas where our facility is a little bit dated, our customer service always needs to be in top shape.”

What that might look like, for Anna or any member of her staff, is taking time to find out how a guest is doing or just engaging them in conversation. “When I walk by and see one of our staff members taking a moment to sit down with a guest out on the patio and have some coffee together, it makes me super happy,” she says. “It’s lovely.”

Ultimately, it’s about creating a place that feels like a home away from home, where guests feel as welcome as they did at that big Italian family dinner table that was central to Anna’s childhood. Only here, the core family is the Guest Center team. Every June on the morning of Commencement, they offer a complimentary breakfast on the patio for all their guests, most of whom are family members and friends of the new graduates. They don’t cater; Guest Center staff all contribute the food. “It’s always so much fun,” Anna says, but the best part comes once all the guests have rushed off to Commencement. “When the staff are the only ones left, we pull a couple of the tables together,” she shares, “and we sit down and eat together as a family. I cherish those moments.”
I wake up and he’s not beside me. I look in the living room, but the sofa is empty except for the blanket. Maybe he’s outside or gone somewhere, but I didn’t hear him leave. I check the recliner in Eva’s room. I check his office and he’s sitting up in the chair by the window. Awake.

I can offer him nothing. I ask, but there is nothing I can do to help. It’s been a while since he hasn’t slept, so I wonder if something’s wrong. Did he want to talk to me and I wasn’t available to listen? Please, Lord. I can’t give him anything that will take this away.

What does he do all night? He’s up and alone in the stillness, darkness without anyone to talk to, or anyone to help.

His body is supposed to sleep and it doesn’t. It just doesn’t do what it’s supposed to do.

I just close my eyes and sleep. No worry or thought about it not happening. Duwayne has to plan for sleep. Meds, lights, windows, fan, air conditioning, two pillows, and a head start so he doesn’t hear my breathing, or other sounds of the night.

I want him to know the ease of sleep like I do, Lord.

Eva knows that ease, but only after about 45 minutes of singing, flailing her hands and legs, shouting at the ceiling, and playing with Nellie the Koala and Cookie Monster. By the time I go to check on her, her head is at the bottom of the bed, one leg resting on the floor and she’s wrapped in the comforter like a pig in a blanket. Her thumb is plugged into her mouth, causing deep, heavy breaths that are soothing to my ears, but not her father’s.

Therefore, there’s so much pressure behind my eye sockets, filling my nasal cavity, muffling my ears, squeezing my head to crush it. Breathing and crying don’t help, Lord. I’m awake and alone in the bed. I’m weak and already running forward with Your time that won’t give me a moment’s rest. My feet are heavy. My whole body is wheezing with fatigue just to sit up, to get to the bathroom, to get to my baby screaming with joy at the morning, to get to the hospital where Duwayne is steeped in morphine.

This chemo regimen is like death and resurrection every two weeks, Lord.

I lose my husband to receive him again. Down, down I go with him until his tongue catches fire with snark and a full plate of curry goat.

He’s unable to eat a morsel of food during chemo. He nibbles on a teaspoon of scrambled eggs or fish or bread. After nibbling, there are leftovers.

When I awaken, I am still with You. When I awaken, Duwayne still has cancer.

Lord, You are full of compassion. Hear our prayers. Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

We’re at the hospital to remove the chemo pump from his chest port. He can’t make it to the infusion center on foot. So I park in the valet section at the front, but there’s no valet service on a Saturday. The curb is always empty and no one has told us not to park there.

I leave wilted Duwayne and sleeping Eva in the car to get a wheelchair.

Duwayne eases himself into the wheelchair. Then I ease Eva into Duwayne’s lap. I push myself and our family to the waiting area.

Familiar faces smile at us.

During worship at church, Duwayne raises his hands straight up above his lifted head.

I leave with Duwayne and Evangelist Eva in the car to get a wheelchair.

When I awake, I am still with You.

When I awake, Duwayne still has cancer.

Lord, You are full of compassion. Hear our prayers.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

† This text is excerpted, with permission, from a continuation of Dannielle’s master’s thesis project: Where Were You? An Exploration of the Presence of God. The work in its entirety can be found online at FULLER Studio along with a video reflection of her experience.
LORD, CHRIST, LORD, HAVE MERCY. HAVE MERCY. HAVE MERCY.
Blessed are the Peacemakers

Before their first child was born—as a kind of final hurrah for Jon and Jan who had just made a courageous decision: that Jon, after ten years in pastoral ministry, should attend seminary. Feeling the need for more training and a stronger intellectual foundation, he had enrolled in Fuller’s MA in Theology program. Now with a baby on the way, they decided to take a trip to Israel through Jerusalem University College before being homebound by school and parenthood.

Their time in the Holy Land became much more than a “final hurrah” for Jon and Jan when they befriended their hotel server. Milad and his wife were expecting their first baby at the same time the Huckins expected theirs. Jon and Milad ended up hanging out on the hotel rooftop one night, talking World Cup soccer and impending parenthood while overlooking Herod’s Palace in the Old City of Jerusalem. In the middle of their joking and conversing, Milad grew somber. He looked at Jon and asked, “Why do your people think I am a terrorist?”

Jon, stunned, had no response.

“How can you thank God for your breakfast every morning and hop on a tour bus to holy sites while, five minutes away, your brothers and sisters in Christ are experiencing daily occupation and oppression?”

Milad was an Arab Palestinian Christian, his family displaced by Israeli military advances in 1948 when thousands of Palestinians fled in terror. He now lived in Bethany—the place of Lazarus’s resurrection in John 11—in the West Bank, where tensions between Israelis and Palestinians often erupted with thrown rocks and flying bullets. At Milad’s invitation, Jon and Jan began visiting Milad and his community. After their Holy Land tour came to a close each day, the two Americans would get on a public bus and pass through military checkpoints into the West Bank. What they saw shattered their perceptions about Israel and Palestine, politics and theology, theology and ethics. Jon realized that he had always understood Israel-Palestine relations through the lens of a subtle yet embedded Christian Zionism—and now, everything was turned upside down. His mind started spinning with new questions about God and discipleship: “Does peace fit into theology? How has my inherited theology been an obstacle to peace rather than a mandate to pursue it? What does a theology of peace look like? How is that practically lived out such that both Milad in the West Bank and my neighbors in San Diego flourish?”

Milad and his community busted open a door in Jon’s mind, and he stepped through to find out what it means to follow Jesus in the midst of very real and physical conflict. • • • • • • • •

In 2005, when a 7.6-magnitude earthquake shattered the region of Azad Kashmir at the base of the Himalayas, the damage in that rural area of northern Pakistan was catastrophic. Emergency response teams were disabled. Almost 90,000 people died and nearly 4 million were displaced. Much of the farming region’s livestock were killed. In the aftermath of that disaster Jer Swigart, a young man who had come to take part in the relief effort, was struck by a realization. Working alongside others to clear rubble, distribute aid, and assist with communications between the villages and United Nations representatives, he discovered a God whose presence preceded him everywhere he went—even into areas he had previously considered “enemy territory.” For him it was an epiphany: God and God’s kingdom were much bigger than he had ever thought or imagined. Rather than bringing God to others in any way, it became clear to him that he was joining a very present, compassionate God in merciful action among those in need. While the infrastructure of Pakistani villages was being rebuilt, Jer found himself—and his perceptions of God—being undone and reshaped by a simultaneously global and personal deity.

His convictions about God’s power and presence only deepened as Jer, serving as a communications liaison for the UN, became involved in the negotiations of a peace treaty between two Pakistani villages that had waged war against each other for decades. When he watched men who had once sought each other’s annihilation shake hands in peace, the gospel went into “high definition” for Jer. He realized that in Christ, God waged a decisive peace; as a result, people who previously were subject to destruction were given new life. BRAINSTORMING PARTNERS

When Jer returned from Pakistan to his home and pastoral work in California’s Bay Area, his expanded understanding of God, enemy-love, and mission convicted him of his deep need for further theological training and leadership formation. At the same time, his boss approached him:

“With your skill set and what God is up to in you,” he said, “I want to encourage you to consider seminary and an MDiv as...
“Does peace fit into theology? How has my inherited theology been an obstacle to peace rather than a mandate to pursue it? What does a theology of peace look like?”

–Jon Huckins

“[I] realized that in Christ, God waged a decisive peace; as a result, people who previously were subject to destruction were given new life.”

–Jer Swigart
your next step.” As Jer discerned, prayed, and researched, he realized that every major mentor in his pastoral career had been a graduate of Fuller Seminary. He enrolled at the Fuller Northern California regional campus.

During one class, Jer found himself consistently pushed, encouraged, and challenged by a classmate in San Diego. When the quarter finished, Jer wrote an email of gratitude to the student, saying he hoped they would get to meet in person one day. When, later, Jer arrived at his hotel in Jerusalem for a Fuller immersion course, he found—much to his surprise—Jon Huckins from his online course sitting in the lobby. Jon was back in Israel, this time with Fuller. Famed ethicist and then-Fuller professor Glen Stassen, known for his “Just Peacemaking” philosophy, was leading the trip, focusing on what it means to live as an agent of reconciliation in the name of Christ.

Jer and Jon spent the next two weeks as travel companions and brainstorming partners. Pakistan and the West Bank collided as the two learned together in East Jerusalem, wondering how to incorporate what they learned—rebuiding from earthquakes, forging peace, sharing meals with the displaced, listening to intellectual giants—into their church ministries at home. Back in the United States, as their discussions continued over Skype and weekend trips, a central question emerged: why had peace—not personal serenity, but the pacific coexistence of and resolution between persons, communities, and even nations—been decoupled from their understanding of the gospel, discipleship, and mission?

This question led to another: “Why have we, as pastors, never taught about peace?” As daunting theoretical questions sprang up in their own backyards, they began to imagine ways they could train their own congregants for lives of peacemaking. Dr. Stassen’s class took on flesh and bones. Finally, Jer and Jon committed to a plan—its end goal being a lived theology for themselves, their people, and their communities.

FORMING EVERYDAY PEACEMAKERS

As an initial experiment, the two tried out their plan with their congregations. Ten individuals from Jer’s church in the Bay Area and ten from Jon’s in San Diego engaged in several weeks of preparatory study and discussion, and then flew to Israel and the West Bank. This was not a mission trip, but a formation trip. The end result was not to convert others to Christianity, but to meet and learn from Christians, Jews, and Muslims on the front lines of building peace in hostile environments. Jon and Jer hoped their congregants would experience the same sort of internal transformation they had undergone. Much to their surprise, it worked. More than that, it was bigger than expected.

Others from their congregations, from neighboring congregations, and from churches across the nation heard about the trip. Before Jon and Jer had even debriefed, the wait list for the second trip was long and growing. They realized this was more than a program; they had started an organization. The Global Immersion Project was born. Jer and Jon continued their peacemaking training and formation trips—now called Learning Labs—to East Jerusalem, and added Tijuana, Mexico, as another with a focus on the immigrant experience. Over time they developed workshops, webinars, and e-courses as further platforms for meeting their mission of “cultivating everyday peacemakers.”

Both Jon and Jer came to Fuller with their own dramatic experiences, but their time in seminary helped them process and grow out of those experiences as leaders committed to peace. “Fuller created the space for questions I couldn’t ask elsewhere,” Jon says. “The professors taught me how to think, not what to think. At the same time, they showed me how much bigger God’s kingdom was. I realized that the world and God’s activity stretched far beyond the American-centric Christianity I had been steeped in. I was formed to think bigger and see more.”

Jer also credits Fuller with encouraging him to step out and experiment with those bigger ideas. The biggest experiment, of course, became the Global Immersion Project, but that was only one outgrowth of the commitment to applied theology Jer drew from Fuller. Another was Jer’s own dedication to “become a student of both the Word and the world,” a commitment drilled into him by Fuller President Mark Labberton. Jer built a diverse library of Christian voices from around the globe, helping him to remember the God who precedes him everywhere.

The Global Immersion Project is just a half-decade old, but it is continuing to expand beyond Jon and Jer’s predictions. They see their work as an equipping of the American church to “embrace its identity as the reconciled beloved and vocation as beloved reconciler.” They desire the church’s transformation and activation as an instrument of peace in the world, a testament to a core tenet of the Christian faith. As they witness the growth of this movement through Global Immersion, they pray it continues to grow. “When Christians in the United States follow the Jesus we talk about—the one who commanded us to love our enemies, to pray for peace, to be peacemakers—the world will be a different place.”

NATE HARRISON, photographer, is assistant pastor of teaching at Rose City Church and co-founder of Fuller’s Faith and Science student group.

REED METCALF (M Div ’14), storyteller, is assistant pastor of teaching at Rose City Church andonden of Fuller’s Faith and Science student group.
When Jessica ChenFeng (MFT ’07) arrived at Fuller as one of only a handful of Asian Americans in her Marriage and Family Therapy cohort, she noticed that she never felt at ease in spaces where she was the only Asian person. “I was my fullest self with people I was comfortable with culturally, and I didn’t like that,” she recalls. She grew up in a Taiwanese American family and a mostly Asian community, and didn’t realize how embedded she was in her own culture and context until she was diving into marriage and family therapy, a primarily white-dominated field.

She noticed that her Asian identity was rarely addressed, and she didn’t learn how to practice therapy out of her own cultural identity. “A lot of the theories are written by white men, and the way marriage and family therapy is practiced is also from a Eurocentric ideology,” she explains, and then jokes, “I was a really good pretend white therapist, and I didn’t know it.”

Before coming to Fuller, Jessica says she had never been exposed to Christianity outside of a Taiwanese context. “I didn’t have a conscious awareness of how culture and faith come together, but I remember experiencing a lot of grace at Fuller,” she says. She also experienced professors modeling humility and curiosity. Jessica recalls Old Testament professor John Goldingay, while answering a student’s question in a Bible course, saying, “The more and more I study it, the less I understand it.” That was revolutionary for Jessica. “It was so refreshing to me,” she says, “because it connected to this thing in me that knew there must be a humility or not-knowing about God—how can we presume that what we know is always right?”

Jessica’s willingness to be humble led her to want to learn about others’ worldviews and how they came to construct them. But first, she needed to learn about her own. While working on her PhD at Loma Linda University, Jessica came across literature on the “intersectionality of social identity,” and, she says, “it clicked immediately. It gave words and language to my life experience. She focused her doctoral work on social location—how one’s gender, culture, race, etc., intersect with each other and influence one’s identity.”

