

Contextualizing Great Commission Fundamentals, Lecture 1: Contextualizing the Glory of God: Glorifying God by Communicating the God of the Bible



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“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36 ESV).

In these three lectures on the contextualization of the Great Commission I am intentionally being both rudimentary and autobiographical. My reasoning is that (1) others will be better positioned to inform as to the latest theoretical thinking on contextualization whereas, nearing 90 years of age I may be better positioned to share some earlier history; and, (2) as any discipline develops periodically it is well to go back and rehearse its first principles, particularly when it has theological roots as contextualization certainly does.

As for the Great Commission, I feel quite comfortable with some recent writings of some Trinity colleagues as put forward in a *Festschrift* for John Woodbridge. In this brief lecture series I am particularly indebted to Trinity colleagues Douglas Sweeney and D. A. Carson.

If defined at all, the word “evangelical” has been assigned various meanings. Sweeney notes the definitions of two fine evangelical scholars. Both definitions make mention of evangelical beliefs but one defines “evangelical” basically in terms of the kind of people involved in the movement; the other in terms of the kind of activities in which evangeli-

cals are engaged.¹ Sweeney himself takes an approach that is more in line with our present considerations. He defines “evangelical” mainly in terms of its *belief system*:

I prefer to describe evangelicalism with more specificity as a movement that is based on classical Christian orthodoxy, shaped by a Reformational understanding of the gospel, and distinguished from other such movements in the history of the church by a set of beliefs and behaviors forged in the fires of the eighteenth-century revivals—the so-called ‘Great Awakening’ . . . – beliefs and behaviors that had mainly to do with the spread of the gospel abroad.²

In a chapter which concludes the *Festschrift*, “Conclusion: Ongoing Imperative for World Mission,”³ D.A. Carson first notes various ways in which he might have chosen to treat the Great Commission, but did not. Then he proceeds to highlight “three fundamental biblical truths as they relate to the ongoing mandate for Christian missions”—“the sheer desperate lostness of human beings”; “the sheer power of the gospel of Christ crucified” (both of which I will deal with subsequently); and, the subject of this present paper, “the sheer glory of God.” Concerning the latter he writes,

. . . the sheer glory of God is tightly bound not only to God as Creator, but even more spectacularly to God’s redemptive purposes His missiological purposes, effected by His Son, the vision’s Lion-Lamb [Rev. 5:5-13, ed.] The same tie between the gospel and the glory of God is often portrayed in the New Testament, usually in less apocalyptic terminology. For instance, when Paul depicts his ministry and the proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus, he tells the Corinthians ‘All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people *may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God*’ (2 Cor 4:15).⁴

Few evangelicals would take issue when Carson goes back to the apostles and selects his “Great Commission fundamentals” from Scrip-

¹ Douglas A. Sweeney, “Introduction,” in *The Great Commission: Evangelicals and the History of World Missions* (eds. Martin I. Klauber & Scott M. Manetsch; Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008), 2.

²Ibid.

³ D. A. Carson, “Conclusion: Ongoing Imperative for World Mission” in *Great Commission*, 176-95.

⁴ Ibid., 192.

ture. On the other hand, when considering the Great Commission, relatively few evangelical missiologists give first consideration to the fundamental *beliefs* involved. In fact, though evangelical contextualizers may well give first consideration to the contextualization of the *gospel*, I dare say that relatively few would think in terms of Carson's three "fundamentals" as we will do here.

One more thing. very, very few contextualizers would ever consider those classical rhetoricians of Greece and Rome as contributors to contextualization theory. After all, Plato, Aristotle, Quintilian and Cicero lived over two millennia before the neologism "contextualization" was even coined. Nevertheless they theorized and practiced rhetoric in terms of speaker (source), speech (message) and audience (respondents); and in terms of speaker intention, logical presentation and audience adaptation. So did the Church Fathers, many of whom were masters of rhetorical theory. Since we are thinking in terms of fundamentals, in these lectures I define contextualization in terms of anything that source contributes to communication effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) by virtue of self identification and acceptance, message determination and delivery, and audience recognition and accommodation. The prominence—even predominance—accorded culture in contextualization theory is a very recent development that cannot be completely overlooked, as we shall see.

In this first lecture, then, our emphasis will be on contextualizing the glory of God. Subsequently we will deal with the other "Great Commission fundamentals."

