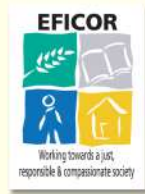


Issue 1, 2026

वैश्वलोक

Evangelical Perspectives on Mission and Ethics



FAITH

in

ACTION



**“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.”
Micah 6:8 (NIV)**

Drishtikone means perspective or viewpoint in Hindi. The magazine seeks to provide a space in which Christians can share their perspectives and points of view on wholistic mission in India.

Our Vision is that **Drishtikone** will motivate change in readers. The experiences of development practitioners, theologians, grassroot workers and others demonstrating God’s love in a practical way, will influence and encourage Christians to join the struggle for peace and justice in this country.

Drishtikone seeks to present a Biblical perspective on social issues and provide readers with information and models of engagement in wholistic concerns. It is a forum for evangelical reflection and dialogue on development issues in India.

Drishtikone is published by EFICOR to mobilise Christian reflection and action. Financial contributions from readers are welcome to support EFICOR in its efforts to influence the mind towards action.

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The views expressed are not necessarily those of EFICOR.

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Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor,

Greetings!

We are very thankful to you for sending us Drishtikone magazine. We request you to kindly continue sending the magazine for our library resource material. Thanking you.

Dr. Benjamin KT
Khammam District, Telangana - 507 203

Dear Editor,

I read the issue of Drishtikone on 'Artificial Intelligence: Unlocking Potential, Navigating Risks.' The magazine is informative and up-to-date. I request you to add my address in the mailing list and continue sending me the hard copies as well as the soft copies of the magazine. Thanks and regards.

Sincerely,
Mr. Prasanna Kumar Semili
Rayagada District, Odisha – 765015

Dear Editor,

Thank you for sharing Drishtikone magazine on AI. The articles are really good.

With warm regards,
Dr. Sudhakar Pawar

Dear Editor,

'Artificial Intelligence' is an interesting issue. The articles are relevant and have highlighted great points on AI risk.

Best,
Dr. Jaideep J.
Rayapudi

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Editorial...

Faith in action is the embodiment of our belief through tangible expressions. The Church, as the body of Christ, is mandated to demonstrate God's love through acts of mercy, raising a prophetic voice for the voiceless, and pursuing justice. This holistic approach aligns with Biblical teachings that emphasize faith not only as belief but as lived action (James 2:14-17). Faith in action has been an underlying theme across almost all issues of Drishtikone but many years have passed since it has been explored in-depth. Therefore, this issue has been published to reiterate some of these basic principles and how they apply in today's world.

Integral mission also called wholistic mission, emphasizes an integrated approach, aligning with social justice, creation care, healing, and reconciliation. God's mission (*missio Dei*) is nothing less than the restoration of all creation into reconciled relationship with Him. Jesus' own ministry held word and deed in unity - preaching repentance, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and confronting injustice. The Kingdom of God he proclaimed was not only a future promise but a present reality to be embodied in everyday life (Luke 4:18-19). The local Church stands at the heart of this vision. Rooted within its own social and cultural context, the Church is uniquely placed to respond to broken relationships that fuel poverty, exclusion, and injustice.

Integral mission reminds us that spiritual renewal and social transformation cannot be separated. In this issue of Drishtikone, we invite you to reflect afresh on: how are we, as Church and people of faith, embodying Christ's love in our own contexts? What might the Kingdom of God look like if our faith were truly embodied in the way we live, love, and act with others?

Faith and Transformation: A Reflection

Rev. Dr. Vinay Samuel

Introduction: This piece will reflect on the relation between Faith and Transformation of persons and communities. Faith is an integral part of our daily life. Without exercising faith, a sort of belief and trust in co-workers, institutions, service providers, family friends etc, normal life would not be possible. When applying it to our work of transformation in communities we are referring particularly to a faith in God, in the reality of the spiritual world and seeking to how it relates to our very practical work of seeing communities change in their cultures, commitments, priorities and practice so they become flourishing communities that enable a high quality of life to its members. So I begin first by exploring the nature and content of this faith we apply to our community transformation work.

A. Faith: The best Biblical definition we have of the nature of faith is found in the book of Hebrews Chapter 11, vrs 1-3. “New faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith, we understand the universe was formed at God’s command. So what is seen was not made out of what is visible”.

So faith is different from a naturalistic explanation of the world; where nature explains itself on its own terms, but a different way of approaching the reality of creation, of understanding how it is made and its purpose. Simply, it is approaching our world and reality from the creator’s point of view. It is attempting to see how God sees his creation. The writer of the Hebrews uses two words to describe the content of faith, hope that is sure not just hopeful and certainty about things we cannot see and examine.

We cannot do a thorough exegesis of the entire passage vrs 1-39 here, but here is a summary.

The first verse is written in the way definitions are

presented in Greek literature. The key word is “Substance” (upostassis) and defines faith as recognition of the objective reality of the promises of God. The word certainty implies objective guarantee that faith sees and finds security in. Faith’s hope in God’s promises is based on certainty and guarantee. Such faith recognises that there is an invisible world which is the source of this visible world. And by faith we have access to it and view this natural world from the reality and perspective of the supernatural world.

So faith gives us the perspective we need to address this visible reality of creation with its life, institutions, communities’ cultures, conflicts and beauty and gives us the tools to see not mere change but transformation.

Hebrews 11 lists those whose lived out faith, changed their world and celebrates it. In fact, faith is a celebration. The first verse of Hebrew 11 has also been translated as now we celebrate faith that is the confidence in the security of God’s promises.

B. The Content of faith: Let us briefly draw out the content of faith that is described in the examples. Abel’s attitude of faith is confidence in an unseen reality. Enoch’s life that continually honoured God as the centre of his life was faith in practice. Noah following God’s instructions when there was no material evidence to back them was faith again in the priority of the spiritual world over material reality.

“...faith recognises that there is an invisible world which is the source of this visible world. And by faith we have access to it and view this natural world from the reality and perspective of the supernatural world.”

We find three pillars that constitute the faith of these witnesses described in Hebrews 11.

1. Truth that comes from God as the foundational basis for helping us to understand and live in the world that he has created and continues to direct it to his purposes. God’s truth is critical for our engagement with the world.

We understand the world as not self-generated and autonomous but one that God created with a purpose and a future. Creation exists in him and continues to exist in him. He is its Lord and in spite of the disruption of human rebellion against God, He is still its Lord. He loves the world, incarnates himself in it and through his life, death and resurrection gives it a hope for its final redemption and glory.

This vision of God's truth is essential for our understanding of human society, God's created order, the laws that enable the world to grow and prosper as God intended for his creation.

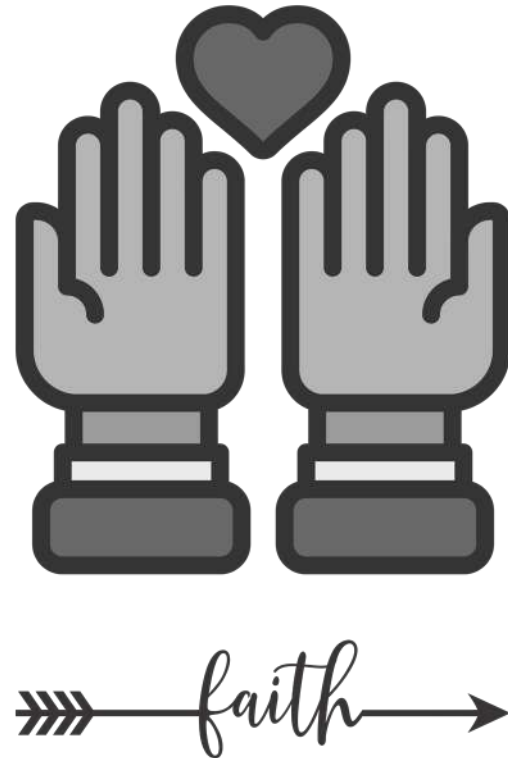
St. Paul affirms that this vision of God creating the world and his continuing relation to the world and the laws by which the world should live is made known to all human beings. (Romans 1). This provides us with the basis for working in a context of religious plurality where we can encourage people to find the laws of God (Dharma) in their religious traditions and the common ground that enables us to explore God's purposes for our society, communities and families.