Cultivating Cultural Humility

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Cultivating Cultural Humility
Critically examining ourselves and understanding our own identity and belief system. Those “others,” she insists, must start with understanding the perspectives and worldview, identities, and worldviews that might in all reinforce her particular beliefs. “She is genuinely living her family worked hard to get an education and citizenship and learn English, and at the same time feeling that she and an Asian woman who had to immigrate to the United States illustrate both the complexities of our relationships with others to be both meaningful and authentic, we need to deconstruct and understand those pieces. “A million little pieces” go into shaping our unique story, perspectives, and worldview. If we want our relationships to be both authentic, we need to deconstruct and understand those pieces.

Jessica tells of one family whose beliefs matched their own. “When things like that happen to me now, I have a different lens,” she says. “It doesn’t disempower me. I’m conscious of why that happens, and I have places where I can process that, so I don’t have to react. It doesn’t take away from me anymore.”

One arena Jessica mentions that highlighted the effects of social location, both for herself and others, was last year’s US presidential race. She observed that, whatever candidate they supported, those families were interacting online in social media echo chambers, attending churches that reinforced their opinions, and socializing with friends whose beliefs matched their own. “What hurt the most and felt personally threatening,” she says, “were the people we assumed were ‘like us’—family members, people who share similar social identities to ours—who we began to perceive as ‘the other.”’ Yet understanding the perspectives of those “others,” she insists, must start with understanding our own critically examining ourselves and the influences that have built our own identity and belief systems. Jessica talks of one family member—another Taiwanese American Christian woman—who experienced discrimination at her workplace and political response. She illustrated both the complexities and constraints of cultural embeddedness. “She has many identities,” Jessica describes. “She is an Asian woman who had to immigrate to the United States and learn English, and at the same time feeling that she and her family worked hard to get an education and citizenship in legal ways.” The news articles this family member reads and the people who inform her thinking, Jessica perceives, all reinforce her particular beliefs. “She is genuinely living out her strongest convictions, but has no access to those with other worldviews that might influence her own.” It’s a too-common situation, says Jessica, in which insulation from another one’s stories can perpetuate disconnection. For Jessica, curiosity about others’ stories is one of the key pieces of becoming conscious of one’s own context and thus free to reach across the divide to the “other.” She shares about how one of her closest friends, who is white, Christian, and identifies as queer, is very different from her yet one of her most trusted friends—a person she feels really “gets” her. Such trust and closeness came “after years of diving deep into our relationship,” says Jessica, and working to understand each other’s experiences and contexts. “I grew up in a conservative Christian environment, thinking certain things about gay people, and my friend didn’t always understand my Asian experience, so we’ve talked a lot about it,” she says. “And that’s the depth of our connection.”

It’s a connection Jessica feels is deeper than one that grows from simply sharing the same cultural background, because “having the same experiences doesn’t mean we’re connecting at this deeper level where healing is happening.”

On a larger scale, Jessica helps her students learn to engage in this kind of consciousness and connecting in the diversity class she regularly teaches as assistant professor in the marriage and family therapy program at California State University, Northridge. In classes like this one, Jessica explains, the goal used to be spoken of in terms of “cultural competence.” But now, more people are becoming aware that one cannot be “competent” in other cultures because those cultures are always changing. “Traditionally, cultural competence was based on a tourism model,” she says, with lessons that tended to box up other cultures: “These are Asian Americans, these are black Americans, these are what Latinos are like.” Because cultures are alive and ever changing, Jessica says her goal is to teach her students “cultural humility” instead of cultural competence. “That term indicates that I can never be ‘competent’ in fully understanding any cultural person, even myself—that I’m always growing,” she says.

This includes coming to terms with one’s own story of marginalization, oppression, and privilege. It’s usually most difficult for students to talk about the parts of their identity that are identified as privileged, Jessica notes. “People feel guilty about it, or ashamed, because for some reason our culture has socialized us to believe white privilege is a terrible thing,” she says. “Most people are more ready to talk about their oppressed identities, but we can often get stuck there.” To help get unstuck from the “dehumanizing language” of oppression and privilege, as Jessica believes it to be, she first focuses on historical context—why and how the social hierarchies in America came to be. “Why was the other so bad? Every immigrant group, all of our xenophobia, all of our history—that’s the same story,” Jessica says. By embedding privilege and oppression in historical context, she helps her students to stop personalizing it, going from “I’m bad” to “No, our history makes it so that we had no other way to live in this social structure.”

Teaching the diversity class over the years, Jessica has noticed that as she walks alongside her students through their shared “consciousness-raising,” she watches them first emerge out of an “ignorance is bliss” state. As they start to understand other people’s behaviors and their own, sometimes it feels more frustrating. “A lot of people, for a season, become angry; they’re discouraged, they feel hopeless about their experience,” explains Jessica. “But if you persist in it, I believe that you do connect more with yourself, you understand the world better, you build coping mechanisms, you learn how to be empowered.”

Today, in a climate that too often feels divided, Jessica believes the challenge we are faced with is answering the question, “What does it mean to be in community and to be in unity as the body of Christ?”

“We have to advocate for processes that allow for everyone to be heard and to emphasize that trying to make people arrive at a conclusion of ‘X’ or ‘Y’ is not necessarily the primary agenda,” says Jessica. “I think for a lot of people, this is scary and risky because it’s so personal.”

“A million little pieces” go into shaping our unique story, perspectives, and worldview, says Jessica. If we want our relationships with others to be both meaningful and authentic, we need to deconstruct and understand those pieces. Taking a clear-eyed look at that embedded identity in ourselves, Jessica believes, will help us be more open to the complexities of the “other”—and cultivate the cultural humility that can bridge divides.
When Brooke Istook (MACS ’10) completed college with a degree in information technology, she had a growing sense she had prepared for a field she didn’t want to enter. With equal parts anxiety and resignation, she walked across the graduation stage and began wandering toward a vocation she couldn’t yet name—a ten-year process that would be much messier than the spreadsheets and systems she had studied.

That process began when she found work as a technology consultant—a job that gave Brooke the flexibility and free time to volunteer in areas that felt more enlivening to her. “By volunteering I could figure out the landscape,” she remembers. “I knew I wanted to have a career transition, but I didn’t know what it was.” Whether it was Bible studies with the homeless in Los Angeles or development work in Ethiopia, when Brooke wasn’t in front of a computer screen she was helping others. “There was always this piece of me that wanted to do meaningful work and not just affect profit and the bottom line,” she says.

Brooke decided to bring this desire and her vocational uncertainty to Fuller’s School of Intercultural Studies, a place where she could take steps toward a vocation she couldn’t yet envision. One class in particular, David Scott’s Children at Risk course, put her passions into sharp relief. “We had a project in the class where we surveyed specific risks children around the world face,” she remembers. “I was going through material about different categories of risk for children globally, and the sexual abuse and trafficking section really broke my heart.” She was haunted by the data, especially the low rates for rehabilitation, and began to use assignments in other classes to research the subject. “I centered all of my work around women’s and children’s issues from that day forward,” she says. “My time at Fuller really helped me clarify and focus on this issue I was passionate about.”

With that newfound clarity, Brooke graduated a second time and began looking for work—just as positions in the nonprofit sector were at a historic low. “We had a project in the class where we surveyed specific risks children around the world face,” she remembers. “I was going through material about different categories of risk for children globally, and the sexual abuse and trafficking section really broke my heart.” She was haunted by the data, especially the low rates for rehabilitation, and began to use assignments in other classes to research the subject. “I centered all of my work around women’s and children’s issues from that day forward,” she says. “My time at Fuller really helped me clarify and focus on this issue I was passionate about.”

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During pregnancy, Brooke was finally forced to slow down the volunteering and work ethic she had grown accustomed to. “In nonprofit work, the currency isn’t money—it can quickly become who’s doing the most,” she says, “and that can get complicated.” The life she was trying to build from her own ambition seemed small compared to the new life in her arms, and she could feel her momentum begin to shift. “I wasn’t focused on my work anymore,” she says. “I began to realize that I was trying to fill a hole, and I had to let go.” Just when Brooke finally let go, the phone rang.

A friend and former coworker in tech consulting was on the other line with details about a nonprofit looking for staff, and she wanted to connect Brooke with the CEO. A few conversations later, Brooke was hired as the director of strategy and operations for Thorn, a nonprofit organization that uses the latest technology to fight child pornography and child sex trafficking on the Internet. Rather than leaving one career for another, Brooke discovered work that needed both her passion and the work experience she had tried to leave behind. “For so long I regretted going down the technical career path, and I couldn’t make sense of it,” she says. “I had given up, but every piece of it has come back around at Thorn.”

In the past, these crimes against children weren’t so easy to access—they required driving to dangerous areas of town or sending illicit mail, but now the anonymity of the Internet creates new digital space where predators can find victims and other abusers with the click of a button. It’s this dangerous blend of technology and predatory behavior that Brooke now works to address. “If we can find victims faster, deter potential

“There was a piece of me that wanted to do something more meaningful and not just affect profit and the bottom line.”
offenders, and make platforms as safe as possible,” she says, “we’re squeezing the access points and hopefully making a difference.” Still, the reality of Thorn’s work can take its toll, and one glimpse of a chat room transcript can remind staff members of the disturbing darkness beyond the screen. “It’s what psychologists call ‘vicarious trauma,’” and the emotional impact can easily tempt them to stop their work. “If you haven’t been taking care of yourself, you hit a rough patch,” Brooke says. “You don’t know what will trigger employees, and I’ve definitely cried on some days.” To keep their work sustainable, Brooke helped Thorn develop a group counseling program and therapy for the employees, a solution that came from her own years of navigating burnout.

With the right emotional support in place, the team can focus on collaborating with others to develop new tools. “Predators are always going to be using the latest technologies to their advantage, so we need to be just as nimble,” she says. Partnering with law enforcement and information technology experts, Brooke helped develop “Spotlight,” a high-powered search engine that identifies potential victims more quickly in order to get them the support they need. Her team has worked with national technology companies to circulate policies and safety standards for digital platforms to incorporate into their code. They recently hosted a hack-a-thon with engineers from Silicon Valley to explore new inventions to protect children. “Some of what we’re doing is asking questions: What would really change things? Can we do that technically and legally? Who should get on board?” she says. “We have a great ecosystem of support and partnerships to make it happen.”

This work is a natural fit, and as she looks back, Brooke sees that working at Thorn is something her own strategizing could not have anticipated. Every day, she brings her passions to analyzing spreadsheets and organizing project plans, systems she has now learned to hold with open hands. “We can strategize, we can try to make plans, but at the end of the day, real change is through relationships, through consistency, through those everyday moments.” It’s a hard-won conviction she carries with her into a rapidly shifting digital landscape, grateful for wherever each step leads.
It is not insignificant that both Luther’s 95 Theses and the common scriptural text that supported the reading of Matthew 4:17 that Luther opposed were penned in Latin. Within a few months, Luther began disseminating his ideas in German, a move that established the growing popularity of his ideas and ensured that his protest against church teaching would move well beyond the confines of academic debate.

One of the most significant theological and cultural legacies of the Reformation was the democratization of biblical interpretation through the production of vernacular theological writings and translations of Scripture. Indeed, in spite of his exceptional influence on the development of Christian doctrine, Luther’s most important contribution may be his own translation of the Bible into German, completed in 1534.

But of course the Reformation’s legacy of producing vernacular translations of Scripture has introduced its own set of hermeneutical challenges. If, for example, the vernacularization of Bible production and implementation of new translation strategies are targeted to and interpreted by local readers, does this inhibit cross-cultural dialogues and learning within “one holy catholic and apostolic Church?”

The essays in this theology section of FULLER magazine all suggest that cross-cultural hermeneutics is not only possible, but necessary and potentially quite fruitful in the globalized world of the 21st century. Each of these articles reflects on the challenges and opportunities involved in reading Scripture in global contexts, particularly among interpreters informed by cultural contexts different from their own. Taken together, these essays reveal the importance of vernacular theologians and translators in facilitating and promoting cross-cultural dialogues and learning within the “one holy catholic and apostolic Church.”

Todos los ensayos en esta sección de teología de la revista FULLER sugieren que la hermenéutica intercultural no solo es posible, sino necesaria y potencialmente muy fructífera en el mundo globalizado del siglo XXI. Cada uno de estos artículos reflexiona sobre los retos y oportunidades envueltos en la lectura de las Escrituras en contextos globales, particularmente entre personas que interpretan y traducen textos informadas por contextos culturales diferentes a los suyos. Juntos, estos ensayos representan las prácticas de lectura de las Escrituras en contextos globales, la transmisión de traducciones y la interpretación bíblica por medio de la producción de escrituras teológicas vernáculas y las traducciones de la Biblia. En efecto, a pesar de su influencia excepcional en el desarrollo de la doctrina cristiana, puede que la contribución más importante de Lutero haya sido su propia traducción de la Biblia al alemán, completada en 1534.

Pero por supuesto el legado de la Reforma de producir traducciones en el vernáculo de las Escrituras introdujo su propio conjunto de retos hermenéuticos. Si, por ejemplo, la vernáculización de la producción y la interpretación de la Biblia significa que las traducciones vernáculas tienen que ser interpretadas por líderes locales, ¿evita esto el dialogo y aprendizaje intercultural dentro de “una sola iglesia santa, católica y apostólica”?

READING SCRIPTURE IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS

Este año marca el aniversario número 500 de la Reforma Protestante. De acuerdo a una tradición, el 31 de octubre de 1517, en un acto público de protesta en contra de la práctica de vender indulgencias, Martín Lutero colocó sus 95 Tesis en la puerta de la Iglesia del Arzobispo de Mainz ese día en 1517, y en esa carta Lutero ofreció argumentos a favor de que todas las enseñanzas del Señor se apoyen y se prueben en las palabras de Jesús en el Evangelio, a las cuales llamó "Disputa de Martín Lutero sobre la Poder y la ESCRITOLOS de la vida eterna de las personas que siguen a Jesús. No es insignificante que tanto como las 95 Tesis de Lutero y el texto escrito común que apoyaba la lectura de Mateo 4:17 al que Lutero se opone fueran escritos en latín. En unos cuantos meses, Lutero comenzó a diseminar sus ideas en alemán, un movimiento que estableció la creciente popularidad de sus ideas y aseguró que su protesta contra la enseñanza del poder de la iglesia se movería más allá de las confiniciones de debate académico. Uno de los impactos culturales más significativos de la Reforma Protestante ha sido la democratización de la interpretación bíblica por medio de la producción de escrituras teológicas vernáculas y las traducciones de la Biblia. En efecto, a pesar de su influencia excepcional en el desarrollo de la doctrina cristiana, puede que la contribución más importante de Lutero haya sido su propia traducción de la Biblia al alemán, completada en 1534.