THE GLORY OF GOD MESSAGE

The greatest and grandest theme of the Bible is the glory of God. I think of that theme in the contexts of three interwoven and determinative biblical metanarratives and especially in the context of the third of those metanarratives—the context of redemption according to which God in grace saves men and women who respond to him first in fear and then in faith.

THREE BIBLICAL METANARRATIVES IN WHICH THE GLORY OF GOD IS NESTED

1. The metanarrative of Satan and his (fallen) angels—creatures of God but awaiting judgment. Satan is the author of evil all (Luke. 10:19); the one who beguiled Eve (2 Cor. 11:3); and the one who brought death into the world (Heb. 11:13). He is ever and always depicted in Scripture as the archrival of God and as desirous of God's glory. The Bible holds

out no hope for Satan or his fallen fellow angels. Hell has been prepared especially for them (Matt. 25:41).

2. The metanarrative of our cosmos—created *ex nihilo*, marred by sin and awaiting renewal. Also critical to a biblical understanding of the glory of God is the awareness that he is the Creator of the world as we know it. He originated it; it is held together by His Word of power and according to his purpose. Its present state is adversely affected by evil and therefore is depicted as groaning and travailing in the pains of childbirth. But it was created to reflect his glory. Accordingly this “first heaven and first earth” will pass away. He will make “all things new”; there will be a new heaven, a new earth and a new Jerusalem which will be lighted by the “glory of God.” (Rev. 21:5).

3. The metanarrative of the redeemed—humankind created, fallen, restored, glorified. The centerpiece of *Gloria Dei* theology is soteriological. That story is too familiar to need retelling here. But always and ever worthy of retelling are those parts that have to do with the glory and grace of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Never to be revised but always to be “re-visioned” are familiar scenes such as Adam and Eve departing Eden in terror after having sinned; Moses with sandals removed at the burning bush; Israel trembling in the foothills of Sinai; Elijah challenging the priests of Baal. The fundamental *problem* of mankind is revealed in Romans 1-3. In essence it is the replacement of the Creator-God with man-made idols. The fundamental *solution* is revealed in Romans 4-11. In essence it is the reception of a gracious God in the person of his Son.

TWO QUINTESSENTIAL RESPONSES TO THE GRACE OF GOD

1. *Fear* as a first response to the Savior-God. In Romans 1, Paul makes clear the fact that an offended and holy Creator is also a condescending and gracious Savior. God first revealed himself in what his Son made, then in what his Spirit said, and finally in the incarnation of his Son. That revelation itself is a gift of grace. But to be complete, by definition the grace (*charis*) of God is not only God’s “unmerited favor” as we often say. It is also mankind’s response of reverence and reception. We rightly emphasize reception but wrongfully deemphasize reverence. Paul, on the other hand, emphasized it. Idolatry is the result of man’s refusal to *glorify* and *thank* God. Claiming to be wise, men became fools and changed the *glory* of God into man-made images. (Ro. 1:21-23).

Now that is worth thinking about. There are two related but distinct kinds of fear (*yare*’) in the OT and two similar kinds of fear (*phobos*) in the NT: terror fear and reverential fear or awe. Terror fear is not only

justifiable but admirable at times. Jesus says we should fear the God who can destroy both soul and body in hell (Mt. 10:28). But reverential fear is commended and even commanded at all times—especially on the part of those who are in covenant relationship with God (Deut. 10:12-13)

2. *Faith* is the second response to the Savior-God. Paul spends half of his letter to Romans on the truth of the gospel and the response of faith. He begins by saying that gospel is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes, both Jew and Greek (Rom. 1:16). And he closes this first section of the book with the explanation that God's redemptive plan takes into account, first faithlessness on the part of the Jews, then faith on the part of Gentiles and, ultimately, faith on the part of Jews (Rom. 11). That plan cradles and even constitutes the Christian mission. Its centerpiece is the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul first rehearses it. Then he recalls the words of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. And then he breaks forth in a passionate paean of praise.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? *For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.* (Rom. 11:33-36).

GOD'S GLORY AND POSTMODERN MESSENGERS

Much has been written about postmodernism. Here we will highlight but one facet of it to show how postmodern views of God affect—and sometimes “infect”—would-be messengers of God's person and glory.