2. The Sacred: At the heart of faith is a belief in the reality of the sacred that shapes God's created order. Our modern world lives and operates as if its natural laws and processes that humans can understand, control and use are the only reality that drives our world. Occasionally it gets surprised when it encounters something that a natural process cannot explain. But generally, life carries on dominated by natural forces. Our modern world has been disenchanted from the sacred. And this is particularly true of the social, political and economic world. Faith sees the sacred as real and shaping our daily

life. It recognises that anything that is able to experience the presence of God is sacred. This is particularly true of humans. Christians believe humans are made in God's image and God can inhabit their lives. So every human is sacred to the Christian. Our view of human rights and what is due to every human person is shaped by recognising the sacredness of human personhood. It is difficult for me to see how a secularist can justify his/her belief in universal human rights.

“ Faith enables an attitude to the future that injects natural reality with the reality of the transcendent that shapes human life and history. Faith sees the promises of God not as possibilities but as assured realities that will be fulfilled. ”

The sacred is also the foundation of the moral/ethical framework that God has given us. The purpose of the moral framework by which we are meant to live is to become what God created us for, life to be Holy as God is Holy reflecting his image in us. So without the sacred that frames and shapes our ethics, our moral codes and ethics are sterile and have no life. No wonder without the sacred we fail miserably to be an ethical people.



The consciousness of the Sacred in human life and our continuing relation to it making it central to our living is the basis of transformation. It exposes the sin that marks human life, society and communities but it also offers healing and transformation.

3. The third pillar of faith is its approach to the Future. God's creation was not meant to be in a static or stable existence. It was created to grow into God's kingdom and find its goal and fulfilment in it. The future that God has for creation is the goal of faith. The writer to the Hebrews rightly recognises that Faith is centred on the certainty of the future that God has promised. Future is defined by the promises of God. A confident hope in the

promises of God for our future is the substance of hope. It is a substantive hope based on a conviction that it is a guaranteed reality.

Hope in the future is hard wired in humans as it is part of being made in God's image. It is not an add on that we find when we begin having faith. It is integral to being human and is common to all humanity and all religions connect with the hope that humans direct to their future thinking and plans.

Faith enables an attitude to the future that injects natural reality with the reality of the transcendent that shapes human life and history. Faith sees the promises of God not as possibilities but as assured realities that will be fulfilled.

The book of Hebrews as a whole is focused on enabling the church to be faithful and learn endurance. Faithfulness and endurance are two of its key themes. While stressing the faithfulness of God, Hebrews affirms that our faithful God also calls us to exhibit faithfulness in our lives and it is such faithfulness we demonstrate that God commends suggesting it is not a gift from God but an orientation and actions of our choices. All humans made in God's image are called to lives of faithfulness. A faithful person is recognised, any person of any faith and also honoured.

In our approach to the future we must have a faith that enables us to develop faithfulness to God and that means trust in his promises and his actions. Faithfulness must also result in endurance that is able to seek beyond the natural to the supernatural and continue to hold on to the fulfilment of God's future for the world.

C. Relating Faith to the ministry of Transformation:

This section will be much shorter than I wish as space is limited.

1. We approach our ministry of Transformation with faith. Our faith shapes our strategies and our actions. We need to identify how faith does that. The perspective of faith enables us to view our ministry as part of the continuing actions of God in moving his creation to its designed destination. We are part of a divine activity and we are

called to be partners with God. Faith enables us to see how we are part of God's act of transforming the world. It enables us to discern the plan of God and see our place in it. A creation that is so spoiled by sin, so deformed by human rebellion can only be transformed by the presence and power of God.

2. Faith enables us to connect spiritual realities, the presence of the sacred with our social engagement, making our engagement wholistic. Wholistic is not a strategy or plan primarily. It is an application of faith in God and his promises to our ministry of transformation.

3. Faith connects God's truth to human knowledge and experience. It opens the framework of God's revealed truth to shape our understanding of human flourishing and human futures.

4. Faith shapes the lives of those engaged in the ministry of transformation with the endurance and faithfulness that is needed to sustain the ministry.

5. Faith teaches communities the nature of hope and its centrality to experience the transformation God has for them.

6. Faith enables communities to endure and see the fruits of transformation.

Conclusion: As we seek to work for transformation of communities, we need to grow in our faith and the understanding that faith enables. We need to see faith take root, grow and transform communities.

(Rev. Dr. Vinay Samuel is the former Founding Director of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (1984-2005) and the Founder of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life (2005 - 2020) both based in Oxford UK. He was also the first Secretary of the EFICOR Board when it was registered as an independent organisation and the founding Co-ordinator of its Educational and Training Unit.)

“ Faith enables us to see how we are part of God's act of transforming the world. It enables us to discern the plan of God and see our place in it. A creation that is so spoiled by sin, so deformed by human rebellion can only be transformed by the presence and power of God. ”

A Response to Rev. Dr. Vinay Samuel's Article

Mr. C.B. Samuel

The word Faith in a title such as 'Faith and Transformation', is usually used as a noun to mean a particular religion (eg. Christian Faith). However, in this article Rev. Dr. Vinay Samuel, uses the word not as we are familiar with, but unpacks its meaning in its Biblical usage. In doing so he raises an important question on the relationship between faith and its impact on transformation.

As he writes, '.... we are referring particularly to a faith in God, in the reality of the spiritual world and seeking to how it relates to our very practical work of seeing communities change in their cultures, commitments, priorities and practice so they become flourishing communities that enable a high quality of life to its members'.

Faith then, as Rev. Samuel writes, changes our perspective about the world in which we live. For instance, he writes, that by faith we recognise 'there is an invisible world which is the source of this visible world.' This should challenge us to think seriously: is Transformation the agenda of the invisible world? In what sense, is this invisible world impacting the happenings in the visible world?

Based on Hebrews 11, Rev. Samuel explains that, the pillars that constitute faith are Truth, Sacredness and Hope. This excellent exposition of the text, is a challenge to those in Transformational engagement. I am not sure as to how our efforts in Transformational engagement take seriously the pillars of faith. How does, for example, Truth, Sacredness and Hope express itself in the context of plurality of spirituality? I agree with Rev Samuel's assertion that Saint Paul affirms that God's truth by which the world should live is made known to all human beings (Romans 1). And the assertion that 'this provides us with the basis for working in a context

of religious plurality where we can encourage people to find the laws of God (Dharma) in their religious traditions and that enables us to explore God's purposes for our society, communities and families.' But the Truth made known to all human beings, however, expresses itself in the various religious traditions, not in way that allows us to work towards a common understanding. For instance, Jesus' statement that 'The Truth will set us free', lays the strong link between truth

and freedom. Whereas the various religious traditions, strongly promotes division and oppression in society. An indicator of our engagement, then, should be the freedom that we bring to people and individuals. Many a time, our engagement is to make people fit into the status quo.

Rev. Samuel, very persuasively states, 'Our view of human rights and what is due to every human person is shaped by recognising the sacredness of human personhood. It is difficult for me to see how a secularist can justify his/her belief in universal human rights.' I agree but it is equally true that the various religious tradition too cannot justify their belief in human rights. Not just human rights but even their foundations of an ethical framework is far removed from the character of God as 'Holy and reflecting his image in us.' I think that Christian engagement in transformation is, therefore, firmly founded on an ethical framework and not materialistic development framework. The new world defined by Christian Hope is founded on this moral framework.

Unfortunately the final section 'Relating Faith to the ministry of Transformation', had to be reduced as 'space is limited'. It is a definite disappointment and I hope that EFICOR will soon include Rev. Samuel's detailed exposition on the subject.

(Mr. C.B. Samuel, was a former Executive Director of EFICOR)

...by faith we recognise 'there is an invisible world which is the source of this visible world.' This should challenge us to think seriously: is Transformation the agenda of the invisible world? "

From Belief to Transformation: The Church's Call to Mercy, Advocacy, and Justice

Dr. John Samuel

It is an honour to reflect on the article “Faith and Transformation: A Reflection” by Rev. Dr. Vinay Samuel, a respected leader in teaching and practicing integral mission. His article shows that Christian faith is not just about holding certain beliefs but is a living power that can change both individuals and society. He describes a way of following Jesus in which trust in God shapes personal ethics, church life, and how Christians respond to injustice, and in which the Church is called to show God’s Kingdom in real-life situations.

At the centre of Rev. Dr. Vinay Samuel’s article is a strong theological understanding of integral mission. He argues that evangelism, social justice, care for creation, and reconciliation are not separate activities but belong together as one response to God’s mission. This unity comes from the Biblical belief that God’s purpose in Christ is to reconcile all things and that the Church is an “interim eschatological community,” a community that gives a foretaste of the coming Kingdom. In that Kingdom, relationships with God, neighbours, ourselves, and creation are healed and brought into shalom, or wholeness. Faith, in this perspective, is not only agreeing with doctrines but trusting in God’s unseen reality and promises, like those described in Hebrews 11, which change how Christians see history, society, and the future.