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THE CONTEXTUAL NATURE OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION: AN ETHIOPIAN CASE

Keon-Sang An

F rom 1990 to 2009 I taught theology and missiology in the Horn of Africa, first in Asmara, Eritrea, and then in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. As a teacher in these contexts, I regularly observed students struggling with Western modes of biblical interpretation. They were often unfamiliar with and disinterested in abstract and rationalistic hermeneutical concepts and methodologies. Western hermeneutics did not offer helpful interpretive practices for these students, especially for the local churches they served. Furthermore, such sophisticated hermeneutical approaches did not teach students to ignore their own ways of reading the texts, neglecting practices that had been passed on in their historical and cultural contexts.

With this recognition, I began to encourage my students to understand the importance of constructing their own theologies in and for their historical and cultural contexts, rather than simply and passively accepting perspectives developed in different contexts. In particular, I worked diligently with my students in Addis Ababa to discover culturally relevant ways of reading the Bible in the Ethiopian context. Fortunately, there was a time-honored church tradition in Ethiopia: the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). It has developed and maintained its own ecclesiastical tradition in the Ethiopian context for almost as long as the history of the Christian church. Significantly, the EOTC has its own distinctive way of reading the Bible, which has been shaped and developed in the context of Ethiopia's long history. This perspective on social location is important because it recognizes communal and individual dimensions as significant factors. As Michael Barram asserts, “Every interpretation comes from a ‘place’ to the extent that no interpreter can fully avoid the influence of [his or her social location]. . . . As we read the biblical text, therefore, what we see, hear, and value is inevitably colored by our own situations, experiences, characteristics, and presuppositions.”

Siegert also emphasizes the role of flesh-and-blood readers and their social location in the reading and interpretation of the Bible. He argues, “All such readers are themselves regarded as variously positioned and engaged in their own respective social locations. Thus, different real readers use different strategies and models in different ways, at different times, and with different results (different readings and interpretations) in the light of their different and highly complex social locations.” In actuality, there is a multitude of voices reading and interpreting the Bible from different parts of the world.

In this discussion, I am referring to social location inclusively, incorporating both the location of a society and an individual’s position in the society. Corporately, social location includes the overall sociocultural and historical context of a society. Individually, social location may include “personal history, gender, ethnicity, race, nationality, place of residence, education, occupation, political perspective, economic status, religious views or commitments, and so forth.” All of these factors shape communal and individual human identities and influence our interpretive practices. This perspective on social location is important because it recognizes communal and individual dimensions as significant factors. As Michael Barram asserts, “Every interpretation comes from a ‘place’ to the extent that no interpreter can fully avoid the influence of [his or her social location]. . . . As we read the biblical text, therefore, what we see, hear, and value is inevitably colored by our own situations, experiences, characteristics, and presuppositions.”

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the social location of the reader and its impact on the reading of texts. Consequently, social location has been privileged as a primary factor that determines the context of the biblical text. As Joel B. Green notes, “The biblical material is the intended addresser of the Bible. First, the biblical texts were written and read in the context of the community of God’s people. Second, the biblical materials have their genesis and formation within the community of God’s people. They speak people’s understanding of the Bible and their culture, language, and context.”

In addition, the Church addresses the contemporary church. God speaks to the church through the biblical texts; the immediacy of the Bible is experienced by the community...
of faith. Therefore, interpretation of the Bible is, primarily, the task of the church. Green asserts, “The best interpreters are those actively engaged in communities of biblical interpretation. . . . No interpretive tool, no advanced training, can substitute for active participation in a community concerned with the reading and performance of Scripture.”

Thus, the church is the primary context for biblical interpretation. Importantly, local churches all over the globe are the hermeneutical community, as these reflect ethnic and long-term theological traditions. They are located in particular historical and cultural contexts. Each faith community reads or hears and understands the biblical texts in their particular place in the story of Scripture. In this respect, each local interpretation involves exploring and describing different ways people read biblical texts in their particular historical and cultural contexts.

It is important to recognize that the contextual nature of biblical interpretation is not an obstacle. Rather, it is a valuable asset for the biblical interpretation of the Christian church. As Ukpung rightly points out, any given reading appropriates only “a certain aspect or certain aspects of a text.” No one way of reading the Bible can claim to appropriate the totality of understanding the biblical texts. A text has multiple aspects, dimensions, and perspectives, which no single reading can totally grasp. Therefore, “the more perspectival readings of a text we are aware of, the more dimensions of the text are disclosed to us, and the better we can appreciate it.”

In this respect, each local interpretation of the Bible in its historical and cultural context can make a unique contribution to a more holistic understanding of the Bible for the church of God. Christians can learn from each other’s interpretation of Gods Word. We are being transformed by the Word of God, and we proclaim the Word of God to the world. In this way, we build up the body of Christ for the glory of God. I would argue that this is the way that the church hears or reads, understands, and practices the Bible. As Green asserts, if “the church is one, holy, apostolic, and catholic,” as in the traditional confession of the church, “there is only one church, global and historical.”

THE EOTC’S READING OF ISAIAH 53:8
The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC) provides a compelling historical example of contextual reading of the Bible, which has been shaped and developed under the substantial influence of the EOTC’s tradition in the historical and cultural context of Ethiopia. The biblical interpretation of the EOTC is most practically revealed in the preaching of the EOTC. As an example, I will analyze a sermon on Isaiah 53:8 given by a priest of the EOTC in a local church.

Israel was the first country to receive baptism and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church became the Tewahido church and, therefore, the true church. In this way Ethiopia laid the foundation for Christianity.

Major Characteristics
The preacher interprets the biblical passage as having two historical references: the first is Jesus Christ and the second is the event of his resurrection. Jesus was then baptized. He was an obstacle. Rather, it is a valuable asset for the biblical interpretation of the Christian church. As Ukpung rightly points out, any given reading appropriates only “a certain aspect or certain aspects of a text.” No one way of reading the Bible can claim to appropriate the totality of understanding the biblical texts. A text has multiple aspects, dimensions, and perspectives, which no single reading can totally grasp. Therefore, “the more perspectival readings of a text we are aware of, the more dimensions of the text are disclosed to us, and the better we can appreciate it.”

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This sermon reveals four major charac-
teristics of biblical interpretation in the
EOTC. First, it is Christ-centered. Second, it
employs a prophecy and fulfillment scheme.
Third, it seeks to connect the biblical text
with the Ethiopian context. Fourth, it places
an emphasis on the practice of faith.

Christ-Centered Interpretation

Christ is the center in the preacher’s sermon,
and the text is christologically interpreted.
He states, “Who can speak of his descen-
dants?” This verse is the word which ex-
claims on Jesus Christ.” He continues, “This
was delivered by the prophet Isaiah. He lived
in 700 BC. However, he spoke about Jesus,
has very nature, suffering, death, emptiness,
and so on, in Isaiah 53:” Then the preacher
seeks the specific implications of the text
speak of his descendants? The story is about
Jesus Christ. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 8:9, tells
us that Jesus’ submissions are all for our
sake. The rich Christ became poor for us.
The Lord sat on a donkey. He was buried in
a human tomb. In order to make us free, he
received suffering which we were supposed
to take. Then he returned to his glory. Now
he is in all his power and authority.”

This preaching demonstrates the tradition-
al view of the EOTC on Christ. For example,
the preacher states, “He is not the one who
many people assume him to be. He is not
man. He is not prophet. He is not mediator.
Then who is Jesus? In order to know him we
need to listen to John’s teaching. According
to John 1:2–4, he was the Word. He was in the
beginning. He was with God. He created the
world. He was God. This Word dramatically
became flesh. He became man. So who is
Jesus? Jesus was the Word. What happened
to him? He became man. How did he become
man? Through the Virgin Mary. This was
prophesied by the prophet Isaiah. Glory be
to his mighty name!” This demonstrates that
the EOTC reflects the traditional teachings
on Christ of the early church.

Prophecy and Fulfillment in Christ Schema

The preacher’s interpretation of the biblical
text follows the traditional prophecy and ful-
fillment scheme between the Old and New Testaments, wherein Old Testament prophe-
cies are accomplished in the New Testament.
He states, “Isaiah 7:14 says, ‘Therefore, the
Lord himself will give you a sign. The virgin
will be with child and will give birth to a son,
and will call him Emmanuel.’ Matthew 1:21
says, ‘Who will give birth to a son, and you
are to give him the name Jesus, because he
will save his people from their sins.’ Isaiah
said that ‘She will be with child and will give
birth to a son.’ And the gospel writer said
that she gave birth to a son, and named him
Jesus. The prophecy was fulfilled.”

Seeking the Ethiopian Connection

In this sermon, the text is interpreted in light
of a special Ethiopian connection. For the
preacher, the verse refers to the circumstanc-
es of the Ethiopian eumuch. He asserts, “Es-
pecially the verse ‘Who can speak of his de-
sendants’ talks about an Ethiopian person.
This verse refers to a particular situation he
was in. He was reading in the biblical text,
read the verse which records this truth in
the book of Acts 8:26–28. The Ethi-
opian eumuch, who name was...enrich our
the head of finances as ordained by Candace,
queen of Ethiopia...” The man was reading
Isaiah 53. Then he was baptized by Philip.”

The central message of this sermon is the
person and salvific work of Jesus Christ.
The preacher employs a christological in-
terpretation of the Old Testament text in
Isaiah. The preacher also interprets the text
as having another historical reference: the
event regarding the Ethiopian eumuch.
The preacher in this sermon seeks to highlight
the salvation of Jesus Christ as well as the
historical significance of the EOTC.

CONCLUSION

This particular sermon demonstrates the sig-
nificant influence of tradition and context
in biblical interpretation. The EOTC provides
a compelling historical example of biblical
understanding that has been shaped under
the substantial influence of the EOTC’s tra-
dition in the historical and cultural context
of Ethiopia. Just as significantly, it helps to
foster our own understanding of God’s truth
in the Bible.

ENDNOTES

1. This article is an extract from my book, An Ethiopian Reading of the Bible: Biblical Interpretation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (Rapids, Wipf & Stock, 2005).
2. Fernando F. Segovia, “Culture Studies and Contemporary Biblical Criticism: Ideological Criticism as Mode of Dis-
course,” in Reading from This Place, vol. 2: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective, ed. Fernando F.
Segovia and Mary Anne Tobin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 16.
5. Ibid.
6. Segovia, “Culture Studies and Contemporary Biblical Criticism: Ideological Criticism as Mode of Dis-
course.”
9. Ibid., 167.
10. Joel B. Saken, Studied by Truth: Reading the Bible as Scripture (Naurogie, Azezana, 2007), 66.
14. Ibid.
15. Joel B. Green, Paraching Theological Interpretation: Em-
powering Biblical Text for Faith and Formation (Grand Rapids:
16. The word “read” in Greek means “being made one,” or “joined.” Traditionally Oriental Orthodox churches,
which rejected the Chalcedon formula, have been known as “monophysite,” which means “one nature.” However, the
EOTC rejects the term in favor of “epiphonous,” since “read
stands for a composite unity, unlike “merged” standing for an
elementary whole. The concept of Christ is clearly expressed in
the name of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church. See Aenom Hopespengares and Joachim Mitru, eds., The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Addis Ababa: The Ethi-
opian Orthodox Mission, 1970), 98.
From 2008 to 2015, our family lived six months out of each year in Mwanza, Tanzania, the second largest city in the country, nestled on the southern shores of Lake Victoria. We began spending half the year in Mwanza because my wife, Jen, is an infectious diseases physician-scientist who does clinical medical research on the inter- action of a freshwater parasitic infection called schistosomiasis and the HIV virus. Jen holds dual appointments at Weill Cornell Medical College in the United States and its partner institution, Bugando Medical Centre, in Tanzania. Although now with school-aged children we are no longer able to split our time between Pasadena and Mwanza, our family still spends the summer months in northwest Tanzania.

As a New Testament scholar my initial experience in cross-cultural hermeneutics, therefore, came not from an intentional pursuit on my part, but because I happened to marry someone committed to the field of global health, someone who has lovingly dragged me halfway across the world during sabbaticals and paternity leaves and summer breaks. Yet the experience of reading, teaching, and preaching the Bible in Tanzania has been immensely formational for my own vocation as a seminary professor. In attempting to connect with the local context in Mwanza, I have regularly volunteered as a teacher at St. Paul College, a Pentecostal Bible college located in the city of Mwanza, the Sukuma, is traditionally non-circumcising, has no rituals of circumcision, and in the past has often espoused per- jorative views of the practice. Another factor is that the procedure is not widely available at regional hospitals and healthcare centers, and it is frequently prohibitively expen- sive (approximately $20–25 USD) when it is offered. Finally, in a cultural context in which religion is a defining feature of many aspects of everyday life, the practice of MC in the region is deeply influenced by religious identity. One study indicated that among Muslim adolescent males in the Mwanza region 61 percent were circumcised, com- pared with 18 percent of Christians.

Yet the leaders at St. Paul College had experienced—in ways that I have still only glimpsed—the tremendous pain and suffering that the HIV/AIDS crisis has brought to their communities. They were eager, therefore, to think creatively about ways in which Christian churches might address the moral and healthcare crisis of the HIV epidemic. As a result of these initial conversations with our Tanzanian friends, Jen and I applied for and received a collaborative research grant from the Association of Theological Schools for a project entitled: “New Creation Is Every-thing: Christian Identity, Male Circum- cision, and HIV/AIDS in Northwest Tanna- nia.” We gathered a team of leaders from the heterosexual Christian churches of the region to design and implement the project.

Our goal for this collaborative research project was to locate the intersection of biblical hermeneutics, theological education, qualitative medical research, and public health—was to develop resources that might equip pastors and church leaders in Mwanza to address the public health benefits of MC from a theologically and medically
We also believed it was important to map local perceptions of MC among Christians before working to develop any resources for these communities. In order to assess these perceptions, we gathered ten single-gender focus groups at local Protestant churches for discussions that lasted between one and two hours. The groups were divided evenly between men and women, as well as urban and rural settings. Focus group questions centered on perceptions of MC, the role of religion, tribal identity, and gender in making decisions about MC, and the nature of the Bible’s teaching about MC. Sessions concluded with a contextual Bible study of Galatians, based in part on a method of perceiving MC as a Muslim practice that blurred the distinction between Christians and Muslims.

Moreover, participants in the focus groups frequently indicated that MC was perceived as a practice for the sexually promiscuous, or as unnecessary since they were taught in their churches to focus on “circumcision of the heart.” One semi-urban male reflected this view clearly: “Our goal is not to enhance promiscuity; our goal is … to build our youth in good Christian faith and to live in it and to be patient to get your partner. For us it is meaningless if [MC reduces] [HIV transmission] because we do not teach our children to be promiscuous.” Only one out of 37 participants had ever heard MC discussed at church, but nearly all Christian parishioners were eager for their churches to address MC as an issue that should therefore be avoided by followers of Jesus. As one urban female participant succinctly framed the issue: “Even if we say many ethnic groups … don’t circumcise, you will find … the Muslims in those ethnic groups have been circumcised but the Christians have not been circumcised.”