THE GLORY OF GOD IN POSTMODERN WESTERN CULTURE

As our culture becomes increasingly secularized/paganized, I have become increasingly aware of the gradual abandonment of a rather general respect if not reverence for God and true religion to a widespread disregard for both of them. Do not misunderstand. My parent's generation had a fair share of those who were openly disrespectful and even outrightly antagonistic to God and the church, but both were generally held in rather high esteem. The clergy, including missionaries, were highly regarded and very often favored by merchants and other professionals. All that has changed. Reverence for God is seldom apparent in

public discourse. Clergy are held in low esteem. Worldlings—and perhaps even Christians—may not be unduly shocked when they read atheist Richard Dawkins’s depiction of God as a “moral monster”:

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving, control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.⁵

Certainly, no clearer contemporary case could be cited for the truth of the biblical pronouncement, “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:18).

THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE WESTERN CHURCH

As Western culture in general, and American culture in particular, changed quite dramatically about the time of the Viet Nam War the church began to change as well. Episcopal bishop James Pike challenged the doctrine of the Trinity. He died (1969) under mysterious circumstances in an Israeli desert, reportedly while “on a search for God.” Some prominent theologians concluded that the God of the Bible is dead. Others (Open Theists) questioned, not his existence, but his intelligence and knowledge—insisting that he is alive but simply lacks the foreknowledge required to intervene before bad things happen. More recently some scholars have questioned God’s emotions and feelings—especially his jealousy and anger—and have concluded that the God of Ezekiel, for example, is narcissistic, self-absorbed and ruthless.⁶

Of course, enculturation occurs across the board and across barriers of time and culture. Japanese culture is idolatrous almost beyond belief. I recall a Sunday afternoon some forty years ago when a brilliant Doshisha student came to our Kyoto home with an “urgent” problem. He was deeply disturbed upon reading that the God of the Bible is a “jealous God” when Satan is a defeated foe and all the gods of the nations (including Japan) are idols. A lengthy conversation ensued. Then, about three hours later just before the evening service was about to begin, his mind was set at ease. We had pursued various lines of thinking together

⁵ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam, 2006), 51; quoted in Kevin J. Vanhoozer, “Does a Red-Faced God Sing the Blues?” *Trinity Magazine* (Fall 2012): 18.

⁶ Vanhoozer, “Red-Faced God,” 18.

but the part of our discussion that had been most compelling had to do with the fact that God is jealous precisely because God is God and God is good. Were he tolerant of either the only rival of his own making, Satan, or of any of the countless Shinto and Buddhist gods of man's making, the world would never be "on Center." Like a wheel off center, the cosmos would eventually self-destruct. *Only when our universe is reconciled to its one true "Center" will there be justice and peace. God is intelligent enough to know that, even if we are not!* Eizoh Maeda learned it that afternoon and went on to graduate from university and seminary in Japan and from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield. And he has served as a pastor in Japan from that time until this.

Here at home, secular postmodern culture affects us differently. My observation has been that the ways in which even evangelicals think and speak of, and to, God has changed along with the larger culture—not to the same degree, of course, but in the same direction. What I have in mind was impressed upon our Trinity community back in the late 1960s when a newly converted Hindu professor of religious philosophy from South Africa, Professor Paul Krishna, enrolled in TEDS in order to study theology. On the occasion I have in mind our chapel was addressed by a young evangelist from California. Dressed in a leather jacket festooned with ribbons and buttons carrying bumper sticker messages, he related how he "invaded" local bars with the gospel. He spoke freely of God as the "Big Man in the sky," of Christ as his "Pal Jesus" and "Big Buddy," and of spiritual matters in generally demeaning terms. As faculty and students filed out of the chapel that day I noticed that Paul Krishna remained seated with head bowed and nested in his hands, tears running down his cheeks. Thinking him to be ill, I approached him and quietly said, "Dr. Krishna, are you ill? Is there something I can do for you?" After a brief hesitation he replied, "Oh no, it's not that. It's just that it hurts so much to hear someone speak of a Sovereign God and my Loving Savior in such irreverent terms."

When you think about it, how dare we do so? Indeed, Jesus is our friend. But though when writing history the evangelists called him Jesus, in normal social discourse none of Jesus' disciples, including the most intimate of them, ever did. They invariably addressed him as Master, as Lord! I say this—and I cite the case of my colleague and then new convert from Hinduism, Paul Krishna—by way of preface to some observations I will not make on contextualizing the glory of God.