This vision challenges narrow views of Christianity that limit faith to inner feelings or Sunday worship. Samuel clearly rejects a spirituality that is only private and that ignores real injustices and harmful social systems. Instead, he calls for a faith that looks at the whole of life under God’s rule. This means that areas such as economics, politics, culture, and the environment are places where the Lordship of Christ needs

to be acknowledged and lived out. Because of this, the Church is called not only to preach but also to show changed relationships in daily life, relationships that point to God’s reconciling work in Christ.

One of the strongest emphasis of the article is its focus on the local Church as the main place where God’s mission happens. The author does not place mission mainly in special agencies or faraway projects. Instead, he locates God’s work in ordinary congregations that are rooted in specific neighbourhoods and social contexts. The local Church is pictured as a community that is itself being changed by the gospel while also working to bring change in its surroundings. It does this through faithful presence, service, and prophetic challenge. This two-way movement - being changed and being an agent of change - protects the Church from both passivity (doing nothing) and triumphalism (acting as if it already has all the answers and power).

Rev. Dr. Vinay Samuel’s description of integral mission as restoring broken relationships and addressing poverty at its roots is especially convincing. It avoids two extremes: on one side, a pietistic withdrawal that stays away from public issues, and on the other side, a purely secular activism that forgets the gospel. He strengthens this approach by pointing to three pillars of faith: God’s truth, the sacred, and a future centred on God’s promises. He insists that every person is created in God’s image and is therefore sacred. This belief gives deep theological support to the language of human dignity and human rights, which otherwise can be weak if based only on human ideas. In this way, Christian teaching about creation, salvation, and the end of all things naturally leads to a commitment to justice and compassion.

The reflection becomes very practical when it explains mission in terms of mercy, advocacy, and justice. Acts of mercy respond to immediate needs, such as feeding those who are hungry, caring for the sick, and visiting people who are lonely. In these actions, the compassion of Christ becomes visible in moments of crisis. Advocacy moves further. It means speaking and acting for those whose voices are ignored or silenced, and trying to influence public opinion, laws, and the behaviour of institutions. Justice, in this framework, focuses on the deeper causes of suffering - unjust laws, unfair economic systems, and social discrimination - and seeks long-term change in these structures. By clearly naming these three dimensions, without breaking them apart, the article prevents mission from becoming only occasional charity or only abstract political talk.

The author also recognises that public advocacy is not always possible. In some contexts, laws, social hostility, or close monitoring limit what Churches can say openly. In such situations, he suggests that steady, practical acts of love and care can themselves become a prophetic witness. They quietly, but strongly, question the values of the existing system. For Rev. Dr. Samuel, faith does not guarantee quick or visible success. Instead, it gives the strength to remain patient, courageous, and faithful even when results are slow and the situation is unclear.

Another important part of the article is Rev. Dr. Samuel's response to modernity and religious pluralism. He criticises a modern worldview that has removed any real sense of the sacred. When the sacred is pushed out, he argues, ethics become empty and human rights lose their deepest foundation. In a culture that often treats religion as only a personal choice or a cultural symbol, he insists that awareness of the sacred - God's presence and purpose - must shape how societies think about justice, human dignity, and the limits of power. This is not simply theory; it speaks directly to debates about laws, public policy, and what it means to be human in today's world.

At the same time, Rev. Dr. Samuel is careful not to ignore the reality of many religions, especially in the Indian context. Using Romans 1, he suggests that Christians can recognise a shared moral order, or Dharma, in other traditions, while still remaining faithful to the fullness of God's revelation in Christ. This way of thinking encourages respectful dialogue and practical cooperation for the common good. It does so without losing Christian distinctiveness or withdrawing into isolation. He also underlines that hope in God's promised future is part of what it means to be human. Such hope is

essential to keep believers going when they cannot yet see the fruit of their labour.

The reflection also points to some areas that could be developed further. Readers may hope for more case studies and real-life stories from Rev. Dr. Samuel. While the theological vision is clear and rich, concrete examples from particular Churches, ministries, or communities would strengthen the argument. For example, stories showing how congregations changed their mission strategies, dealt with failure, or confronted specific injustices - such as caste-based oppression, violence against women, or environmental damage - would help link theory with practice. Such narratives would demonstrate how integral mission looks on the ground.

In addition, the article could address more directly the tensions that arise when Churches move from traditional charity to prophetic justice work. Important questions remain: How can congregations handle accusations that they are being political when they support marginalised groups? How do Church leaders keep unity when some members prefer quiet, inward ministry and others push for public engagement? The reflection already gives theological tools to think about these matters. Explaining their practical implications more clearly would help Church leaders and lay leaders deal with conflict and complexity.

Overall, Rev. Dr. Samuel's article offers a strong, context-aware, and theologically deep vision of Christian faith as a power that can transform both individuals and communities. It serves as a guide for Churches that want to hold together evangelism, social concern, and care for creation as parts of one mission from God. By stressing the sacredness of every person, the central role of the local Church, and the linked tasks of mercy, advocacy, and justice, it invites the readers to ask whether their Churches truly show the Kingdom of God in daily life. With more specific examples and fuller discussion of practical challenges, this reflection could become an even more effective tool for Pastors, leaders, and congregations who desire to live out a faith that truly transforms.

Dr. John Samuel is the CEO of TENT, a training ministry based out of Hyderabad (www.tentindia.org), which is involved in training bi-vocationalists.

From Virtually Absent to Virtually Whole

Mr. Anand Peacock

The Call to listen

The Manila manifesto (1989)ⁱ began their declaration by underlining the human dilemma, while we all have inherent dignity and worth, that image in many ways has become distorted, and the reasons are manifold, it can be summarized in one word, sin. In fact, I would state that much harm to the environment and ourselves has been owing to irresponsible stewardship and outside the garden behavior. It is the management of the house (Economics, from oikos meaning house) that has gone awry and resulted in a desperate effort for the unity of the house (Ecumenics). We have assumed ownership in place of stewardship, greed where there ought to be just sharing, unforgiving attitudes where we have not forgiven the debts of others, ungrace in place of grace and dominion instead of surrender. The original manifestation of the word becoming flesh has been sadly indoctrinated with the flesh being put back into the word today.

Post-Covid we see the world with a new lens, yet all is not lost. There has been a renaissance of sorts when the Church has made visible effort to be more authentic and closer integrate word and deed in reaching out as a transformative agent in the lives of men and women. Preach the gospel, if necessary, use words, has never been truer. I do not recollect any other time in history when the church doors have been opened wider to be able to listen to the voices on the other side of silence.

The call to be the salt and the light

Jesus uses the metaphors of salt and light for us which are transformative agents, he did not need to back his statements to his listeners as salt was better understood in their times. The Roman soldiers had their wages paid in salt, the Mosaic law mandated that all offerings contain salt (Lev 2:13), today salt is a commodity that we have taken for granted, we pay for it rather than consider it an essential form of revenue.

Nevertheless, his teaching still stands universally applicable. What held true in Jesus' time holds true even today, we are to act as preservatives and thwart moral decay in a world infected with sin. The call to be the salt and light is a costly one, while it is easy to slip into timidity, or a reluctance to get involved, we are to offer a counter culture which implies we will suffer on all counts lest we remain silent and conform to the pattern of the Philosopher Nietzsche who called Christianity the religion of comfortableness.ⁱⁱ

Being the light calls for making the dark visible - to stand alongside the victim who has experienced the lash of injustice. In days when the media is a predominant force and it is indeed taxing to discern the truth from lies; when the lines between truth and falsity are blurred to silence evil, our role is even more pressing, to expose the truth and take sides with the wounded. Often the church has disregarded her counter-cultural identity. Does it take a pandemic to cause untold havoc for us to be reminded that we have probably

lost our saltiness? One extreme response has been to wear our minority and marginal status as a symbol of uprightness. Have we lost our relevance in the world and reverence for God? It is not possible to be faithful and popular simultaneouslyⁱⁱⁱ.

A Biblical Basis for mission

Stott maintained that: *Mission arose primarily out of God's nature himself and not from the church.*^{iv} The basis for missions is not grounded in any theory or words but is the being and character of God himself. The origin of missions was not Carey or Paul the apostle, but God the Father himself. If then the basis for missions is rooted in the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, all have a mission spirit and purpose. Considering the Trinitarian emphasis Bosch contends that, "Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology."^v

“The call to be the salt and light is a costly one, while it is easy to slip into timidity, or a reluctance to get involved, we are to offer a counter culture which implies we will suffer on all counts lest we remain silent and conform to the pattern of the Philosopher Nietzsche who called Christianity the religion of comfortableness.”