This distinction between Christians and Muslims via the practice of MC was occasionally framed in theological terms, as was seen in the comments of two participants:

“In the Christian churches we teach people mainly about the spiritual life alone, but the body we leave behind” [semi-urban female].

“The Christian is concerned with spiritual matters rather than with physical matters. That does not apply to the Muslim. The Muslim is very much concerned with physical matters and he talks more about issues of cleanliness rather than stressing religious issues … when his body is clean that is when he is noticed by God. It is not like that for a Christian, he says God deals with the heart” [semi-urban male].

As part of our curriculum, our team offered a reading of Galatians that could be employed by Tanzanian church leaders and theological educators to promote the very practice that Paul so strongly opposes. Our reading of Galatians contextualized in light of MC as an effective HIV/AIDS intervention in East Africa and is rooted in the apocalyptic nature of the epistle. Paul’s opponents (and perhaps Paul himself) at an earlier point in his life: see Gal 5:12) were advocating circumcision as a means of Gentile entry into the family of Abraham, a religious position indicative of a worldview in which Torah is central and the cosmos is defined and divided according to the antimony of circumcision and non-circumcision. Jews and Gentiles.

Given this apocalyptic reading of Galatians, an appropriate Christian embodiment of Paul’s message in Tanzania in light of the realities of the HIV/AIDS crisis would, it seemed to us, encourage the very practice that Paul diacourages, while also standing with Paul in his apocalyptic view of the world. Apocalyptic eschatology has fundamentally to do with the conviction that in the present time God has inaugurated a liberating war against the powers that have enslaved humanity and set the world in opposition to God—powers that Paul elsewhere identifies as sin and death (see e.g. Rom 7:7). In the context of the Galatian controversy, Paul presents circumcision as problematic in part because the law that prescribed the practice was itself involved in the enslavement of humanity (1:23-25; 4:3-5; 5:18). Since “neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything, an insistence that uncircumcision is mandated for Christians as an identity marker for God’s people or a means of defining the world is not a viable option for those who read Galatians as Chris- tian Scripture. Yet that conclusion paves the way for a consideration of the role that advocacy of the practice of MC might play in a robust theology of embodied existence.

Elsewhere in the curriculum we suggested that, from a theological perspective informed by Paul’s teaching about MC, concerns about sexual immorality, and confusion about whether the Bible supports or disallows the practice of MC for believers. As part of our curriculum, our team offered a reading of Galatians that could be employed by Tanzanian church leaders and theological educators to promote the very practice that Paul so strongly opposes. Our reading of Galatians contextualized in light of MC as an effective HIV/AIDS intervention in East Africa and is rooted in the apocalyptic nature of the epistle. Paul’s opponents (and perhaps Paul himself) at an earlier point in his life: see Gal 5:12) were advocating circumcision as a means of Gentile entry into the family of Abraham, a religious position indicative of a worldview in which Torah is central and the cosmos is defined and divided according to the antimony of circumcision and non-circumcision. Jews and Gentiles.

Paul’s letter to the Galatians is an attempt to explode that particular binary cosmology. Following Paul’s experience of the revelation of God’s son (5:18), the old world—with its antinomies between Jew/Gentile, circumcision/uncircumcision, law/not-law—was obliterated by the cross of Jesus Christ. This leads Paul to declare twice in Galatians that a “body God has put together” (3:28) and uncircumcision has ceased its world-defining role. In 6:14, for example, Paul explains that in light of the cross of Christ, the old way of structur- ing the cosmos and human social relations within it, through the governing binary of circumcision/uncircumcision, has been crus- ticated to Paul—and Paul to this cosmos (cf. 5:6). In Paul’s apocalyptic perspective, therefore, Christ-believers in Galatia must not submit to the rite of circumcision because the practice, in that particular context, denies the irrevocable, world-shattering power of the gospel and reflects a cosmology char- acteristic of “the present evil age” (1:4) rather than the new creation effected in the cross of Jesus Christ.

Thus, we suggested that, from a theological perspective informed by Paul, circumcision as an identity marker for God’s people or a
The campaign provided male circumcision. The governmental MC campaign brought a crucial to the success of the project at this earlier developed. The primary outcome was the(odds ratio 3.2 [95 percent confidence interval (CI): 1.8–6.0]). The results of this study were published in J. A. Downs et al., “Obstacles and Opportunities for Increasing Uptake of Male Circumcision in Tanzania: a Cluster Randomised Trial,” Lancet Infect Dis 13 (2013): e298.

Many of the current Bible colleges and seminaries in Africa were established with the involvement of Western missionaries who had been educated in the major missionary schools of the English-speaking world and that it calls for hope in and work toward a better world and that it unveils the poverty, injustice, and racism that figure in the plight of the oppressed.”


In the West, with its emphasis on biblical studies, biblical hermeneutics as the framework for theological education and ecclesiastical training of clergy, many in their congregations find little interest in this way of reading the Bible. The students’ more scholarly contributions may even be met with scorn by congregations longing for a fresh and active word from God, a word spoken by God through the Bible directly to their own situations. In fact, some consider our students “unspiritual” because their reading of the Bible seems to lack spontaneity and immediacy. Emmanuel Obeng has said that it is commonplace to hear statements that there is no need to prepare for sermons: the Holy Spirit will give utterance to the anointed people of God at the time of delivery.”

To unpack this a bit more, we can use a hermeneutical paradigm drawn from the “sender-message-receiver” model of communication. Applying this paradigm to the Bible, the scholars speak of an “author-text-reader” model, in which the author is the human author of a biblical

CONCLUSION

By the end of our project—or at least the most recent iteration of it, as we are continuing to explore ways to build upon our previous work—we had come a long way from the question, “What does it mean to read Paul’s letter to the Galatians in a context in which male circumcision might actually save lives?” Or perhaps we realized that what seemed like a reasonable simple for understanding Galatians is not nearly as straightforward. We may not adequately be answered without careful attention to a cluster of related issues such as what the ancient church leaders thought about the practice of circumcision, Christian identity in a pluralistic setting, strategies for the promotion of public health measures, qualitative research methods, and effective and the relationship between theology and medicine. I have certainly come to see that reading Scripture in a cross-cultural setting can be an immensely challenging yet deeply rewarding experience.

And biblical interpretation can be an extremely important aspect of public health policy in sub-Saharan Africa. Without specific appeal to Paul’s theology, Msu Dube, one of the leading prophetic voices working to encourage the church in Africa and worldwide to confront the reality of the HIV/AIDS crisis, has referred to “the HIV & AIDS apocalyptic,” suggesting that the disease “functions like an apocalyptic text, vividly revealing all the current social injustices, and exposing the perpetrators and the plight of the oppressed.”

According to Dube, HIV/AIDS is an “apocalyptic that it calls for hope in and work toward a better world and that it unveils the poverty, injustice, and racism that figure in the plight of the oppressed.”

HERMENEUTICS FOR THE AFRICAN CENTURY

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book speaking in his own time to his original audience, the text is the Bible as we have it in written form, and the reader is us, the contemporary audience. (God, the divine author of Scripture, is understood to be active by means of the Holy Spirit in all three components of this model.) Through the centuries Christians have placed differing emphases on the relative roles of authors, texts, and readers as they have read the Bible and sought to hear God’s authoritative revelation.

Through most of the late-19th and 20th centuries, biblical scholars in Western universities found their academic disciplines dominated by an approach to the Bible that focused on the author-text end of this model. The goal of peering behind biblical texts to explore the historical world of the author and the author’s community tended to supersed interest in the text itself as the Word of God, and often this approach even precluded such interest. Confronted with the skepticism about God’s role in producing biblical texts that accompanied this “historical criticism,” more theologically conservative scholars began to use the “grammatical-historical method” in interpreting the Bible. This is a more text-centered subset of historical criticism that focuses on the text as a product of the author and his historical age, while leaving room for belief that the human authors who wrote biblical texts were divinely inspired. Such an author-text approach allowed evangelical scholars to engage in academic study of the Bible. But it also kept their attention on the text-reader side of the hermeneutical equation, rather than the text-reader side. Even today, or at least until very recently with the renewed interest in theological hermeneutics, evangelical hermeneutics textbooks tend to say more about how to recover historical author meaning in a biblical text than about how to make living connections between the text and contemporary readers.

In addition, African biblical scholars trained in Western theological institutions have often been influenced, even unconsciously by the historical approaches they learned there. As David Adamo puts it, “Although one appreciates the opportunity to study in many of these great Western universities and seminaries, one thing is certain, the overseas training in biblical studies and theology is one of the ways by which African biblical scholars have been colonised.” As a result, mission-related Bible colleges and seminaries may continue to reflect primarily Western approaches to, and assumptions about, interpreting the Bible, even when the teaching faculty and institutional leadership have been nationalized.

Am I advocating a rejection of historical and grammatical study of the Bible? By no means. But a more comprehensive approach to biblical interpretation that takes into account the author, the text, and the reader in God’s choice to communicate with his human creatures through written revelation, most notably through the historical age, while leaving room for us, the contemporary audience. (God, the Bible itself as an inherent source or tool of imperialist, patriarchal, and oppression. This suspicion runs counter to evangelical African biblical scholars about ways to engage the reader’s viewpoint in biblical interpretation. What has appeared comes largely from university circles in South Africa and beyond, interpreters who may express suspicion of the Bible itself as an inherent source or tool of imperialism, patriarchy, and oppression. As it happens, Western evangelical biblical scholars have been colonised. How might we envision an evangelical African biblical interpretation that takes seriously the divinely inspired authority of authors and texts, while acknowledging the role of readers in completing the process of God speaking? In bringing their insights...
to global biblical interpretation. African evangelicals offer significant contributions as readers in at least two ways. First, because of cultural affinities with pre-industrial, agrarian, and/or communalistic societies like those within which the Bible was written, African biblical interpreters can sometimes clarify practices and values that Western readers misunderstand or ignore. I personally have gained from the expertise of research students at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, who have explored the resonance between biblical texts and their own social and cultural contexts in practice as community worship, sacrifice, and polygamy, or as specific familial customs (Nosh in Gen 2–27) and respect for the tombs of ancestors (Nehemiah in Neh 2:1–5). Secondly, because of their own experiences, African biblical interpreters often challenge other readers in terms of what they notice and prioritize in biblical texts. Conceptual frameworks such as honor and shame, poverty and power, patronage, or extended family relationships may be preeminent for African readers. That Nehemiah refers simply to material poverty, that is, the situation of not having enough money, is what my African students from identifying similarities between the biblical text and their own cultural context as an essential element of daily existence. Western readers may have to reframe passages in a New Testament class in Kenya, in an attempt to filter out Western assumptions absorbed through previous Bible studies and textbooks, students felt challenged to reimagine their own roles as Christ-followers in addressing poverty in their local settings.

I have also observed that at times Western interpretive traditions block my African students from identifying similarities between the biblical text and their own contexts. Sometimes these readings need to be unlearned—or "decolonized," as Ngigi wa Thong’s others have so famously said. For example, Luke’s focus on the poor in his Gospel is well known, but while white-middle-class Westerners, to select just one set of readers, may too readily assume this refers simply to material poverty, that is, the situation of not having enough money. Women and poor people in Luke’s Gospel is not only true to the historical author’s intent, but also offers a much richer resonance for African readers who have their own experiences of social and economic inequity on a national or global scale, and for whom cohesive relationships with family and local community are an essential element of daily existence. What we need to do is to recognize the ways in which African studies have the power to remind readers elsewhere that these chapters in 1 Corinthians are not merely about the possibility of offending the sensibilities of other Christians ("should Christians drink alcohol?"). They also address more troubling issues of syncretism and potential deviant behavior for believers to consider when we participate in social practices with religious or quasi-religious overtones—whether it’s Halloween in Europe and North America, the Day of the Dead in Latin America, the Hungry Ghost Festival in China, Asian practices directed toward ancestors, Christians in India considering the multitudes of Hindu temples and festivities that surround them, or any of us receiving thoughtful gifts of holiday food from Muslim friends and neighbors on Moulid (Mohammed’s birthday) or Eid (the end of Ramadan). My goal here is not to prescribe what a Christian ought to do, but rather to propose a closer look at the biblical text and ask: how do we make in any of these situations, since circumstantial variation is substantial, but instead to point out the opportunity for a confluence of author, text, and reader in African evangelical hermeneutics that can offer important insights from the Bible not just to African readers, but to all of us in the global church.

In Africa, where people long for the Bible to address daily needs for identity, security, health, prosperity, and defense against spiritual forces, an evangelical African biblical hermeneutic that weaves together the divine inspired authority of authors and texts with the role of the readers to whom God is speaking today opens new possibilities for the Holy Spirit to bring written revelation to life as divine communication. And as the numerical center of Christian movements to the Global South, especially to Africa, the understanding they draw from God’s inspired Word will flow north and west, enriching us all.

Endnotes
“I find it helpful to think of reading the Bible like eating food. We eat food regularly with our friends, family, and coworkers. Instead of communally reading meaningful amounts of the Bible, most Christians read small pieces alone, if at all. Even at church services, we generally read the Bible for about one minute. It is my belief that communal reading of Scripture helps the church relearn how to feast on the Word together, to be fed and nourished by the God who speaks to his children through the Word. It is very encouraging to see that the vast majority of Christians want to read more of the Bible. But when they are instructed to do so and left to read the Bible individually, most are not able to read much. It is therefore not an issue of desire but a problem of strategy. By gathering together as a community and reading Scripture together, people can read the whole Bible in well under two years. (Reading all 66 books of the Bible takes about 80 hours at a normal speed.)

* Fuller Trustee Bill Hwang is currently partnering with Vice President of Vocation and Formation Tod Bolsinger to build resources on FULLER studio that will facilitate the practice of reading the Scriptures communally.
THE HERMENEUTICS OF INCARNATIONAL EVANGELISM: READING THE GOSPEL WITH PERUVIANS

Greg McKinzie

For over six years, my wife and I have been reading the Gospel of Mark with every Peruvian who was willing, one-on-one or in small groups. Together we have been in the sum of our mission team’s work in Arequipa, Peru, but it was our primary approach to evangelism. I hesitate to frame our practice of Bible reading with reference to the word evangelism, because the term evangelism needs badly to be freed from the verbal, informational, and cognitive biases that have dominated its use in Christian mission. Proclamation of the good news of the kingdom of God is a word-and-deed endeavor, and that is what I mean by evangelism. For our team, the word “evangelism” focused on reading the Gospel of Mark as gospel, and the deed dimension focused on reading with Peruvians seeking God’s kingdom and justice. These two dimensions, summarized as reading with, constitute a practice I would identify as “incarnational evangelism.”