THE GLORY OF GOD CONTEXTUALIZED

In recent years a great deal of missiological interest and literature has had to do with Christian sources (scholars, pastors, missionaries) contex-

tualizing the gospel message (with its component parts) so as to make the gospel understandable (interesting, persuasive, impactful, etc.) to respondents of various cultures (home and foreign). Of course, contextualization does not stand alone. To be contextualized a message must first be “decontextualized”—absolved of at least the most invasive aspects of the source’s culture. Contextualization is a large and complex science. And if it is possible to under-contextualize a message, it is also possible to over-contextualize it. In what follows here we will confine the discussion to the contextualization of aspects of the glory of God as it occurs in two fundamentally different contextualizations of themes that appear in two justly famous NT passages of Scripture: Philippians 2:1-11 and Romans 8:12-25.

AN IRREVERENT OVER CONTEXTUALIZATION: WM. PAUL YOUNG’S *THE SHACK*⁷

I choose to deal with the “*The Shack*” at this point for what I believe to be some good reasons. First, the book is popular and will be familiar to many. Second, its author, Wm. Paul Young, was raised by missionary parents to a Stone Age tribe in what was New Guinea. Third, the story addresses the familiar question “Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?” Fourth, the book receives not just the imprimatur but also the praise of seminary professor Eugene Peterson, author of *The Message*. And, fifth, on several occasions I have been asked what I think about this work. Actually, it was to respond to this question that I read the book.

1. The story line (for those who are not familiar with it) as stated on the back cover is as follows:

Mackenzie Allen Philips’s youngest daughter, Missy, has been abducted during a family vacation and evidence that she may have been brutally murdered is found in an abandoned shack deep in the Oregon wilderness. Four years later, in the midst of his Great Sadness, Mack receives a suspicious note, apparently from God, inviting him back to that shack for a weekend.

Against his better judgment he arrives at the shack on a wintry afternoon and walks back into his darkest nightmare. What he finds there will change Mack’s world forever.

And what does Mack find there? Well, when Mack responds to the note (from God) and actually visits the shack he has a

⁷ Wm. Paul Young, *The Shack* (Windblown Media: Newbury Park, CA, 2007).

premonition that God might answer the door. He wonders how he should address God. "Should he call him Father, or Almighty One, or perhaps Mr. God, and would it be best that he fell down and worshipped, not that he was in the mood," Young writes.⁸ His suspicions were justified. The members of the Trinity were inside: a large African-American woman who engulfed him in her arms and spun him in around with overwhelming love and ardor; a "small, distinctively Asian Woman" who "collects tears"; and a Middle Eastern man dressed like a laborer and with well muscled arms. The large black woman is God the Father whose name is Elousia but who is called Papa. The Middle Eastern man is a Hebrew named Jesus but called Yeshua, Joshua or Jesse. And the small Asian Woman is Sarayu, "Keeper of the gardens, among other things."

From the members of the Trinity Mack not only receives loving and magnanimous treatment, he also receives what he believes to be sensitive and satisfying answers. As a result, Missy's sister Katie is absolved of guilt for taking Mack away from Missy and thus allowing the killer to abduct her. Mack himself is transformed by the realization of who God "really is"; that God is occasioning a revolution of love, tenderness and kindness; and that "*One day, when all is revealed, every one of us will bow our knee and confess in the power of Sarayu that Jesus is the Lord of all Creation, to the glory of Papa.*"⁹

2. An evaluation. The paragraphs from the back cover quoted in part above conclude with the statement: "You'll want everyone you know to read this book! " Actually, I don't. It would be incomparably better to read and study the book of Job. Having read Job it would be better to read C. S. Lewis's *Problem of Pain*. Eugene Peterson thinks that "This book has the potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* did for his. It's that good!" Perhaps! But perhaps not! At least, if it has potential for good it also has potential for ill.

So why would I not recommend *The Shack*? For many reasons, but principally for one. More on that later but first I want to draw your attention to another and more helpful and hopeful contextualization of the glory of God.

⁸ Ibid, 82.

⁹ Ibid, 248 (emphasis mine).

**A REVERENT CONTEXTUALIZATION:
KAMEGAYA RYOUN'S TESTIMONY
BUKKYOO KARA KERISUTO E
(FROM BUDDHIST TO CHRIST)**

In *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, I divulge some contextualization lessons learned some sixty years ago at the very outset of our ministry to the Japanese people. At the time, the Japanese were still living with the devastation that attended World War II and desperately in need of the hope of the gospel. Most missionaries were still new to Japan and ready to proclaim that gospel with deep conviction but unable to proclaim it with equal clarity. In such circumstances the ministry of Kamegaya *Sensei*, a converted Buddhist priest, experienced Presbyterian pastor, and author of the book *Bukkyoo Kara Kirisuto E*¹⁰ was especially appreciated by the attendees of our fledgling church in Urawa.

