

## **Queen Esther's Conversions: From Intercultural Estrangement to Intercultural Engagement**

In cross cultural missions, missionaries often confront complex and delicate power dynamics that consume much of their energy. In addressing conversion, transformation, and mission from both biblical and psychological perspectives, my purpose of the paper is to highlight Queen Esther's multiple conversions and impending mission. I explore Queen Esther's conversions from intercultural estrangement to intercultural engagement; shrewdness *within*, and innocence *without* depicts the duplicity of her names--Hadassah (righteousness) and Esther (hiddenness).

Because Esther's confluent conversions require a *both-and* lens, I employ a "yunist" epistemology, derived from Taoism which sees reality through a *both-and* holism. "Yin," the feminine energy in Taoism, not only includes masculine energy, "yang." The male's unconscious feminine inner archetype in Jungian psychology is called *anima* (yin) and the female's counterpart is called *animus* (yang). Based on yunist wholeness of being and becoming, I develop an integrative approach to interpreting Esther's conversion narratives of estrangement and engagement with a special focus on the series of banquets she hosts. In Esther's banquets three main characters play out the king's assigned roles only to experience surprising Shakespearian-like twists and turns of power dynamics.

Through Esther's multiple conversions and duplicity tactics of living in the enemy's court, I seek to address the unbalanced script of evangelical Christian teaching and to balance both shrewdness *within*, and innocence *without*--exemplified in the spirituality of "If I Perish, I Perish."