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 “yinist” 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 yinist 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.”