If mission is part of God's character, then our source for the study of mission is God's word. Our compass, inspiration and guiding light is irrefutably the Bible. As Bishop Newbigin says, "In every age we have to go back to God's revelation of Himself, to learn afresh, by the guiding of the Spirit, what is our duty for today?"^{vi} When we use the Bible as our text to study mission, we will find ourselves constantly pushed near the heart of God because that is where we find the basis for mission, which is also where he unveils his heart, from the first chapter of the Bible till the last, his singular quest has been *where are you?*

One of the most profound poems ever written was penned by an Englishman Francis Thomson, he was actually a genius but became a drug addict and was on the run for many years of his life. On more than one occasion he tried at his father's insistence to get into Oxford University but he never made the grade because he had so hurt his mind in the process of his addiction, Francis Joseph Thompson was an English poet and a Catholic mystic. At the behest of his father, became a doctor, he entered medical school at the age of 18, but at 26 left home to pursue his talent as a writer and poet. Towards the end of his life, he wrote a magnificent masterpiece that has been printed called the *Hound of Heaven* as he portrayed God like a hound with loving feet pursuing us till, he catches up with us who are trying to run and flee from him and he wrote: *Fondest, blindest, weakest, I am he that thou sleekest.*
vii

If Mission means to send, then God is the initiator, the Father sent Christ, and Christ sends the Church today, giving us the Holy Spirit without measure. The oft quoted John 3:16 is among the popular texts quoted from the Bible addressing this mission; in the Old Testament (OT): for God so loved his son (Adam) that he gave him the world, as he erred, and Adam could not fix it, in the New Testament (NT) this paradigm shifts, from God loving his first son, to God so loved the world that he gave us his son. Missions has its roots in the OT and throughout scriptures, he was actively involved in providing the spiritual and material needs of his people. All because he was interested that His people live in freedom and liberty. Adam and Eve were told to fill the earth and subdue it (Gen 1:28) this was far more than procreation; it was to propagate Eden around the globe and fill people with a relationship with the creator. The purpose of Eden was to be a uniting force, God with all of creation and as we participated in that harmony we would be conformed to the image of Christ. While the Old Testament basis for mission is grounded in the covenantal promise to Abraham, the Gospels function as dynamic narratives that capture the essence of early apostolic proclamation.^{viii}

Jesus summed it all up when he said *As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.* (John 20:21) This captures the basis of mission in the NT even as Jesus empowered us through the Holy Spirit in telling us where to go and what to do. In the Nazarene Manifesto, (Luke 4:17-19) as Jesus read from the scriptures when he began his ministry, his mission

encompassed wholeness and went beyond mere evangelism. It embodied the body, soul and spirit and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Mission Post-pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a tragic loss of lives across all demographics, irrespective of age, race, or religious affiliation. Its impact was multifaceted, with untold economic repercussions and widespread loss of income affecting nations globally, both rich and poor countries. The crisis transcended national boundaries, compelling both developed and developing countries to comply with their respective state restrictions and adapt to unprecedented challenges. A calamity became the great equalizer. Nonetheless, the recovery has been promising. With healthcare taking a distinct shift and malnutrition on the rise, children were deprived of a few years in school, yet despite the colossal loss, we now have a base towards holistic development. The value we ascribe to healthcare today is more universal and inclusive in nature. Probably, the single biggest response has been our sensitivity to our environment and our neighbour. How do we love our neighbour and more so who is our neighbour after all? The answer am convinced goes beyond geographical boundaries on maps; our neighbour is anyone in need.

Several key areas in relation to the Church's response to her environment surface. There is no singular way to deal with mission post Covid-19 pandemic, we are still adapting and dealing with newer ways to be appropriate and real. This also means stretching our creative blueprint and finding new ways to deal with old and first-hand glitches. We can either focus on the damage or look at innovative ways in addressing existing predicaments. Clearly, it wasn't just the West that adapted and upheld the weaker nations, from the West to the rest has been replaced with from the South to everywhere, in recent times. How then do we adapt?

The Shift: From - to

No matter how advanced technology is and the strides we have made in healthcare, no vaccine can keep us free from the attack of something even more threatening than COVID-19. Deborah Tannen in her article titled *Coronavirus will change the world permanently, Here's How*^{ix} wrote how the personal became dangerous. We went through a season where being in the presence of others, breathing the same air they breathed became treacherous. Being in the presence of people was no longer reassuring rather it was the conspicuous absence of others that brought us comfort. Safety was re-defined in the form of absence not presence. Evangelism became less relational and more technological, authenticity was substituted with digitization, telling became showing, how then can the Church become vested in the *Missio Dei* when we have had to re-define what safety meant?

We live in an information saturated culture, since March

2020 the church has left no stone unturned to present content 7 days a week, while that in itself is commendable, it gave no room for personal reflection, solitude, silence (information overload can be noisy) and pensive prayer. Giving just enough for people to work on these areas would suffice. The danger with such an approach is discipleship becomes content-possessed. The conviction that if someone can absorb good content then their lives will realign, is that accurate? Such a classroom culture is far from the context of Bible times which were more relational and focused on diffusing Christ-like values than growing in specific doctrine. May we remind ourselves that ideas and doctrines do not save people, only Christ does. We need to make a distinct shift from presentation to presence, from production to proximity, from programmes to people.

Can we move from a high-quality production service to an environment that encourages a conversion of the heart? To reclaiming the altar from a platform of performance? Where spectators become participants? To replace technology with personal intimacy? To prioritize presence over presentation, transformation over information, wholeness and holiness as a people, and Jesus above all else.^x

Model for Mission today?

Today, I am persuaded that the church ought to take a two-fold approach to address mission: resilience and adaptation.^{xi} If the Church is oblivious to the change around and fails to address a fresh context with newer ways and hold on to yesterday's conventional forms of expression, then it will neglect a conversation with the new generation and its needs.^{xii} Regardless of how we conceptualize mission, as service, or worship or even transformation of society, the spotlight has shifted from the Church to the kingdom of God. We are now able to shift our gaze to the state of the world rather than ponder over the structure and functioning of the church. Rather than wait for people to come to us, we are to go out and address a need and this calls for a paradigm shift from workable Christian models in the past to a mission-shaped one that listens more than it talks. Today, we have to find ways of reaching out to those who have no access to technology, and that is through presence.

Despite the immense losses in employment, economic stability, and health, we have found ways to support those in need through the provision of food, essential supplies, prayers and counselling to the millions suffering in our country and the world around. Let me cite our church's contribution. During the pandemic, we assisted families from various faith backgrounds, helping them combat hunger and hardship. Even today, individual Church members have taken it upon themselves to provide essential supplies for the unemployed and those in distress, irrespective of their religious affiliation. We have moved from a virtual community to a relational one.

Is there a specific model that I would recommend in this new

season of the 'new normal'? There is no singular fixed model - rather, a paradigm shift: one that shifts from programmes to people, from virtual engagement to personal presence, from walls and edifices to the people of God who participate in building God's Kingdom and dismantling the barriers that divide us.