Reading with kingdom seekers is a deeply formative experience, not least hermeneutically. The formative effects of “reading with” have already been highlighted by those streams of liberation hermeneutics focused on reading the Gospel of Mark as gospel, and the deed dimension focused on reading with Peruvians seeking God’s kingdom and justice. These two dimensions, summarized as reading with, constitute a practice I would identify as “incarnational evangelism.”

Yet West’s work has a couple of important limitations. First, West consistently speaks of the other as a believer. This is natural if one adheres to the dictum that the church should be interested in reading the Bible. But shouldn’t the practice of evangelism shape the imagination and the hermeneutical strategies of the church? If so, there is obviously a space in which to imagine the reading of Scriptures with the other who is not a believer. The author who comes nearest to extending the insights of liberation hermeneutics in this direction is Bob Ekblad, who writes about reading with the “not-yet-believing” other, primarily in a prison context.1 Ekblad’s concern, however, is the liberation of the other, not the hermeneutical formation of the Christian who reads with the other. This brings us West’s second limitation: he discusses the formative effects of reading with only in relation to the transformation experienced by the scholar. The “ordinary readers” with whom West impels scholars to read are members of the church (i.e., believers). The hermeneutical practice of reading with is a scholarly concern, not a practice of the church. The hermeneutical formation of the church as readers, therefore, is not in view.

In light of my experiences in Peru, however, West’s hermeneutical hermeneutics2 is quite natural, though admitting some particular sites of struggle. Those sites (outside the periphery of the “ordinary reader”) have been the places where I have discovered the more elusive thoughts and conversations “behind the scenes,” the conversations of the “not-yet-believing” other. This is “the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as Mark 1:15 would have it.”

The problem with problem with incarnational evangelism is, as Billings believes, that it is not as effective in reaching the Gospel of Mark with Peruvians. In this case, a yes to Jesus is a yes to his call and participation in the Spirit’s work. I strongly affirm both of those realities and see them as dimensions of a robust missional theology in which incarnational evangelism also plays a part. The problem with incarnational evangelism, rather, is the limit of our ability to identify with the other. José Míguez Bonino observes, for example, that evangelism is “the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as Mark 1:15 would have it.”

The task that faces us is “to place ourselves” in a different relation to the poor—even if we go so far as to “assume the condition of the poor”—that this does not make us poor in the full sense of the term. There is no total “kenosis” possible for human beings.3 The same is true of culture.4 The admission of such limitations is not, however, a denial of the possibility of any Christlike self-emptying or self-denial. We still have choices to make.

Will we place ourselves, inasmuch as we are able, into the particularity of the other? Will we live in solidarity with the other? For the evangellistic practice of reading Scripture with kingdom seekers, then, the question is whether reading with means merely reading together or, in the humility, service, and solidarity by which one comes into the particularity and experience of the other.

Reading a Gospel as Evangelism

Now I come to the dynamics of taking a Gospel as gospel. On the face of it, Mark is “the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). In this sense, to tell the story of Jesus as the message of evangelism is quite natural, though admittedly unusual.5 Moreover, I have found that reading a Gospel is the best means of making disciples rather than converts.

The experience of walking through Jesus’s story gives the reader a chance to decide who Jesus is and whether to follow him. For example, halfway through Mark’s narrative (8:29), the reader who confesses that Jesus is the Christ after reading the whole story necessarily confesses that Jesus is the crucified and resurrected one. In this case, a yes to Jesus is a yes to his call and participation in the Spirit’s work. These are, by themselves, good reasons to practice reading the Gospels evangelistically.

In my experience, though, reading a Gospel as gospel is especially fitting for incarnation because of the correla-
The church has various theological formative practices. Worship, for example, is a set of practices that shapes the church in numerous intangible ways that, in turn, affect how we interpret Scripture. This is not the primary aim of worship, but it is, undoubtedly, one of its effects. Similarly, incarnational evangelism includes a variety of practices, one of which is reading Scripture with kingdom seekers. I consider these fully theological practices—forms of life that cohere with the missional theology of God’s sent people. As such, they shape the church theologically.

In particular, incarnational evangelism puts the church in solidarity with the other, which has its own formative effects. Reading Scripture with the other uniquely places the church in a position to hear God’s word from new perspectives. More specifically, reading Mark in solidarity with Peruvians allows me to experience the gospel in a new way, as one “partially constituted” (West) by the longsuffering hope of the Peruvian people. Perhaps the only way they have of addressing the difficulty they feel related to God’s word to a Peruvian. Reading with the hopeful is one example among many. I might also write about reading with the poor, the thankful, the strong, the ecumenical, the inclusive, the all of these and more, and were aspects of reading Mark with Peruvians that shape me in ways that defy easy description. The difficulty of putting these experiences into writing is very much the point: the practice of incarnational evangelism is formative in ways that merely reading the perspectives of others is not. If we could gain the perspective of the other just by reading about it, we wouldn’t need to read with the other. This fact, is reading with, in the fullest sense of the phrase, is uniquely transformative.

**ENDNOTES**


4. See, for example, a number of essays in Michael W. Gonzalez, ed., Reading the Bible Missionally (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).


7. See, for example, the concept of “150 percent persons” in Sherwood L. Lingenfelter and Marvin H. Mayers, Ministering Cross Culturally: A Model for Effective Personal Relationsh (3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016); and this paper, “What is a Missional Hermeneutic?” Catalyst April 2010, http://www.catalystresources.org/catalystmag/a-missional-herme-

8. Mortimer Anslyn (edison the word) for the Renewal Mind of Jesus Christ (Ort: Academic Renewal Press, 2001) (1984) 21 challenges the status quo: “If we want to understand the real meaning of evangelization we need to get back to the sources, to Jesus and our Lord, and to the Gospel.” I find this statement as relevant today as it was 30 years ago. See, for example, one of the major explorations of Paul Ricoeur, On Being in the World. Trans. Kathleen Blannen (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

While teaching at a conference some years ago, I was startled when a participant announced that he could not imagine how any Republican could claim to take the Bible seriously. Not long afterward, I witnessed a repeat performance in another setting, except in this case we were told that Republicans alone read Scripture correctly. This reminds me of what I imagine to be a first-century “battle for the Bible”: Pharisees, Christ-followers, and Sadducees, all reading the same Scriptures but reading them quite differently, and reaching diverse conclusions about the nature of faithfulness to God. How can this be?

Clearly, a lot has to do with our formation as readers of Scripture and not only with the words written on the page. This underscores the importance of reading Scripture as a “practice,” since the idea of “practice” assumes circularity: Formed by our reading of Scripture, we become better
readers of Scripture. This is not because we become better skilled at applying biblical principles. The practice of reading Scripture is not about learning how to mold the biblical message to contemporary lives and modern needs. Rather, the Scriptures yearn to reshape how we comprehend our lives and identify our greatest needs. We find in Scripture who we are and what we might become, so that we come to share its assessment of our situation, encounter its promise of restoration, and hear its challenge to serve God’s good news.

Paradoxically, perhaps, cultivating the practice of reading Scripture first prioritizes Christian formation generally. This is because there is no necessary, straight line from reading the biblical materials to reading them Christianly; sharply put, one can be “biblical” without being “Christian.”

When Jesus criticizes two disciples on the Emmaus Road for their failure to believe what the prophets had spoken, the problem was not their inability to hear the prophets or take them seriously. Jesus asked, “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:27 CEB). “Of course it was necessary!” we might say, but the question remains, which prophets actually document this necessity? “Isaiah 53,” we might respond, but we would then need to acknowledge that we can say this only because we have learned to read in just this way. After all, Isaiah 53 never mentions the Messiah, and Jesus’ contemporaries were unaccustomed to thinking of Isaiah’s Servant as a suffering Messiah. The problem faced by Jesus’ disciples was their lack of the cognitive categories required for making sense of the Scriptures in this way. They needed more than a commonsense reading of a biblical text. That Isaiah spoke of Jesus was something they had to learn. Accordingly, Luke records: “Then he interpreted for them the things written about himself in all the scriptures.” (Luke 24:27 CEB).

This example speaks to the integrated nature of Christian practices, and especially to the ways those practices shape us as readers of Scripture. Christian formation helps us to read the Scriptures Christianly. So it is worth reflecting on the difference it makes to our reading of Scripture that we regularly recite the Apostles’ Creed. What difference does it make to our reading of Scripture that we meet each other repeatedly at the Lord’s Table, that we speak often with people who do not share our faith, that we who share a common faith in Christ eat together regularly, and that we pray to Jesus as though he were God? (And what difference does it make when we do not engage in such practices as these?)

Of course, reading Scripture is itself a central Christian practice, so we may ask how we cultivate this practice among the others—a question I take up more fully in Seized by Truth: Reading the Bible as Scripture (Abingdon, 2007). Here let me make six suggestions.

(1) Reading Scripture is not enough. Theological and ecclesial formation inform and are informed by reading Scripture. Communities that put Scripture into practice, so we may ask how we cultivate this practice among the others—a question I take up more fully in Seized by Truth: Reading the Bible as Scripture (Abingdon, 2007). Here let me make six suggestions.

(2) Read and read again. It is easy to turn time with Scripture into a game of “Twenty Questions”: how to read Scripture.

(3) Read slowly. Those of us who find ourselves moving back and forth between blogs, email, texts, news outlets, and social networks on our smartphones and tablets need different rules of engagement for reading Scripture. This practice concerns not how fast I can get through today’s reading, but how slowly, combining prayer, reading, and contemplation.

(4) Involve yourself. If the last century or more has imagined education as the process of stepping back to observe, assess, and attain knowledge, then this practice calls for different habits. This learning is self-involving, a means by which we hear God’s address. Why do we resist this text but embrace that one? What does it mean that we are included in the community of God’s people addressed by this text?

(5) Read together. Inasmuch as scriptural texts have their origins and purpose deeply rooted in the community of God’s people, we ought to find ways to read in community. By this I refer to the importance of study groups where our assumptions and views are tested, but even more I mean to counter the temptation to imagine that Scripture is simply for me and about me, or that I am tasked with determining its significance apart from the larger church, historically and globally.

(6) Refuse to distinguish between reading the Bible for a class or sermon and reading the Bible for Christian formation. We come to Scripture for different reasons at different times, but it would be a mistake to imagine that preparing an exegesis paper or sermon required qualitatively different protocols. Should we leave our theological and ecclesial locations behind when doing exegesis? Should work with Scripture in sermon preparation bypass the reservoir of my regular reading practices? Should the crises that arise as I encounter God’s voice in Scripture not shape my reading of these texts with and for others?

As with Christian practices in general, so with developing scriptural patterns of faith and life: the destination is the journey itself. This is a journey in which we discover that the work of scriptural reading is not about transforming an ancient message into a modern application but about the transformation of our lives through Scripture. The Bible does not present us with texts to be mastered, then, but with a Word intent on shaping our lives, on mastering us.
BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION IN THE
GLOBAL-INDIAN CONTEXT

Johnson Thomaskutty

In the globalized context of the early 21st century, with a world characterized by integration and convergence, new modes of biblical interpretation are needed. Interpreting Christian Scripture in the Indian and South Asian contexts is a very different task when compared with Euro-American ways of interpretation. In a context such as India, in which various linguistic, religious, cultural, ideological, and symbolic diversities exist, a locally oriented interpretation that is attuned to global perspectives has the potential to strengthen the narrative voice of the text. This essay attempts to highlight ways in which biblical worldviews and pluralistic Indian worlds intersect in the process of interpretation. Yet this interaction raises a number of challenging questions. Are there existing interpretive methodologies sufficient to address global readers? How would a “local” to “global” development help interpreters draw the attention of a global audience? And how might a “glocal” interpretive process (in relation to descriptive processes) help an interpreter achieve his/her goal?

In the following sections, I discuss an interpretive framework suited to globalized India. A model of interpretation that takes into account people of other faith traditions, religious experiences, and secular/postreligious contexts will also be considered in the process. With that in mind, I discuss the following: the necessity of crossing traditional boundaries, the importance of creating ideological constellations, the value of building dialogical relationships, and the goal of leading the discourse toward a “third space.” The story of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4:1–42 will be considered as a paradigm for developing such an interpretative framework.

CROSSING TRADITIONAL BOUNDARIES

In the contemporary global context of India, crossing traditional boundaries is one of the foremost necessities in biblical interpretation. The interpretive task should begin with an attempt to understand differences based on prevalent castestatic, religious, linguistic, and ethnic identities. Part of attending to contextual realities in India involves understanding the “otherness” of different readers and their interpretive sensibilities. If an interpreter attends exclusively to his or her own contextual realities, a wider impact is impossible in today’s global Indian context.

In the story of the Samaritan woman as narrated in John 4, Jesus crosses traditional boundaries based on gender, race, and culture in order to engage in a conversation with the woman. The dialogue develops in a threefold fashion: the metaphor of water and their interpretive sensibilities. If an interpreter attends exclusively to his or her own contextual realities, a wider impact is impossible in today’s global Indian context.

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Though Jesus engages with the woman in a local context where she comes to carry water from Jacob’s well, the dialogue as a whole develops, first, with the help of a universal metaphor (that is, water), and, second, with a spiritual connotation attributed to that universal metaphor for esoteric significance. Jesus thus uses a strategy of dynamic localization rather than pure localization. This can be seen as a rhetorical strategy directing readers from particulars to universals.

In today’s global-Indian context, an interpretative strategy of dynamic localization, wherein both the centrifugal and centripetal aspects of a text are brought to the foreground, is to be preferred over a purely local approach. That is, Christian Scripture should be interpreted as a source that develops from local to universal realities, and vice versa. In this way, the text can find its meaning in a wider global context. In the technologically advanced and postmodern context of India, an interpreter can adopt innovative methodologies to advance the scope of her or his initiative, aiming at a global audience. A majority of the hermeneutical questions raised in India today are inadequate to catch the attention of a wider, non-Indian audience. Pure localization methods and exclusively contextual hermeneutical strategies may not make adequate sense for a wider audience. Those who interpret the text from Dalit, Tribal, and Adivasi perspectives mostly adopt pure localization methods and thus limit the scope of their hermeneutical engagement. As interpreters consider methods that focus primarily upon the particulars, and vice versa. In that sense, contextual interpretation in India should take a different stance by deemphasizing methodologies of pure localization.