1. A walk at cherry blossom time. As a group of us walked down an Urawa road and headed out across the rice paddies one day, it became apparent that some emotion deep within Rev. Kamegaya reached out in profound appreciation for the simple beauties of nature that surrounded us. The cherry blossoms were in full bloom and their ever-so-delicate pink petals were special objects of his fascination. Sensing this, one Japanese youth made a move to pick a small branch for *Sensei*—something rarely done in that esthetically inclined culture. Kamegaya gestured for him to desist, smiled slightly, thanked him and said, “Please understand that those flowers are a gift of my heavenly Father. Because he has given me all things in Christ they are already mine. I prefer to keep my blossoms right there on the tree.”

That was early on in a week or so under his Kamegaya *Sensei*'s ministry. But already we—certainly I as a new missionary but also eight or ten young Japanese converts who were largely dependent upon me for an understanding of God's Word at that point—were learning what Paul really meant when he said,

You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, but whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Rom. 8:15-17).

¹⁰ I am no longer in possession of any information as to the availability of this book.

2. A testimony of suffering and service. Something of Rev. Kamegaya's enculturated appreciation of nature now enhanced by the Spirit's testimony to his position in Christ had already made itself known. But at that point none of us could have anticipated all that was yet to be learned. It was at the final service that Kamegaya was scheduled to tell his life story. When it came time for the service the gospel hall was filled to overflowing. Kamegaya reciprocated by holding his hearers spellbound for almost an hour as he added his personal narrative to that of the Christian gospel. I clearly remember the gist of it even now after the passage of sixty years. He said,

I was born into the humble home of a Buddhist priest in a small village in northern Honshu. My father had in mind that I would grow up to get the best education possible and succeed him as priest in the temple in which he and our forebears had served for generations. One day when I was still small, he took me into the temple and spoke to me in measured tones. 'My son, I want you to look carefully. See the images of the Buddha. Look at them carefully. Someday they will be yours. See the pictures and tapestries on the walls. Look at them carefully. Someday they will be yours. And look at the candle holders and the incense burners too because someday they will be yours as well. Son, look at this whole temple. Someday it will all be yours. It belongs to your father today, but it belonged to my father before me and to his father before him. But someday it will all be yours and teach all the people about the truth of the Buddha. To do it well, you must study hard now so you can go to a good university, graduate and return to the people of this village as their Buddhist priest.'

I was so proud the buttons on my shirt almost came off. Finally, I was accepted in Tokyo Imperial University in Tokyo. While there I came to know a wonderful missionary who taught me about Jesus Christ. Gradually as time went on I came to realize that, it was not Gautama Buddha but the Lord Jesus Christ who brought us the truth. I became a Christian. But one day about that time I received a telegram from home. It was from my mother and it said, 'Son, come home immediately. Your father has died.' So I gathered my few belongings together, got on a train and returned home immediately.

But I was not prepared for what was about to happen. After the funeral some of village elders came to me and started a conversation. Before long they were addressing me as 'Teacher.' I realized then that they considered me to be their new priest. It was hard, but I said 'Gentlemen. I am sorry but I cannot be your

priest. I am no longer a Buddhist. I am now a follower of Jesus Christ. And I must serve him.'

They were astounded. They kept coming to our home to persuade me that this was my duty. My mother and the rest of my family urged me not to bring shame on the family but to do as my father had wished. This continued until finally I decided that I must leave. So I placed in few belongings in a *furoshiki* in the middle of the night and left by the front gate, holding the bell so it would not ring. I started down the narrow street to the railroad station, and then I stopped. I thought, 'Kamegaya Ryoum, what are you doing? You are giving up your name, your family, your friends, and an important place in the village. Are you sure this is what you want to do?'

And then it was as though my Heavenly Father spoke to my heart in teaching you will find in Romans 8:16-17 in the Bible. He said, 'My son, do you see the cryptomeria trees? My Son created them. They belong to him but you are a joint heir with him, so someday they will be yours too. Do you see the mountain top reflecting the light of the moon? My Son created those mountains. They belong to him, but you are a joint heir with him, so someday they will be yours too. And do you see the moon and the stars? They too are his. But some day they will be yours as well. My son, remember. If you suffer with him you will also be glorified with him.'