End Notes

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- ^{vi} Wilhelm Andersen, "Further towards a Theology of Mission," *Theology of the Christian Mission*, edited by G. H. Anderson (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., Inc., 1961), p.306., from M. A. C. Warren, *Mission under the Cross*.
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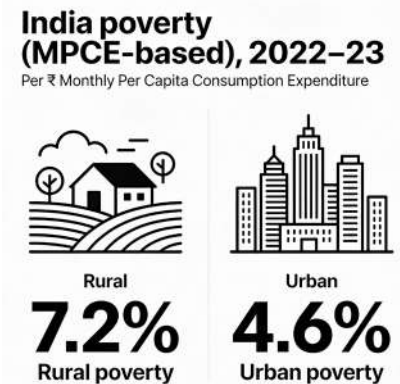
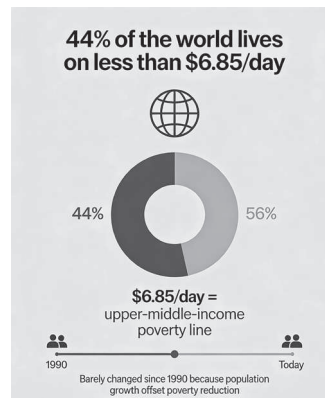
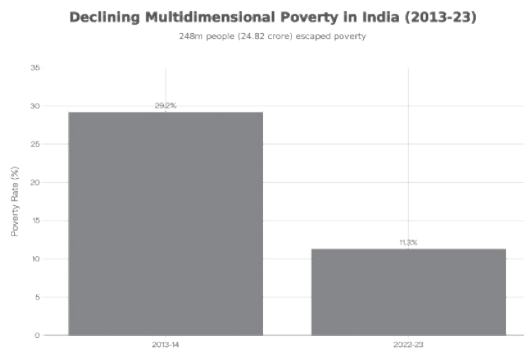
(Mr. Anand Peacock has an experience of working in healthcare and he has worked with several organizations. Since 2017, he has pastored Circular Road Baptist Chapel, a 207 year old church, in Kolkata. He can be reached at - anandpeacock@crbc.in)

FACTS

Poverty and Inequality

The World Bank has raised the International Poverty Line (IPL) from \$2.15/day (2017 PPP) to \$3.00/day (2021 PPP). While the change led to a global increase in the count of extreme poverty by 125 million, India emerged as a statistical outlier in the positive direction. Using more refined data and updated survey methods, India not only withstood the raised threshold but also demonstrated a massive reduction in poverty. The new poverty line would have increased the count of global extreme poverty by 226 million people. India's extreme poverty (under US \$2.15 /day PPP) fell to **2.35%** of the population in 2022-23. Under a broader poverty line of US \$3.00/day (2022 - 23), poverty stands at \approx **5.25%**.¹

India at a Glance



² <https://www.pib.gov.in/FactsheetDetails.aspx?Id=149222>

³ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/10/15/ending-poverty-for-half-the-world-could-take-more-than-a-century>

Poverty in India (Multidimensional Poverty Index 2023):

230 million people have risen out of poverty during 2015-2021, but 16% still live in multidimensional poverty. Key deprivations include: nutrition, education, sanitation, housing.⁴

Comparative Global Poverty

- 1.1 billion people in 112 countries live in acute multidimensional poverty globally.⁵
- In India alone, an estimated 24.82 crore (248 million) people escaped multidimensional poverty between 2013-14 and 2022-23.⁶

Unemployment

Youth unemployment (15-24 years): 23% (ILO 2023)

- India's unemployment rate dropped to 5.1% in August 2025.⁷
- In May 2025 it was \sim 5.6%, with women slightly higher (\approx 5.8%) than men (\sim 5.6%)
- Female unemployment (% of female labour-force) was \sim 4.38% in 2024.⁸

¹ <https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2025/jun/doc202567566101.pdf>

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Transforming Lives

In the heart of Daltonganj, in Jharkhand's Palamu district, stood a Church that has quietly rewritten the story of hope for families - one act of faith at a time.

The Calvary Gospel Ministry Church in Daltonganj was founded in 2010 by Pastor Prasansa Raj. Pastor Prasansa Raj's life was shaped by an unwavering faith and the service of his father. Inspired partially by his father's legacy, the Pastor felt a divine calling to dedicate his life to serving both God and the people of his region. What began as a small congregation with a simple dream - *to serve, to love, and to uplift* - has now grown into a thriving faith community of over 1,000 members and 25 branch Churches across Jharkhand.

Since the time of its inception, the Church's mission has been rooted in the essence of the Great Commission - *to make disciples, to transform lives holistically, and to reach out in love and compassion*. This vision became the foundation upon which the Calvary Gospel Ministry Church stands for.

A New Vision

A defining moment in this journey came in 2015, when Pastor Prasansa attended a training on Integral Mission which was conducted by EFICOR. What he learned there changed his outlook on ministry forever. He realized that the Gospel, to be truly transformative, must be lived - not only preached.

"It's not just about sharing the Gospel," he recalls. "It's about being the Gospel - serving, healing, and empowering people where they are."

This revelation reveals a new kind of mission: one that combined faith with practical service, spiritual growth with social transformation. The Church was no longer just a place of worship; it became a centre of community transformation.

Small Steps, Big Change

Transformation begins with small yet meaningful acts of service -

efforts that directly respond to the everyday struggles of the poor and marginalised.

• Safe Drinking Water

In several villages around Daltonganj, families relied on unsafe, contaminated wells for drinking water. The Church took the initiative to address this issue. With donations and community participation, they installed 45 hand pumps across 45 villages, providing safe drinking water and improving health outcomes. This simple intervention soon became a blessing for many families who once suffered frequent illnesses.

• Self-Help Groups

In 2018, the Church introduced Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to empower local women and families financially. Starting with only 10 members, this initiative now has 42 SHGs with 850 active volunteers across three districts. These groups are not just about saving money or accessing credit; they have become a powerful support system. Members organise blood donation camps, assist the sick, and raise awareness on health and education. Many of them have also benefitted from Government schemes like the *Kisan Samridhi Yojana*, which provides electric rickshaws and solar-powered irrigation systems, helping small farmers and entrepreneurs thrive. Through these initiatives, women have started small tailoring units and farmers have improved their productivity.

When Faith Meets

As the Church's engagement deepened, something pivotal began to unfold - trust.

In the early years, some villagers were sceptical of the church. The Church was

often mischaracterized as an institution seeking only conversions. But over time, the community began to see the sincerity of the Pastor and the Church in their commitment to transformation.

Pastor Prasansa explains, "At first, people thought we are here to change their faith. But as they saw our work,

Starting with only 10 members, this initiative now has 42 SHGs with 850 active volunteers across three districts. These groups are not just about saving money or accessing credit; they have become a powerful support system.

they understood - our mission was not conversion, but transformation."

“Through genuine service and compassion, barriers began to dissolve. The Church became a bridge between faith and community mobilisation, between people and possibilities.”

This transformation wasn't just physical or economic - it was relational and spiritual. Through genuine service and compassion, barriers began to dissolve. The Church became a bridge between faith and community mobilisation, between people and possibilities. Families began opening their doors, local leaders began inviting them to village meetings; and slowly, a sense of shared purpose grew. The Church became a trusted partner in development.

Challenges Along the Way

Every journey of change comes with its share of challenges.

In some areas, resistance and mistrust made progress slow. Navigating the complexities of Government systems - securing housing approvals, accessing education subsidies, or obtaining disability benefits - often takes time and require perseverance. A few individuals even tried to misuse benefits meant for others.

“We learned that faith requires patience,” says Pastor Prasansa. “We chose to keep walking in love, even when progress seemed slow.”

Through prayer, transparency, and a spirit of accountability, the Church continued to earn the community's confidence. Their approach became a model of how Churches can complement Government efforts and ensure that the benefits reach those who truly need them.

Partnering for Transformation

The turning point came when the Church began actively collaborating with Government departments. These partnerships, based on trust and collaborative goals, multiplied their impact.

Working with the Block Office, the Medical, Labour, and Employment & Training departments, and through schemes such as ADIP and Abua Aawas Yojana, the Church facilitated remarkable results:

- 80 families built permanent homes under the *Abua Aawas Yojana*, replacing fragile huts with solid houses.
- 8 persons with disabilities received electric tricycles, restoring not only their mobility but their dignity.

- 250 underprivileged families received educational materials, stationeries, and basic supplies to keep their children in school.
- Awareness programmes for migrant workers helped them understand their

rights, avoid exploitation, and educate them on processes when starting small businesses

These partnerships brought visible transformation - from new homes to children proudly carrying new books to school. These results became a testimony of what can happen when the Church, Government, and community walk hand in hand.

Lives Transformed

Hariom Upadhya and Shila Kumari, once confined by physical limitations, now move independently on their new electric tricycles. Their joy is palpable as they share how mobility has given them not just freedom but also purpose.



In another village, a new hand pump replaced a contaminated well. The new hand pump brought relief to dozens of families who no longer have to suffer from waterborne diseases.





Each of these stories tell the same message: transformation begins not with wealth or power, but when faith moves people to act.

Through its work, the Church has redefined what it means to be a faith community in modern India - one that doesn't stand apart from society but stands within it, serving shoulder-to-shoulder with those it seeks to uplift.

A five-kilometre stretch of newly constructed road now connects eight remote villages to the main city, opening opportunities for trade, healthcare, and education.

Faith that Builds Futures

Today, the Calvary Gospel Ministry Church stands as a model and established community resource - for entire communities. Its story is one of faith translated into tangible change, of compassion overcoming division, of service that reflects the very heart of the Gospel.

Through its work, the Church has redefined what it means to be a faith community in modern India - one that doesn't stand removed from society but stands within it, serving shoulder-to-shoulder with those it seeks to uplift.