CREATING CONTEXTUAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONSTITUTIONS

Creating contextual and ideological constellations between biblical worldviews and contemporary Indian worldviews should play an important role in the process of interpreting the Bible. In John 4, Jesus interweaves religious and cultural presuppositions in the context of the Samaritan context with that of Jewish religious aspirations, and then leads his interlocutor toward a new perspective on eternal life. In the story, the

There is no sweeter taste than a read of the Psalms in the morning, no more gentle guide than Old Testament stories, and no greater grace and mercy than the gospel of Jesus. I am so thankful that my life is bathed every day in this sweetness, guidance, and mercy.

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65 2017 | ISSUE 48 READING SCRIPTURE GLOBALLY
contextual reality of drawing material water is aligned with the spiritual levels of every human. Since Jacob appears as a common figure both in the Samaritan and Jewish scriptures (Gn 24), Jesus links Samaritan religiosity with that of Jewish religiosity? Furthermore, the Messianic hope of Judaism has striking parallels with the figure of Tabea in the Samaritan religion. These major connecting links are supported with the help of other themes in the narrative framework. In this conversation, Jesus develops an ideological constellation to lead the woman toward a new level of understanding. This approach can be quite significant in the multireligious and pluralistic context of India.

An adequate study of the Bible, as Paul Ricoeur has argued, must be thoroughly hermeneutical. This principle has been placed at the forefront of all interpretative hermeneutics.

In the process of interpretation, the text should be connected to a universal worldview. Hindu names and concepts such as Brahman, karma, Atman, and others can find meaning in the interpretive task and their implications explored in relation to universal readers. Similarly, the experiences of the Dalits, Tribals, Advadis, and other marginalized groups should be dynamically placed and interpreted with a gnomic intent. Jesus’ employment of a constellation of words and ideas from the Samaritan context to lead his interlocutor toward a new perspective on eternal life can serve as a model for Christian interpreters of the Bible in India.

BUILDING DIALOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS

In the process of interpreting Scripture in a pluralistic context, an interpreter should consider building dialogical relationships with people of other religious and cultural backgrounds. The dialogue of Jesus with the Samaritan woman reveals a universalistic, interreligious, and cross-cultural mission initiative as he breaks down gender, ethnic, and religious boundaries to be engaged in the mission Dei. The interreligious nature of the dialogue sharpens the woman’s existential views and directs her to the Savior of the world. John’s narrative techniques develop an unusual method of interpretation in order to accommodate the feelings and aspirations of the woman. Jesus as the protagonist communicates the message of eternal life in relation to the contextual realities of his interlocutor.

The message of the Bible should be communicated distinctively from people to people and culture to culture. The Johannine narrator uses his literary skill at its best in the story of the Samaritan woman. When an ancient text is introduced to the global-Indian reader, it has to be interpreted with the help of a narrator and a modern reader who interact with one another. While the dialogue within the text (between Jesus and the Samaritan woman) functions at the micro-level, the dialogue between the Jerusalenic and the modern reader functions at the macro-level. When the text is introduced to the global-Indian reader through the perspective of an ever-continuing narrator, the text can transact contextual realities and the reader can gain a new identity in relation to the textual horizon. In this way, the text can deal with existential realities such as gender discrimination, economic problems, caste hierarchy, and others. A dialogue of the narrator with the global-Indian reader through the mediation of the Samaritan woman and her experiences would facilitate a dialogue that leads to liberation and transformation.

LEADING THE DISCOURSE TOWARD A “THIRD SPACE”

An interpreter is expected to lead readers toward the global-Indian context. Neither an interpreter who simply engages in a descriptive analysis of the text nor one who emphasizes only the pure localized aspects of the Indian society can direct the attention of the reader toward a gnostic “third space.” In John’s discourse, the personal and moral attributes concerning the Samaritan woman are sandwiched between divine realities as follows: first, the dialogue begins with a discussion about the difference between the “gift of Jacob” and the “gift of God” (that is, between the “water of this world” and the “living water”) in relation to eternal life (vv. 7–15); second, the woman’s moral and personal situation is subsequently discussed (vv. 16–18); and third, there is an emphasis on the need to adhere to the existing Jerusalem-centric worship in order to continue with the “already . . . but . . . not yet” worship in spirit and truth (vv. 19–20). The dialogue reveals a central truth toward the end of the conversation, that is, the revelation of the identity of Jesus as the Messiah. This development of the dialogue rhetorically persuades the reader to aspire to an eternal life experience. Ultimately, Jesus finds the woman toward “eternal life” perspectives. Thus, a “third space” (eternal life experience) emerges in relation to but distinct from the first and second spaces the Jeremiah-centric spirituality and the Samaritan-centric spirituality.

A distinguishing mark of Indian ethos is its profound spiritual outlook. But at the same time these exist polarities of religious
In conclusion, prevailing biblical interpreters should employ dynamic localization strategies in order to make scriptural texts relevant in both local and global contexts. A gnomic interpretative strategy in relation to descriptive aspects should be adopted in the global-Indian context for wider efficacy. In that process, the text should be considered as a paradigm to include the feelings and aspirations of diverse people, irrespective of their racial and national identities. In order to achieve this goal, an interpreter, first of all, should cross traditional hermeneutical boundaries, moving from pure localization to dynamic localization. Creating constellations of ideas between the biblical worldview and the Indian worldview might help interpretation in particular contexts, but such a strategy should not ignore a global audience. In a pluralistic context like India, building dialogical engagements with other religious and cultural forces both is necessary and has the potential to enhance the scope of the interpretative task. Furthermore, by crossing traditional boundaries, creating ideological constellations, and building dialogical relationships, the interpreter should aim to direct global-Indian readers toward a “third space.” Through these means an interpreter can lead an interpretative discourse in contexts both “here and now” and “everywhere and ever.”

ENDNOTES
2. In the English language, “gnome” often refers to a general maxim or a proverbial saying. With reference to a grammatical category in his analysis of Kîrovan, Daniel B. Wallace states that “this gnome present refers to a general, timeless truth” (Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament [Grand Rapids, 1999, 523). In speaking of a “gnomic present interpretation strategy,” I am referring to the timeless dimensions of Scripture. But such gnomic interpretation must stay always be done in reference to the historical context of the text.
3. For local/ideological contextualization, the interpreter attempts to emphasize the local/contextual aspects over against the global/ideological. But in dynamic/localization, the contextualization of the interpreter makes the local in relation to the universal.
4. P. S. Jacob states, “The New Testament is the word of God and it cannot be confined to doctrinal interpretations alone. Words of God have infinite possibilities of understanding and these possibilities should be explored as much as the interpreter can. Scripture comes from understanding a whole range of possibilities where one talks on one’s basket and above all something being in Jesus. John Thomaskutty states, ‘Fifty Years as an Educator, Leader, and Theologian: A Friendly Conversation with Dr. P. S. Jacob,’ New Testament World (blog), January 10, 2012, https://newtestamentworld.wordpress.com/2012/01/05/fifty-years-as-an-educator-leader-and-theologian-a-friendly-conversation-with-dr-ps-jacob/
5. Kevin Quast states that “Jesus’ word was a symbolic stage setting for talk of more than mere words. Being at the foot of Mount Gerizim, it also marked a dialogue about words.” Kevin Quast, Reading the Gospel of John: An Introduction (New York/New Jersey, Paulist, 1998), 30. Also see Johnson Thomaskutty, Dialogue in the Book of Signs: A Polyvalent Analysis of John 1:19–12:50 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015).
6. There is not much literature on how these biblical narratives read the Bible or how it impacts their daily life, but close observers of Christianity in the Andes region can note profound transformations in local/ideological contexts. These readers take notice when the biblical narrative depicts natural catastrophes, unpaid wages, or discrimination—experiences that more commonly and disproportionately affect minorities and the poor. Accordingly, reader responses to such narratives play a greater role in shaping faith culture where most believers are poor and underprivileged than in communities that enjoy the fruits of material prosperity, and political self-determination. For believers in their community in La Paz, Bolivia, the Bible narratives face these familiar issues as it takes them beyond the place of the reader, making them participatory in the vital ethical and affective experiences it stimulates.
7. I am wary of the temptation to eucate the Bible reading of mis/heard narratives, but my formative years spent in La Paz suggest to me that narrative elements that are in error in
some contexts come alive in others, often to powerful effect. To the indebted, ill, or downtrodden woman, a God who advocates debt forgiveness (e.g., Neh. 2:2) provides miraculous healing (e.g., 2 Kings 4), and vanquishes those who deny justice to the innocent (e.g., Isa. 1:25) becomes personal and close instead of abstract or far off. Identifying with a character in the story makes it easier for a reader to believe that the creating and redeeming God of the Bible knows her.

What is more, this depth of identification is often accompanied by a correspondingly higher degree of expectation placed upon God—or at least one that comes less self-consciously. The theologian Karl Barth, in a series of lectures delivered in 1939, reminded us that in prayer we are obliged to “meet [God] with a certain audacity; thus hast made us promises, thou hast commanded us to pray... and I say to thee what thou hast commanded me to say.” Help me in the necessities of my life, “Thou must do so; I am here.”** As scandalous as it seems to some Western Christians, our hermanas and hermanos in South America expect and demand that God respond to them with urgency, and they have few qualms that we often do about issuing prayers that can sound to our sensitive ears like an injunction. Validation, comfort, and hope from our living God are unquestionably prayed for here and now, not in the distant abstract afterlife.

**Experiencing the Bible in Bolivia: Scholarly Exercise**

Zona Rosales is a rural township located on the outskirts of the city of La Paz. In the 1980s, when my parents first moved our family to the area, the barren mountain hills of Rosales were considered clandestine, and the district did not qualify for the city government’s development plan of urbanization. At the time, the area had no access to running water or electricity and was inhabited by extremely poor indigenous families. We founded the Bethesda School and Church in 1988 after constructing the first building out of bricks made from adobe mixed with clay and water hauled by local laborers. From this site, it took half an hour’s walk to the nearest public transportation. Families with six, seven, or more children were not uncommon, and the sight of schoolchildren playing in the dust during daytime hours was typical. Rosales families could afford neither school supplies nor the matriculation fee, which in those days was usually around the equivalent of one US dollar per child per year.

My parents had emigrated from South Korea to Bolivia three years earlier; and they decided to move into Tupa-Cela (the original, indigenous name for today’s Rosales) in order to serve the local community more effectively. They believed that the good news of Christ’s salvific power combined with quality education would maximize every child’s potential and could release him or her from the brutish cycle of poverty and ignorance that had been the norm in this neighborhood and many like it in Bolivia. In its first academic year, the school enrolled 150 children aged 5 to 12, providing free education and inviting their families to join Sunday church services. As the school gradually expanded to K-12 education, it attracted a robust constituency from Rosales and other adjacent zones and began producing graduates, most of whom were the first generation in their families to attain high school education. In recent years, more than 80 percent of graduates, about half of them young women, have gone on to universities and other comparable institutions of higher education. Today, the school has five buildings and a total enrollment of approximately 700 students. Most come from families who are now able to pay a nominal fee, having benefited from decades of economic growth as the neighborhood stabilized, was eventually annexed by the city, and began receiving water, electric, sewer, and other municipal government services.

A typical example was Hermana Celia, who had migrated from a rural village near Cochabamba. She, her husband, her mother-in-law, and her five children lived in a one-room structure, which served as their bedroom and kitchen. Their modest house belonged to a wealthy mining company executive. Hermana Celia and her family had been hired as chabanderos (guards at a property), and Hermana Celia’s husband also worked as a handyman at the executive’s house. For 15 years they received no salary payments, having been told that one day when Rosales was incorporated into urbanization, the executive would sign their plot’s lien over to Celia and her husband in lieu of back pay. Naturally, as soon as urbanization and the introduction of basic services materialized, the price of land in Rosales skyrocketed. The family lost their home and found themselves entangled in a legal dispute with a powerful adversary.

Based on my own observations of situations like Hermana Celia’s, I note two principal ways in which reading the Bible uniquely impacted the lives of Bible readers—and especially of indigenous women readers—at Bethesda. Although these patterns may not show up in all developing-world Christian communities, I believe these dynamics can likely be seen in similar populations around the world.

First, Bible reading itself often became the means to secure a basic level of personal autonomy and self-determination that is nearly universal in the United States, but is not as widespread among Bolivia’s ignominious poor. The Bible was a gateway to literacy and, hence, personal dignity and empowerment. Literacy levels among our congregants varied widely: a typical hermana at our church in the early 1990s probably read at a third grade level, and some were completely illiterate. Most had not finished elementary school. Protestant churches in Latin America tend to emphasize individual Bible reading, but many of our hermanas had never read a book cover to cover before. Once they identified themselves as cristianas evangélicas, they started reading the Bible voraciously, participating in Bible-study groups daily and even ignoring ordinary activities as a means of solidifying not only their faith, but also their reading ability.

Second, in reading and responding to the Scriptures, our hermanas were not necessarily influenced by a gender-driven interpretive framework. The Bible had opened their eyes to their inherent value and dignity as humans, and their core identity did not reside solely in gender. Of course, many of the challenges these women faced existed because of their gender; due to the traditional machismo present in many aspects of Bolivian culture—but they also encountered prejudice and discrimination because of their ethnicity and social standing. It was the full set of these problems that dehumanized them in daily life. At the time, Bolivian culture offered few

“In my daily reading of Scripture I might be disturbed or reminded of comfort or procedures, but no matter how the Spirit works with the text on any given day, I am living out my Wesleyean habit of giving these texts a primary place amidst all of the other words that surround me. In this way the habits of my life, the maps that frame how I perceive and interpret and act, is shaped by biblical stories, poems, letters, and prophets.”

Marcia Beecher is the Howard L. Goddard Professor of the Ministry at Fuller Seminary. An ordained pastor, she teaches in the areas of congregational leadership and community engagement.
female leaders or instigators of social change who could serve as role models to empower and inspire indigenous women. They rarely had the opportunity to speak up and could not always muster the courage to act in opposition to injustice. Our hermanas, however, captivated as they were by the biblical narratives they read, assumed that the stories were theirs to emulate and embody, whether for their present condition, and her future aspirations were hers to speak in public. In these settings, their identity was not only that of a wife, mother, or daughter. These women spoke at various churches throughout the city and its campus. In Bolivia until recently it was not very common that someone like Hermana Juana would be seen speaking in public or in a position of leadership, but many evangelical churches now embrace female preachers from backgrounds like hers. Hermana Juana and others like her, having gained literary confidence, a sense of self-possession, and a boldness for action by reading her Bible, went on to inspire other women who followed suit.

Hermana Juana participated in gatherings that provided a rare opportunity to speak at churches throughout the city and its campus. In Bolivia until recently it was not very common that someone like Hermana Juana would be seen speaking in public or in a position of leadership, but many evangelical churches now embrace female preachers from backgrounds like hers. Hermana Juana and others like her, having gained literary confidence, a sense of self-possession, and a boldness for action by reading her Bible, went on to inspire other women who followed suit.