Hearing that, I literally ran to the railroad station and returned to Tokyo. I went to seminary and after graduation returned to my village, not as a Buddhist priest but as a Christian pastor of a small Presbyterian church. I will be there the rest of my life because of a promise I made to my Heavenly Father. I told him that, since many generations of Kamegayas had led these people in the error of Buddha, at least one generation will lead them in the truth of Christ.

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE FOREGOING CONTEXTUALIZATION

There are some very obvious differences between these contextualizations. They emanate from vastly different cultures, times and circumstances. One is fictional; one is biographical. Nevertheless both are motivated by Christian aspirations; both are imaginative; both are appealing. Why should one be judged as theologically mistaken if not grossly misleading and the other be judged as theologically sound and

spiritually satisfying? In a word, it is because one is a faithful characterization of the God of the Bible. The other is less so and to the degree that it is not a characterization it is a caricaturization. By way of illustration, compare Young's contextualization of Philippians 2:11 with Kamegaya's contextualization of Romans 8: 15.

1. Young on Philippians 2:11. As we have noted and in a word, Young says that "one day, when all is revealed, everyone of us will bow our knee and confess in the power of Sarayu that Jesus is the Lord of all Creation, to the glory of Papa." Appealing? Yes. In a way, perhaps even compelling. But there is a fundamental problem here. Never mind that Young does not cite the Philippians reference. The passage is well known. "Sarayu" needs attention as part of Young's over-contextualization of the Trinity. But never mind "Sarayu" for a moment. The fundamental problem here is that Young says what Paul did *not* say. He takes the kind of license with the text that is typical of his entire book.

"Abba Father" can be translated "Papa, Father" but not simply as "Papa." Also, "Abba Father" appears only three times in the entire NT and in contexts entirely different from that of Philippians chapter two where he is dealing with the Incarnation of Christ.

2. Kamegaya on Romans 8:15. Whether Kamegaya *Sensei's* interpretation and contextualization of this passage on adoption was based on careful exegesis or not I cannot say. All I can say is that his contextualization was not only compelling, it was warranted by the biblical text. "Abba Father" occurs three times in the NT. First, Jesus uses the expression in Gethsemane when in agony of spirit he prays "Abba, Father, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless not my will but thine be done" (Mark.14:36). Second, Paul uses it Galatians 4:6 to point to the incredible change that occurred when Jewish believers ceased to be slaves under the law, were redeemed, and received the adoption of sons whereby "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into [their] hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Gal. 4:6). Third, Paul also uses it in the passage that provides the biblical basis of Kamegaya's testimony (Rom. 8:15) where he exhorts believers to put to death the deeds of the flesh; explains that we have "received the Spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" and declares that believers are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, *provided that we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*"

3. A *stoicheion* (rudiment) of *gloria Dei* contextualization. Careful exegesis is critical to faithful contextualization. In Romans 8 Paul is assuring believers—especially traveling and suffering believers—that they have received the "Spirit of adoption" whereby, like the Lord Jesus him-

self, they cry “Abba! Father!” Moreover, the day is coming when, as heirs of God and fellow heirs with his Son, they too will be glorified and inherit all things!

In Philippians 2, Paul is assuring the whole cosmos that the day is coming when every created being in heaven, on earth and under the earth will join in bowing their knees and blending their voices confessing that the incarnate, crucified, resurrected and ascended Jesus Christ is *Lord of all* “to the glory of God the Father.” Christ will be Lord. God will be God. And when that is so, all will be right with the world!

CONCLUSION

Contextualization has proved to be an exceedingly complex science. For missionaries, its study could—and probably should—last a lifetime. But in these lectures I am proposing that, first of all, Christian contextualizers not overlook or diminish the fact that Scripture itself is a contextualized book with a divine message that is absolutely true and universally applicable. Second, that some of the best instructors on the contextualization of Scripture as it applies to any particular respondent culture are the preachers, teachers and evangelists indigenous to that culture. Perhaps out of their own awareness, what and how they say and write provides some of the most significant insights available to missionaries, preachers, teachers and evangelists from other cultures. Perhaps what they say and write cannot be said in the same way and with the same effect. Nevertheless, it serves to inform biblical interpretation and meaningful contextualization.