Pastor Prasansa said,

"Faith isn't something we preach; it's something we practice - together, with our community."

The story of the Calvary Gospel Ministry Church is proof that when faith turns into action, miracles no longer seem far away. Found in clean water drawn from a new well, in a child's laughter on their way to school, in a mother's newfound independence, and in the shared belief that with love and perseverance, even the smallest Church can help transform the world around it is a clear indication of such miracles.

(Pastor Prasansa Raj is the Pastor of Calvary Gospel Ministry Church in Daltonganj, Palamu district, Jharkhand. He can be reached at rajprasansa7@gmail.com)



Suraj Singh's family, who once lived in a makeshift shelter made of plastic sheets now sleep under a sturdy roof. Their new home was built through the *Abua Aawas Yojana* governmental scheme with the guidance of the pastor.



Height of Safety

In the flood-prone heartland of Assam, where the Brahmaputra and its innumerable tributaries reside, the concept of safety means more than physical protection - it is a lifeline that dictates dignity, survival, and the ability to rebuild after nature's fury. For communities living along these turbulent riverbanks, floods are not rare occurrences but seasonal certainties. Their impact is not only destructive but affects generational change shaping the livelihood strategies, local governance, migration patterns, and social cohesion of the community living in the banks of the Brahmaputra river.

Yet, in this landscape marked by vulnerability, a simple, community-driven innovation - the raised earthen flood shelter - has emerged as a symbol of resilience. Whilst it is not a sophisticated engineering marvel, it is a reminder that simple solutions grounded in local contexts can transform lives and secure futures.

The Unpredictability of Floods and the Absence of Safe Refuge

The upper Brahmaputra basin is notorious for its frequent and often devastating floods. Every year, monsoon waters spill over the riverbanks, submerging vast stretches of land in districts like Dhemaji and Lakhimpur. These floods routinely destroy crops, inundate homes, displace families, and wash away livestock.

For many years, villagers had no dedicated safe space to go to. Their evacuation options were limited to embankments, fragile bamboo platforms, school buildings, or government camps located far from their homes. The urgency of these floods left people with little time to plan their escape. With waters rising rapidly, families often grabbed whatever they could carry and fled.

Livestock - an essential source of income, food, and agricultural labour - were frequently left behind on higher patches of land or tied to makeshift platforms. Many families returned after the flood to the heart-breaking sight of dead cattle, ruined grain stores, collapsed homes, and fields buried under silt. This recurring cycle of displacement and loss made one fact clear: if communities had access to safe, well-located flood shelters, both human and animal lives could be greater protected, and recovery could begin sooner.



Changmari Village: A Microcosm of a Larger Crisis

The Changmari village in the Dhemaji district of Assam exemplifies these challenges faced in these regions. Home to around 50 households, the settlement has long been at the mercy of the monsoon floods. With no community shelter nearby, villagers often travelled nearly 15 kilometres to escape the flood. This journey was burdensome for the elderly, risky for children, and emotionally taxing for everyone.

To safeguard their livestock, villagers usually left their cattle in the local market area. However, with no one to watch over them and floodwaters being prone to rise unpredictably, many of the livestock could not survive. Repeated losses over the years prompted discussions within the village. Community elders, along with development workers, began reflecting on long-term solutions. They came up with the idea of building a raised flood shelter within the village itself - a place

high enough to withstand floods, large enough to accommodate people and cattle, and accessible to each household.

RVC and the Introduction of Raised Earthen Flood Shelters

The Rural Volunteers Centre (RVC), an organisation working extensively in flood-affected districts, recognised this need early on. Their approach emphasised low-cost, community-managed disaster preparedness. Concrete structures, though durable, were often expensive and slow to build. Moreover, transporting

“...the raised earthen flood shelter - has emerged as a symbol of resilience. Whilst it is not a sophisticated engineering marvel, it is a reminder that simple solutions grounded in local contexts can transform lives and secure futures.”

materials to remote villages posed logistical challenges.

The RVC introduced an alternative: raised earthen shelters - large, elevated platforms constructed entirely out of compacted soil. These mounds are built at a height above the flood levels and reinforced with vegetation to minimise soil erosion. They serve as multipurpose spaces: community grounds during dry seasons and safe havens during floods.

To pilot this idea, RVC supported the construction of 11 such shelters in Sissiborgaon and Jonai blocks of Dhemaji district and Dhakuakhana block of Lakhimpur. The success of these early shelters inspired confidence, both among villagers and local authorities.

The objectives of the raised shelters were:

1. Reduce disaster risks in vulnerable villages.
2. Ensure safe nearby refuge for people and livestock.
3. Strengthen social cohesion through community-led construction and management.
4. Facilitate quicker recovery by keeping displaced families closer to their homes.

Overcoming Practical Challenges

In Changmari, the first challenge was identifying a suitable plot of land. The shelter had to be located where all the villagers could reach this place easily, especially during sudden flooding. Fortunately, there was a Government-owned plot at the centre of the village.

However, using Government land required official permission. The villagers submitted a formal application through the Changmari Panchayat to the District Commissioner. The process involved paperwork, repeated follow-ups, and explaining the urgency of the project. After sustained effort, the Government approved the construction - an important milestone which was celebrated by the entire community.

The RVC committed some financial assistance, but the community also wanted to play a central role. Through the Food for Work programme, each of the 50 households contributed labour. This ensured that the shelter was not just an external intervention but a project built by the community themselves. A village committee oversaw the construction, keeping meticulous records of labour contributions and ensuring fair distribution of wages. RVC experts provided technical inputs, especially regarding:

“The shared labour, collective decision-making, and long-term maintenance responsibilities instilled a renewed sense of community ownership.”

The ideal height of the shelter, the slope and shape of the structure, correct soil compaction techniques, and drainage plans around the mound.

Proper compaction was crucial - poorly compacted structures are prone to collapse or erode. With guided expertise, villagers ensured that the shelter was built to last. Once completed, a Flood Shelter Maintenance Committee was set up to monitor damage and manage the shelter during emergencies.

A Transformative Impact on Everyday Life

The raised earthen flood shelter has brought far-reaching changes to Changmari and nearby villages. For the first time, communities could remain in their own village even when floodwaters rose. This proximity allowed them to protect their belongings and livestock and return to their homes as soon as waters receded. Also, the raised earth flood shelter ensured safety for women and girls because relief camps which are far from home often posed challenges in terms of privacy, sanitation, security, and access to childcare. With the community shelter, women could stay in familiar surroundings, supported by neighbours and extended family. This boosted their sense of security and dignity. Furthermore, the shelter also offered a safe space for children.

The shared labour, collective decision-making, and long-term maintenance responsibilities instilled a renewed sense of community ownership. Villagers reported improved relationships not only within Changmari but also with neighbouring settlements who sometimes used the shelter during emergencies. In an era of climate change - where floods in Assam are becoming more frequent, intensified, and increasingly unpredictable - the raised earthen flood shelter stands as a powerful example of community-led adaptation. For Changmari, the shelter is more than a safe space during floods. It is a symbol of resilience, unity, and preparedness. It represents a community's determination to rise - literally and metaphorically - above the waters that once defined their vulnerability.

(Adapted from the book 'Turning the Tide: Good Practices in Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction,' published by EFICOR and Sphere India, 2010, Pp.72-73)

FPOs to Market Access

Mrs. Joan Lalromawi

In the heartland of rural India, where small and marginal farmers have long grappled with fragmented land holdings, limited market access, and low yields, a quiet transformation has taken place. At the center of this change is a **Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO)**. The FPO was initiated with the support of **EFICOR (The Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief)** - an organisation with a decades-long history in disaster relief, capacity building, community development and rural livelihood strengthening.

The Genesis

Since 1967, EFICOR has worked across several states in India to enhance sustainable livelihoods, promote food security, and build community resilience. As part of its community development strategy, EFICOR recognised the potential of FPOs as a means to overcome the structural challenges that individual farmers face: lack of bargaining power, restricted access to credit, and weak market linkages. With EFICOR's guidance, many poor farmers across the villages in Damoh, Tendukheda, Madhya Pradesh were mobilised into a farmers' collective. The FPO known as Bailwada Watershed Farmer's Producer Company Limited (BWFPC Ltd.) was formed on 18th November, 2022.