Scholars note that today in North America many Christians can be seen dwelling in “the divided consciousness of simultaneously believing and not believing.” On the one hand, believers may embrace the Bible’s message of salvation; on the other hand, they may be skeptical of its relevance to their lives. This tension can create a sense of dissonance for many Christians. Despite these challenges, many Bolivian evangelical churches have found ways to interpret the Bible in ways that resonate with their experiences.

Scriptural inspiration and authorization of bold action is not a uniquely Bolivian phenomenon. What was perhaps different was how these women responded to challenging circumstances based on their reading of the Scripture, especially compared to nonbelievers in the indigenous community. Because these hermanas took the Bible seriously, they were emboldened to speak and act in ways that made them rare—and also highly effective as evangelists—among the indigenous community.

I met Hermana Juana during Bethesda School’s first year, when her oldest son, Josueqín, enrolled. She was a single mom of two young boys working a couple of days each week as a house cleaner. She herself had little formal education, having been taken out of school during the fourth grade and brought to the city by her older sister to work as a maid. Hermana Juana had struggled, grieved with depression after being abandoned by her husband. Whom she became a Christian, her love for the Scripture was insatiable. Over the two decades I knew her, I saw her transformed into a confident reader and eloquent preacher who was often invited to speak at various churches throughout the city and its campus. In Bolivia until recently it was not very common that someone like Hermana Juana would be seen speaking in public or in a position of leadership, but many evangelical churches now embrace female preachers from backgrounds like hers. Hermana Juana and others like her, having gained literary confidence, a sense of self-possession, and a boldness for action by reading her Bible, went on to inspire other women who followed suit.

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ENDNOTES


2. A recent study that does offer insight into the interpretation of the Bible in Bolivian Protestant churches is Ex Aventar’s reading the Bible across Contexts: Jordan’s Gospel, Socio-Economic Marginality, and Latin American Biblical Hermeneutics (BIS 145; Baker, 2010).


4. This phenomenon has been reported elsewhere, see, e.g., Alison Prifitera, Gender, Education, and Pentecostalism: The Women’s Movement within the Assemblies of God in Burkina Faso,” in Beyond Access: Transforming Policy and Practice for Gender Equity in Education, ed. Sheila Akerewe and Elaine Underhalter Salmon (Oxford GB, 2001), 212–28.


Both active in the Los Angeles Chicano Mural Movement of the ’60s and ’70s, David Rivas Botello and Wayne Alaniz Healy joined forces in 1975 to form East Los Streetscapers. In 1996 they were awarded the commission to depict the diverse Pico neighborhood of Santa Monica. As Healy describes it, this project “required an immense amount of patience.” In addition to site changes, the approval committee could not agree on the concept: “What one group approved, the next group rejected.” Eventually the city provided photographs of members of the community and the project was completed nine years later (at left in detail, above in situ). More at eastlosstreetscapers.org.
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“Prayer is not a matter of waking up God or making God pay attention to us. God is always with us, in us, around us, under us, over us. God’s presence pervades the universe, and that presence is personal. God loves each of us all the time. The problem has to do with us and our ability to quell the noise that goes on constantly in our minds. . . . So we need to learn to focus the barriers that keep us from God. . . . In the end, it is God who does the focusing through attention to us.”

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Charles Scialla, professor of church history, in a discussion about distraction and the Jesus Prayer, an ancient Orthodox form of prayer based on repeating the phrase, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Learn more online.

BERANAH

“Beranah prayer begins objectively with what God has done in history. We know who God is because of what he’s done . . . Christian prayer and worship began with these objective statements, thanking God, and then asking God to intercede on their behalf in the world today.”

Todd Johnson, William K. and Delores S. Brehm Associate Professor of Worship, Theology, and the Arts, reflecting on the biblical roots of prayer in the Old Testament. Dr. Johnson is also an associate in the order of Julian of Norwich, a monastic order for contemplative prayer in the Episcopal Church.

THE JESUS PRAYER

“We live in a time when prayer is trapped by the distractions of the world. We are 24/7 in our society we are always on, always connected, always trying to multitask to do more than one thing, and that makes it very difficult for us to just focus on God, to focus our minds and our hearts on God. We have to look at the wisdom of our own Christian tradition, the wisdom that enables us to develop practices that cause us to be a still point in the frantically turning world we experience.”

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THE LORD’S PRAYER

“The Lord’s Prayer is not really a how-to manual or an instructional manual. It’s really a kind of relationship manual and a loyalty manual. It has to do with developing certain patterns of thinking, feeling, and believing that are constituted in certain practices. . . . Those kind of patterns give rise to a kind of relationship manual and a loyalty manual or an instructional manual. It’s really a kind of relationship manual and a loyalty manual.”

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THE EXAMEN

“The examen is a wonderful tool to use as we’re seeking God’s will and discerning our own vocation, because the parts of my life when I feel alive, present in love, and energized are most likely those places where God has put a gift inside of me or given me a passion or a purpose. When I’m in line with the purposes of God, I am fully alive. The times that I’m detached or removed, I’m somewhat farther away from God and God’s plans and purposes for me. As I’ve practiced with the examen on a daily basis, looking for God’s presence in those times of joy and understanding more about God’s movements in places of detachment and pain, it helps me prepare spiritually for those times when I’m really in a difficult place.”

Levy Machado, associate professor of clinical psychology, reflecting on the psychological effects of the prayer of examen, an Ignatian practice of prayerfully reviewing our daily lives. Learn more online.

“Prayer can be paradoxical (learned here by a unique name, professed above, of Fuller’s prayer garden), and it involves patience, practice, and connecting to a tradition that is older and deeper than the present moment. This voice gathered here introduce only a few of the many prayer practices we can use to dialogue with the Presence that “pervades the universe.”

This content is curated from ongoing conversations taking place throughout the Fuller community.

Visit this Voice section on Fuller.edu/Studio for links to full videos, articles, and more.
“Prayer for much of the Christian tradition has caught up between two folded hands the ache of human life, our longing for purpose, the growing fears of everyday life, the inexplicable and cruel, the loss that stands in the midst of all things mortal, the hope that there is one who delivers, one who remains when all else goes down to the dust. How could anyone teach such things? Prayer seems to awaken every longing that goes unquenched in human life, and to lift those desires to the dark luminosity who is God.”

“Communicative prayer seems to be the species of prayer that is in play during liturgies when utterances seem to be addressing God. If God is not the target of an utterance in the liturgy, can these utterances also be seen as addressing God or not?”

“Prayer is the alignment of personal, only personal relationship will be effective. We are confronted with the potential that the things involved. It remains unrelated. Since reality is personal being in the context of an intimate relationship. Thus, prayer is not magic. Magic doesn’t work because it doesn’t connect to the nature of the things involved. It remains unrelated. Since reality is personal, only personal relationship will be effective. We are confronted with a who.”

“Prayer is inherently relational. Prayer petitions and praises a personal relationship; if you truly pray; if you truly pray, you are a theologian.”

“Communication is the highest form of prayer or pure prayer. This is the experiential knowledge of God, not speculative knowledge of God’s essence. Evagrius is famous for saying that if you are a theologian, you truly pray, if you truly pray, you are a theologian.”

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“The act of petitionary prayer involves placing our desired outcomes before our minds and maintaining an active desire that God will help bring it about. Further, if we truly want God to help bring about a desired state of affairs, we must assume that it is in accordance with God’s will so that the act of prayer will include actively surrendering our desires to God so that they might be in alignment with his desires.”

“Prayer can lay the foundation for a theological aesthetic since it transforms not only one’s heart but, in so doing, it transforms one’s way of perceiving the world.”

“The key benefit presupposed by many Christians is that God sometimes does things in response to prayer that (1) God wants to do and can do but (2) would not have done had the prayer not been offered. This isn’t a genie in the sky, but it is the case that whether something happens depends in part on making the request to God. That’s why prayer matters.”

“Analytic theology will not help one pray better if one simply wants to know how to philosophically describe a Christian phenomenon. Indeed, insofar as such desire bends toward curiosity, it works against the ends of prayer. . . . Analytic theology will be spiritually fruitful to the extent that it opens itself up to an end beyond analytic theology.”

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“Prayer is in the activities of God, and to do that we must know what the activity is, we must join ourselves to it in intention . . . and we have to be responsive to God’s intentions in ways that music players are responsive to the conductor.”

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For centuries, Christians have cried out to God with this simple prayer, words prayed in a single voice no matter the language or culture or time: Lord, have mercy! Many of the languages spoken at Fuller are represented on this page, and you can hear them set to music on REVERE | RESTORE, an album created by members of the Fuller community. Says Director of Chapel Julie Tai: “In these times, the only words I can pray are, ‘Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Grant us forgiveness and peace.’” Recently the Prayer Garden (pictured) was transformed into a contemplative and creative space for people to pray for the world.

Resources

- The Vital Connection: A Fresh Approach to Christian Spirituality and an Opportunity to Move On with God
  John Goldingay (St. John’s Extension Studies, 1998)
- The Spiritual Formation Series
  Richard Peace (NavPress, 1998)
- Meditative Prayer: Entering God’s Presence
  Richard Peace (Wipf & Stock, 2015)
- The Practice of Worship and Prayer with Catherine Barsotti (and other faculty)
- Psychology and Spiritual Formation: Integrating Research and Practice with Sarah Schnitker
- Spiritual Traditions and Practices with Richard Peace (and other faculty)
- The Spiritual Disciplines with Richard Peace
- Integration of Spirituality and Urban Ministry with Joseph R. Colletti
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Available Classes

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"Rigorous physical activity, like sports, that emphasizes striving, growing, becoming ever better and more capable, is a spiritual activity. The maintenance and honing of the body in order to meet all of its potential is to ... strengthen the sole means we have for knowing God—we strengthen our physical and created selves, our whole person. Sport serves as a systematic vehicle for this spiritual pursuit, the improvement of the body, the whole person, and the spiritual self.”

Erik W. Davys, PhD student and adjunct professor, from his essay “Sport and Transcendence through the Body” in the International Journal of Public Theology. Erik was one of many speakers at the inaugural Global Congress on Sport and Christianity held at the Yorkminster Cathedral in York, England. Other Fuller representatives included Adam Metz (DMin student), Ben Houltberg, associate professor of human development, Rubén Fernández Morales (MAT student), and Robert Johnston, professor of theology and culture, who are quoted in these pages. Dean of Students Steve Yamaguchi (pictured above) enjoys the rigorous activity of riding to work every day, and recently took a group of students on his route from Pasadena to Long Beach, California.

“While winning and competition are not inherently theologically empty, Christians must look beyond ‘winning’ and seek to infuse the contemporary sports culture with beauty and creativity. In order to do that, Christians must acknowledge the beauty and creativity that often are found outside of winning.”

Adam Metz, DMin student, from an essay on sports and popular culture. Adam was one of the many Fuller representatives at the Global Congress on Sports and Christianity.

“We do not just have bodies. We are our bodies. We are our bodies. Our bodies inescapably relate to who we are and what we do in sport and life. No bodies, no sport. Sport is an embodied performance which humans do in the good bodies God created. That means our bodies matter. Since our bodies are good gifts from God, then what we do with the work of our heads, hands, and feet in the games we love to play should express the God-given value of the human body.”

From What Does It Really Take to Be Great? a collection of theological and scriptural reflections to help athletes understand emotions, character, adversity, and more. The resource was edited by Rubén Fernández Morales (MAT student), the Western Europe coordinator for the international sports ministry Athletes in Action.

“Reading St. Paul from a disability perspective urges reconsideration of how to understand the metaphors of winning and achievement of the imperishable prize. Within this Pauline framework, winning does not come at the expense of losers. On the contrary, those who are most successful are shaped by norms of competition that foster the well-being of others, that honors and respects those who are otherwise deemed weak and inferior, and that seek to edify the whole rather than the individual self. Is it possible for us to develop a Pauline theology of sport from this platform?”

Amos Yong, professor of theology and mission, analyzes Paul’s use of athletic metaphors for the Journal of Disability and Religion. Read the whole article as well as other voices on able theology online.
“Performance-based identity is an identity where people put their worth and value into how they perform in sport. What I’ve found in my research is that this performance-based identity is also associated with a fear of failure, with perfectionistic concerns, and with fear of disappointing those around you. Physiologically when we put our worth and value into our performance, we can begin to anticipate competition as a threat to our actual selves, which triggers some of the same mechanisms as real fears and threats and pulls from our resources in negative ways.

“It leads to four areas of coping: blame, shame, creating chaos, and control—but that’s really undermining people’s emotional health. . . . Changing this identity starts with unlearning.”

“Want to know the six words [children] most want to hear their parents say? ‘I love to watch you play.’ That’s it. Nothing grandstanding like ‘you’re an all-star,’ and nothing discouraging like ‘here are a couple of things I noticed that you can work on.’ Just ‘I love to watch you play.’ As I gear up for T-ball, band concerts, gymnastics practice, and everything else I’m going to be noticing this, internalizing these six words. I’m sure I’ll say other things, some that are helpful and some that aren’t. But I want my kids to hear that doing what they do, and learning about who God created them to be, is a joy to watch as it unfolds.”

> Sarah A. Schnitker, associate professor of psychology, with Benjamin Houltberg, associate professor of human development, in their essay on developing virtues in athletic contexts. Read the whole article online.

“Although winning can create a pedestal to preach the gospel, it can also lower Christian athletes feeling that they must attain athletic success to be useful to God’s kingdom. This would be an example of ministering ‘through’ athletics rather than ministering ‘to’ athletes. In contrast, the latter focuses on sport as a context for spiritual transformation as a part of one’s vocation, which includes gifts that (a) remind one of God’s unchanging love, (b) provide a source of joy, and (c) create opportunities to connect and serve others.”

> Brad Griffin, the associate director of the Fuller Youth Institute, in an essay considering research on youth athletics and emotional health. Read more online.

“When I started training, I would have said that I run to be as impressive as my brother, to have that medal around my neck instead of simply being the little sister at the finish line. But over these months, my view has changed. Now I would say that I run to connect with the church, to form bonds that will last a lifetime. We have all experienced a lot over the past few months, moments of joy and moments of sorrow, moments of peace and moments of pain, but what was most important was that we could all share these moments together. A true church family, united by a cause and a God much bigger than any of us could ever imagine.”

> Meredith Miller (MDiv ’08) reflects on her experiences running with a World Vision marathon team. Read her whole article online at the Fuller Institute.

“While some people are naturally driven by purpose, many people base their worth in what they do rather than in who they are. We believe that through experiences like a home build with Hope Sports, identities can begin to shift towards something greater than achievement. This shift occurs through meaningful encounters that are experienced cognitively with the mind and affectively with the heart.”