Linked with the NABARD

A pivotal moment in this specific FPO's journey came with its linkage to the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), one of India's leading rural institution promoting farmer collectives. NABARD has been instrumental in forming and nurturing thousands of FPOs across the country, allowing farmers to access grants and capacity building support. Through this linkage, the FPO promoted by EFICOR could access grant assistance under NABARD's **Producers Organisation Development Fund (PODF)** and related schemes.

Growth of Membership

Today, the EFICOR-facilitated Bailwada Watershed Farmer's Producer Company Limited (BWFPC Ltd.) boasts a membership

of 758 farmers, predominantly small and marginal producers. This represents a significant cross-section of the local agrarian community. 758 members reflect the mandatory minimums under national FPO guidelines - which



Image: Bailwada Watershed Farmer's Producer Company Limited (BWFPC Ltd.)

“Earlier, buying seeds and fertilisers was expensive. Traders would charge extra and we had no bargaining power. Once the FPO started bulk procurement, we could buy quality inputs at lower rates. I've seen my input costs fall noticeably.”

suggest membership thresholds around 300 farmers in plain regions. Membership spans multiple villages, encompassing producers of staple crops such as paddy, pulses, and horticultural crops.

This diversity allows the FPO to pool resources more effectively and negotiate better terms with buyers, input suppliers, and service providers.

How Farmers Have Benefited

The formation of the FPO has ushered in a range of tangible benefits that were previously unavailable for isolated farmers:

1. Collective Procurement of Inputs

One of the earliest gains has been the ability to obtain agricultural inputs - seeds, fertilisers, and basic farm equipment – at a significantly lower cost. By purchasing inputs in bulk through the FPO, members have significantly reduced their input costs, thereby easing their overall capital burden. As narrated by Meena Devi, Member of the Bailwada Watershed Farmer's Producer Company Limited, *“Earlier, buying seeds and fertilisers was expensive. Traders would charge extra and we had no bargaining power. Once the FPO started bulk procurement, we could buy quality inputs at lower rates. I've seen my input costs fall noticeably.”*

2. Access to Credit and Financial Services

Through the NABARD partnership, the FPO has been able to secure financing options that members could not individually access before. These include equity grants and soft loans that

help cover operational expenses, seasonal credit needs, and investments in basic infrastructure.

3. Market Linkages and Better Prices

Aggregation of produce through the FPO has enabled farmers to sell in larger quantities, giving them direct access to wholesale and institutional buyers. This has led to improved price realisation for many member farmers. Moreover, this collective approach has created additional opportunities for value-addition activities such as grading, cleaning, and packaging. These enhance market readiness and help secure premium prices for farmers, if they pursue those activities.

4. Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

Regular training sessions organised by EFICOR and supported by the NABARD equip farmers with modern agronomic practices, post-harvest handling techniques, and market insights. This leads to better yields and increased productivity on member farms.

“The most profound transformation has been the strengthening of social capital - farmers who once operated in isolation now regularly co-ordinate, share insights, and plan cropping cycles collaboratively. This collective mind-set extends beyond economics and has improved community solidarity.”

5. Strengthening Social Capital

The most profound transformation has been the strengthening of social capital - farmers who once operated in isolation now regularly co-ordinate, share insights, and plan cropping cycles collaboratively.

This collective mind-set extends beyond economics and has improved community solidarity.

Looking Ahead: Sustainability and Scale

As it matures, the FPO is exploring avenues such as value-addition units, direct digital marketing, and e-commerce tie-ups with emerging platforms - strategies that enhance long-term sustainability. The organisation is also working towards formal certifications and exploring partnership opportunities with agri-businesses seeking stable producer networks.

This story demonstrates how an FPO can serve the collective function of transforming the farmers' lives through institutional support, combined with community mobilisation and strategic partnerships. What started as a small collective has become a platform for economic empowerment, social inclusion, and agricultural resilience - a model that holds promise for thousands of farmers seeking a more secure and equitable future.

(Written by Mrs. Joan Lalromawi, with inputs from farmer members of the FPO - Bailwada Watershed Farmer's Producer Company Limited, Tendukheda, Madhya Pradesh)



Photo: Farmer Producer Organisation members' meeting

Books on our Desk

Dino L. Touthang: His Life and Influence

By Bonnie Miriam Jacob, Published by TRACI (Theological Research and Communication Institute), Delhi (1 January, 2024), 178 Pages

Mrs. Joan Lalromawi

This biography *Dino L. Touthang: His Life and Influence*, authored by Dr. Bonnie Miriam Jacob, is both a tribute and an in-depth exploration of the life, and ministry, of Rev. Dino L. Touthang. The book offers a comprehensive reflection on the values, teachings, and transformative impact of a Christian leader deeply rooted in service and leadership - A biography of a man who has significantly influenced the Christian community in India and beyond.

Rev. Dino L. Touthang emerged as a visionary whose leadership reached far beyond traditional religious roles, engaging in public theology, grassroots community service, and Christian leadership development. The author Dr. Bonnie skilfully traces his journey from a young man deeply committed to his faith to becoming a pivotal figure in shaping Christian thought and praxis in India. Rev. Dino's life has been shaped by his deep convictions and his ability to translate these beliefs into action, whether through church leadership, his involvement in social activism, or mission work.

A central theme of the book is Rev. Dino's significant contribution to public theology. By definition, public theology involves the engagement of religious beliefs with societal concerns. Dino L Touthang's life is a true testament to this idea. He was a strong advocate for applying Christian teachings in practical ways, influencing not only congregations, but also public discourse on moral and societal issues. The author stresses Rev. Dino's holistic approach to ministry, not just one spent in academia or religious organisations. He was deeply involved in practical service and the upliftment of marginalized communities. His hands-on approach is captured in various anecdotes and heartfelt reflections from colleagues, friends, and family. These personal accounts add depth and warmth to the narrative, transforming the book into more than a biography - a celebration of a life lived in faithful service of others.

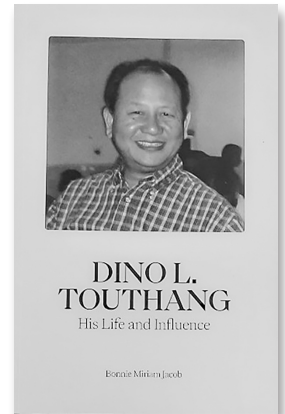
One of the key highlight emphasized by the author throughout the 14 chapters of the book is how Rev. Dino's life exemplifies the idea that theology should extend beyond academia and religious institutions. Theology should influence everyday life, address societal challenges, and advocate for social

justice, community development, and promotion of moral leadership in society. The book also touches upon Rev. Dino's leadership within Christian missions. His involvement in the training and mentoring of Christian leaders is particularly highlighted, demonstrating how his legacy continues through the lives of those he mentored. Testimonies from those who were directly influenced by his teachings and mentorship adds authenticity and richness to the biography.

While the book is undoubtedly a tribute to a great Christian leader, it also serves as an academic resource, offering insights into the broader implications of public theology in the Indian context. Overall, the book's structure offers readership to a wide audience - whether readers are looking for a spiritual biography, a study in leadership, or an exploration of theology in action.

At its core, the book *Dino L. Touthang: His Life and Influence* is a compelling account of faith in action. It inspires readers to live out their faith with integrity, compassion, and courage. The book is not just another biography, it serves as a guide for translating faith into meaningful service. The book is definitely a significant contribution, in particular, to the Indian Christian community, where Rev. Dino had paved the way for a more inclusive and socially engaged ministry.

However, the book's largely celebratory tone leaves limited space for critical engagement with challenges that may have shaped Rev. Dino's ministry and leadership journey. Additionally, a more explicit engagement with alternative theological perspectives and/or critical voices could have strengthened the biographical and theological reliability of the work, particularly for readers approaching the text as a purely academic resource. Nonetheless, this work is essential reading for anyone interested in Christian leadership, public theology, or the transformative power of lived faith.



The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative

By Christopher J. H Wright, Varsity Press, Nottingham, 2006, 584 Pages

Mr. Rajib Teron

The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative by Christopher J. H. Wright has a unique approach toward a Scriptural theology of the mission of God, making this book a treasured resource to any ministry work or a seminary library. The contents of the book are divided into four parts and these four parts of the chapters are inter-connected on the theme of mission.

In the first part, the book emphasizes on the *Bible and Mission*. This part covers the Biblical basis of the mission of God, in which the mission of God is grounded within the teaching of the Scripture.

In the second part, it emphasizes on the *God of Mission*. This section discusses how God Himself reveals through revelation, reconciles with redemption, and provides judgment. Ultimately through Jesus Christ, people can understand the deep truth through God's mission and help us to know the purpose of God's mission towards the people.

In the third Part, the focus shifts to the *People of the Mission*, tracing God's election and callings throughout the Old and New Testaments. This part highlights the key events in the Old Testament that set the stage for later occurrences in the New Testament and their relevance with the present situation on mission.

Finally, the last part *Arena of Mission* emphasizes the understanding of God's mission beyond simple evangelism to encompass a broader responsibility for caring for all of creation. The author argues that God is concerned not only with human beings but also the whole creation as creation itself is the manifestation of God's power.

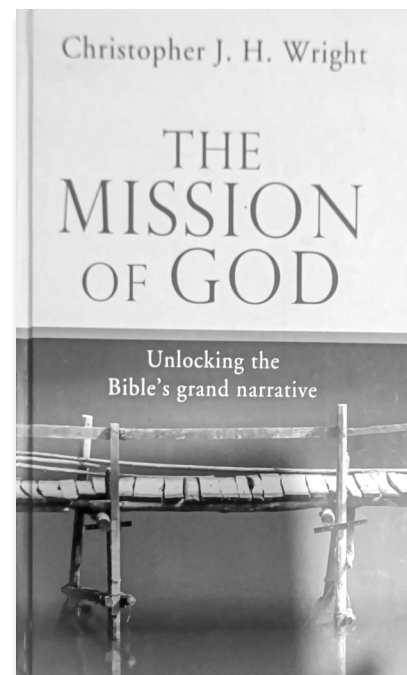
According to Wright, in contemporary times, the understanding of divinity has adopted a reductionist view of missions. However, the understanding of missions should not rely solely on isolated texts distinct from the Biblical tradition. Instead, the Bible itself is inherently mission focused, and our approach to reading it must be reflective. Scripture reveals how God discloses Himself through mission. Making the concept of mission is essential for accurately interpreting the Biblical narrative and understanding God's mission for all creation. The book also develops a missional hermeneutic, emphasizing that Scripture should be interpreted according to God's intent rather than our own interpretation.

This book is filled with profound theological and Biblical insights and presents an interesting approach to mission that captures the reader's attention. Wright offers a convincing argument in examining the need for mission to appease God, which provides a renewed confidence and encouragement for the Church in mission based activities. Although the significance of this work is undeniable, it has not received the strong support it truly deserves. Recognizing that God is a God of mission and that His Word provides a solid foundation offers substantial support for our own efforts. Wright's expertise as an Old Testament scholar and missiologist shines throughout, making this a remarkable and high-quality scholarly contribution to theological studies.

Observation

Overall, this book is an outstanding piece of research by Wright, offering authentic knowledge, deep insights, and practical encouragement for the growth of Church ministry through mission. It emphasizes missional hermeneutics - interpreting Scripture in a deeply Biblical and purposeful way. The book is particularly valuable for those engaged in mission, helping them understand the intention of God's mission, based on the Biblical foundations of both the Old and New Testaments. Moreover, it connects these Biblical insights in a contemporary context, offering a more practical and effective understanding of mission today.

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Understanding Integral Mission from the role of the shepherd

Mr. Kennedy Dhanabalan

“Integral Mission is the Biblical call for Christians to both speak of and live out our faith in Jesus Christ in every aspect of our lives”¹.

Dr. Christopher J. H. Wright in His book, “The Mission of God” writes, “The God who walks the paths of history through the pages of the Bible pins a mission statement to every signpost on the way”. So, to understand Integral Mission, one should study Scripture from a wholistic view. This Bible study is to explain how Integral Mission can be understood as we interpret the Bible in the context we live in.

Read Ezekiel 34: 1 – 31.

Wider Context

Before understanding Chapter 34, it is important to understand the broader context in which the book of Ezekiel was written. During Ezekiel’s life, Judah was defeated by Babylon and people were taken into exile. Ezekiel himself was taken, and it seems he was staying in Babylon where other Jewish captives were staying. The reason for their exile is because of their sin and their unwillingness to obey the word of God.

It is in this context; chapter 34 starts with “The Word of the Lord came to me.” Prophet Ezekiel received the word of the Lord, and he was asked to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel.

Read verses Vs. 2b - 6 and Vs. 8.

Why was the prophesy pronounced against the shepherds? What are the responsibilities the shepherds fail to fulfill?

The shepherds cared for themselves but not for the sheep. The primary responsibility of the shepherd is to feed the sheep, which the shepherds failed to fulfil. They did not strengthen the weak or heal the sick or bound up the injured. They did not protect them and let them scatter and became food for all wild animals.

Implications for Pastors

If we consider the shepherds as present-day Pastors, what would be the accusation the Lord can bring against the Pastors? Use the passages above to understand the responsibilities of the Pastors in the present context.

Read Vs. 17 – 22.

Who do you think the Lord was accusing? What could be the offense they have committed which the Lord is bringing against them? How could we look at this situation of God bringing an offense up in the present day context?

The imagery of fat sheep and lean sheep and how the fat sheep shove with flanks and shoulders, butting all the weak sheep with their horns and driving them away portrays how the rich oppress the poor and exploit them causing injustice. Currently, we have seen in many places that industrial effluents are allowed to flow in the rivers nearby without being treated. This pollutes the land, mainly agricultural land, which affects the crops of poor farmers. The water sources which people were and are using are also polluted, leading to major health issues among the people who were living near the water sources.

Read Vs. 11 – 16 & 25 – 29.

What does the Lord say that He will do to the flock?

If that is what the Lord wants to do to them, what are the implications for Pastors in the present day context? What are they expected to do in fulfillment of God’s expectations?

He will look after the sheep. He will rescue them. Bring them together after searching for the lost. He will tend to them in a good pasture. He will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. He will shepherd the flock with justice. He will ensure safety and provide for them a land renowned for its crops, and they will no longer be victims of famine in the land or bear the scorn of the nations.

Conclusion:

While Pastors provide the spiritual needs required for the people, they are also expected to meet the physical needs of the people. Where people face injustice, the Pastor along with the Church should stand with the poor and raise voice (Proverbs 31: 8,9). A wholistic response is needed by the Pastors and the Churches.

(Mr. Kennedy Dhanabalan had served the EFICOR as the Executive Director. At present, he works with the Serve Afghanistan.

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¹ <https://res.cloudinary.com/tearfund/image/fetch/https://learn.tearfund.org/-/media/learn/resources/tools-and-guides/2020/2020-tearfund-envisioning-for-integral-mission-en.pdf>

IDEAS FOR ACTION

AS AN INDIVIDUAL

- **Practice acts of mercy.** Support or volunteer with initiatives that provide food, shelter, education, and medical care. Offer emotional support, counselling, or listen to those facing trauma and are in need.
- **Be a voice for the voiceless.** Raise awareness and facilitate Government schemes.
- **Engage in doing justice.** Support fair-trade products and ethical businesses.
- **Foster reconciliation.** Pursue peace and healing in broken relationships, within your family or community.
- **Steward creation.** Take practical steps toward environmental stewardship in everyday life.
- **Commit to prayer and learning.** Pray regularly for your community and leaders. Study the Scripture and resources that help connect faith to actions.
- Be generous. Help the poor and underprivileged.

AS A CHURCH

- **Establish ministries of mercy.** As a Church, organize medical camps, education initiatives, or provide safe spaces for vulnerable groups. Offer pastoral care and mental health programmes.
- **Be a prophetic voice.** Speak out against injustices affecting your local community. Your Church could host public forums or awareness events on issues such as gender discrimination and gender-based violence, human trafficking or, environmental destruction.
- **Do justice in the community.** Partner with local NGOs or para-church organizations to respond to local concerns.
- **Engage in wholistic transformation.** Map out the community's needs and develop long-term initiatives that restore broken relationships. Support local livelihoods, mental health, education, and social inclusion programmes.
- **Foster inclusive communities.**
- **Equip and train members.** Offer trainings on integral mission and community development. Mentor young leaders to carry forward the mission.
- Model the Kingdom of God by striving to be a reconciled, generous, and compassionate community.

YOUR FEEDBACK

Drishtikone has been in print since 1994, and we are deeply thankful to the Lord for His guidance over these years. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to readers like you, whose continued support has been vital to sustaining the publication of our magazine.

From your responses we recognise that over the years Drishtikone has been a blessing to our readers and it has been instrumental in shaping evangelical thinking on several social issues and inspiring action.

At EFICOR, we are considering changes in the publication format of Drishtikone. We request you to kindly send us your feedback on whether you prefer to receive the magazine in hard copy or soft copy format. Your feedback will be invaluable in guiding our decision-making process.

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