> Christine Feist, a student researcher at the Thrive Center, reflecting on redirecting sports away from destructive forms of competition and towards purpose. Read her reflections online.

“Through training for a triathlon is one way that I can attend to my own body, and when I exercise, I practice attending to the present—before, during, and immediately afterwards.”

> Timothy P. Foster, a sport psychologist of Christian ethics, on the value of embodied physical activity. When Erin is not teaching psychology, or in other times of training for a triathlon, she is pictured above. Watch her interview about mortality and the body here.

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"I like to commute by bike because it helps me reconnect with our planet and our Creator. Twenty-five miles feels different when pedaling myself over it rather than sitting in a car. I sweat and breathe a lot and feel purged and invigorated when I get home. When I'm on the riverside bike path, for the southern half of the ride I find a contemplative rhythm that is prayerful and quieting. When I'm on the urban northern half of the ride, I pray for all different kinds of people I see on the route through some very diverse urban neighborhoods. Riding my bike helps me pray and see God in ways I wouldn't see otherwise."

Dean of Students Steve Yamaguchi bikes to Fuller Pasadena from Long Beach—a daily commute that helps him pray with his whole body. He recently took a group of students for a weekend ride down to Long Beach. On the ride, organized by the All Seminary Council, the group biked over 30 miles from Pasadena, through downtown Los Angeles and over the LA River, and ended at the waterfront. ASC Sports Coordinator Chase Weaver said, "Recently, we've started emphasizing outdoor-type events and drawing from our very active faculty and staff to accompany and even lead these events. Steve has been riding for years and was the perfect companion for our veteran and rookie riders on a trip through the region we call home."

"If a person is not able to play, he is easily bewitched or possessed by his own seriousness or the seriousness of another. Inhumanity is the result. Play breaks through such barriers and thus serves as a prologue to and/or a check upon a life of freedom. . . . Play revitalizes our 'over-seriousness' toward life, filling us with a spirit of joy and delight that carries over into all aspects of our existence. This attitude is based in and fosters the tacit recognition of a restored humanity that senses its rootedness in life's fundamental sacredness."


"In the 2016 national championship, I spun our car in the showcase turn right in front of everyone—it was such an ugly spin! I ended up winning the class that year, but I can't just focus on the performance. If I only analyze my runs, compare my times to my son's and husband's times, and focus on my mistakes, I know I've lost something. It's important for me to choose to have fun. If I'm not enjoying the sport, then it's only another form of work. Racing engages my whole self, and when I'm free to enjoy it, I feel so alive."

When Mari Clements isn't leading Fuller's School of Psychology as dean, she's racing competitively with her family. They've enjoyed the sport for over 20 years—and won numerous national and ProSolo championships along the way. On some days, she's walking around the Pasadena campus in racing flag heels, a quiet nod to the action-packed sport. Watch a video of her racing online.

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L. Paul Jensen (PhD ’07), an adjunct professor and founding president of The Leadership Institute, in his book Subversive Spirituality: Transforming Mission through the Collapse of Space and Time. Pictured above: Roger Feldman’s Tenacious Convergence, a temporary site-specific sculpture on Fuller’s Pasadena campus that expresses the unstable context of the first-century church. In side, angled walls intentionally disorient the viewer and reveal open spaces just out of reach—evoking a struggle to find prayerful silence in the midst of chaotic times. Watch a video on the installation online.

“In solitude and silence people become aware of what is actually occurring in their hearts—without incessant external stimuli, they discover who they are.”

Jude Tiersma Watson, associate professor of urban mission, describing her calling to be an “urban contemplative” cultivating silence in the city of Los Angeles, available online. Pictured, students walk through Austin, Texas, at the Brehm Center’s South by Southwest Festival immersion course; the street mural above them evokes a struggle to navigate a chaotic modern life.

“As a Christ-follower, I practice meditation on a regular basis. When I meditate, I turn my gaze from my self to Christ who redeemed me. Instead of simply focusing on how I feel or what I think, I look at Christ and what he has done for me on the cross more than two thousand years ago. I am reminded of his goodness in my life and I become more aware of his presence. As I remember how much I am loved by God, it prompts me to think and act more in ways that reflect his love.”

Joey Tong, assistant professor of psychology, discusses her research on the psychological benefits of mindfulness and meditation. Read more from her research and how she incorporates this practice into her own life of prayer online.

“What does solitude and silence look like in my context? There’s not a lot of silence. I have to think about a spirituality of noise and how I incorporate these noises into my life with God. . . . The example that I think of is the desert and the city. The early church fathers and mothers went to the desert to get away from outside pressure for their encounter with God. I believe we can have that encounter right in the midst of our own context and our own cities. The problem with a lot of us is that we spend so much time learning about all the things that are happening in the world—we spend a lot more time there than in the Bible. So what does it mean to listen to God not just at Saint Andrew’s Monastery, but also in MackArthur Park or walking down Alvarado Street?”

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Berenice Rarig, an international installation and performance artist, was an invited friend of Fuller’s Brehm Center at the 2016 Culture Care conference. Pictured during a performance in Fuller Pasadena’s prayer garden, she uses a contemplative approach to art and materials to explore her conviction that “everything in creation points to the Creator.” Watch her interview online.

“SILENCE PRECEDES SPEECH...only one who has learned to be silent is prepared to speak.”

David Augsburger, senior professor of pastoral care and counseling, from his Baccalaureate address on the pastoral nature of silence, available online.

Berenice Rarig, an installation and performance artist pictured in Fuller’s Prayer Garden, uses simple materials like fabric and paper to guide others to prayerful silence—a silence where we become aware of “the language that is already in the material, pointing to the Father.” Watch her interview from the Brehm Center’s Culture Care Conference online.
Martin Scorsese, Academy Award-winning director, made the statement above at Fuller’s screening of his film Silence, a story of Jesuit missionaries in 17th-century Japan based on the novel by Shusaku Endo. He is pictured with Brehm Center Director Mako Fujimura (left) and Assistant Professor of Theology and Culture Kutter Callaway (right). At this screening sponsored by the Brehm Center’s Reel Spirituality initiative, the film created space to reflect on faith, suffering, and more. Watch the whole conversation online.

“Words like ‘silence’ seem harsh and stark, and they seem to hit home too deeply in an entertainment-filled world. Rarely do we encounter art that gives attention to the complexity, paradoxes, and mysteries of life without falling into the abyss of despair. Silence is an antidote to the morphine-like numbness of our culture. It can and should shock us to see the deeper reality beyond the normative reality.”

From Silence and Beauty, a companion book and video series by Brehm Center director Mako Fujimura exploring the connections among the novel Silence, Japanese culture, suffering, and more. Download a chapter online.

“Every time that had taken place until now had been necessary to bring him to this love. ‘Even now I am the last priest in this land. But Our Lord was not silent. Even if he had been silent, my life until this day would have spoken of him.’”

Toward the end of Endo’s novel, Father Rodrigues offers confession for a Japanese Christian and has an epiphany: faith was still possible in the midst of the suffering he had witnessed. Paradoxically, God’s own silence expanded his heart, making it possible to love in a new way.

Resources

Rust: Experiencing God’s Peace in a Restless World
Silence and Beauty: Hidden Faith Born of Suffering
Makoto Fujimura (InterVarsity Press, 2016)
Meditative Prayer: Entering God’s Presence
Richard Peace (Wipf & Stock, 2015)

Available Classes

Spiritual Traditions and Practices with Richard Peace (and other faculty)
The Spiritual Disciplines with Richard Peace
Theology, Film, and Culture: Engaging Independent Films with Kutter Callaway
Spirituality and Mission with Jade Terrance Watson

“Where do I go to find the meaning of existence and the meaning of life? For me, it’s Christianity.”

“Everything that had taken place until now had been necessary to bring him to this love. ‘Even now I am the last priest in this land. But Our Lord was not silent. Even if he had been silent, my life until this day would have spoken of him.’”

Kutter Callaway, assistant professor of theology and culture, hosted the conversation with Scorsese described above and guided their conversation to thoughts on sustaining faith in traumatic circumstances. Read his reflections on chronic pain online.

After reflecting on his own spiritual journey navigating his Catholic faith and work in Hollywood, Scorsese walked through Fuller’s Pasadena campus and paused at Christopher Slatoff’s sculpture of the crucifixion—a silent moment to remember where love and suffering meet.

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Martin Travers enjoy traveling the world painting and offering workshops to provide at-risk youth and communities with creative alternatives. He has spent extensive time in the Himalayas and in the Mission District of San Francisco. His 2002 work Naya Bihana (A New Dawn)—detail at left, in situ above—portrays three generations of Nepali women struggling to create a better future. Travers was in Nepal in 2015 when the country was rocked by a magnitude 7.8 earthquake, and in the wake of the experience helped found Kala Sikchya, an organization providing art workshops for traumatized Nepali children. Follow him at @martintravers71.
Recent Faculty Books

 Church History: An Introduction to Research Methods and Resources, 2nd ed. (in Korean: Search Academic, 2016).  

Woman in Ministry and Ministry to Women (IVP Academic, 2016).  


Spiritual Transformation: Taking on the Character of Christ (Baker Academic, 2016).  


Recent Faculty Articles and Book Chapters

New Fuller Faculty

EUN AN CHOI  Assistant Professor of Intercultural Leadership  
Dr. Choi comes from Fuller as a faculty position at the Azusa Center for Theological Studies and Mission-Area United Theological Seminary in India,烦恼和喜乐, 印度, and missions in Russia and other central Asia, where she planted and led multiple churches and trained local leaders, who bring rich grace to their communities.

KIRSTEN OH  Ecological Associate Professor of United Methodist Studies and United Methodist Ministry  
An ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, Dr. Oh is one of three United Methodist representatives to the Faith and Order Table of the National Council of Churches, and former UM’s Woman of Color Scholar. In addition, she serves as associate professor of practical theology at Fuller University.

MATTHEW W. RUSSELL  Assistant Professor and Associate Director of the Fuller Institute for Recovery Ministry  
Teaching primarily at Fuller Texas, Dr. Russell previously served as an adjunct at Fuller, taught practical theology and community engagement at Duke University, and internationally. He has taught theology at multiple seminaries and currently serves as senior pastor of Iglesia Blasiecapa in Los Angeles.

ENRIQUE TORRES  Ecological Professor of American Baptist Studies and Executive Director of the American Baptist Theological Center  
Joining Fuller’s faculty as an ecological professor, Dr. Torres brings experience as a pastor, educator, author, and executive with multiple national and international organizations. He has taught theology at multiple seminaries and currently serves as senior pastor of Iglesia Blasiecapa in Los Angeles.


J. ROMERO  “‘Religious Support and Psychological Well-Being: Gender Differences’ (2016).


2016); “Teología y Distopía: En Busca de una Iglesia Desvictimizante en el Nuevo Mundo” (2016).


2016); “Beyond Ableism: Disability and the Renewal of Theology and Ethics.”


109–20 (T&T Clark, 2016).


109–20 (T&T Clark, 2016).  

250–63 (Ashgate, 2016).


Grief and offense, stories and lament—these and much more have been encouraged within the clearing the memorial has created. 

“Isn’t it strange to be in a place of such beauty?” Julie says. “I was surprised to find my heart heavy; I only expected to be2

Weeks passed. When it rained, Julie gathered students and staff on the steps, lighting candles and sharing stories. Local communities have lost loved ones?” said Julie, “Who will make an exponential impact for Jesus in any context? We need spaces for conversations that aren’t easy, and we’re responsible for them.”

On Fuller’s Day of Prayer in Pasadena, on the steps of Payton Hall Julie and the chapel team placed photos, names, and stories of lives lost in the black community to denounce violence. Around the images they placed signs from a local protest, explicitly one with the words Julie had been praying from: “For your brokenness, for your loneliness; for coming together for your well-being.”

When the Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and the Arts sought new music for a worship recording project, Julie worked with Ed Willmington, Fuller’s composer in residence, to record the song. What had been a quiet prayer of mercy was now a lament: “for the vast amount of suffering, injustice, and pain in our world; and we’re responsible for it.”

Fuller offers 18 programs in 7 localities—or programs at 7 campuses—with Spanish, Korean, and online options—through our Schools of Theology, Psychology, and Intercultural Studies, as well as 20 centers, institutes, and initiatives. Approximately 4,000 students from 90 countries and 110 denominations enroll in our programs annually, and our 43,000 alumni have been called to serve as ministers, counselors, teachers, artists, nonprofit leaders, businesspeople, and in a multitude of other vocations around the world.

¿Qué es Fuller?

El Seminario Teológico Fuller es una de las instituciones evangélicas más influyentes del mundo, el seminario teológico más grande y una voz principal para la fe, la corriente lúdica en la jus
ticia en la iglesia global y la cultura en general. Con raíces profundas en la ortodoxia y ecuanimidad en innovación, nos comprometemos a formar mujeres cristianas y hombres cristianos a tener fidel
idad, valor, innovación y colaboración y a ser líderes de éxito que tengan un impacto exponencial para Jesús en cualquier contexto.

Fuller ofrece 18 programas de estudio en 7 localidades —con opciones en Español, Coreano, y clases en línea— a través de nuestras facultades de Teología, Psicología y Estudios Interculturales y sus 4,000 estudiantes en 90 países y 110 denominaciones ingresan anualmente a nuestros programas y nuestros 43,000 alumnos y alumnas han aceptado el desafío a servir en el minis
torio, la consciencia, el arte, en organizaciones sin fines de lucro, los negocios y una multi
dad de diferentes vocaciones alred
edor del mundo.

What is Fuller?

Fuller Theological Seminary is one of the world’s most influential evangelical institutions, the largest multidenominational seminary, and a leading voice for faith, civility, and justice in the global church and wider culture. With deep roots in orthodoxy and branches in innovation, we are committed to forming Christian women and men to be faithful, courageous, innovative, collaborative, and fruitful leaders who will make an exponential impact for Jesus in any context.

Fuller offers 18 degree programs at 7 campuses—with Spanish, Korean, and online options—through our Schools of Theology, Psychology, and Intercultural Studies, as well as 20 centers, institutes, and initiatives. Approximately 4,000 students from 90 countries and 110 denominations enroll in our programs annually, and our 43,000 alumni have been called to serve as ministers, counselors, teachers, artists, nonprofit leaders, businesspeople, and in a multitude of other vocations around the world.
Fuller’s MA in Intercultural Studies offers deeper missiological preparation and more flexibility than ever, with the new option to complete the program 100% online. More electives allow students to shape the degree to their needs, and a stronger core of coursework equips them to work for transformation in any context—whether that’s combatting sex trafficking, nurturing reconciliation in the local community, working among the poor internationally, or serving in a place God has yet to reveal.

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