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**Conversions and Transformations:
Missiological Approaches to Religious Change**

Paper Proposal:

“Regard as valuable”: Missiological approaches to the “Silence” of religious change

Accounts of conversion and transformation within the Christian tradition are often linked to narratives of success and expansion. Yet a truthful missiology needs to engage the entirety of the Christian story.

Silence is a historical novel that offers an absorbing, albeit bleak, meditation on the inability of the seventeenth century Jesuit mission to establish religious change on Japanese soil.

The book is currently being made into a movie. Directed by Martin Scorsese and due for release in 2016, it will undoubtedly rekindle debate regarding conversion and transformation, including how to understand the mission in the gaps and silences of history.

This paper will examine three missiological approaches.

First, the work of Donald McGavran who has argued that lack of success in conversion and transformation is due to the strategies being deployed, particularly a lack of resources focused on evangelism.

Second, the work of David Bosch who has argued that suffering is at the core of Christian mission and that silence can be an evangelistic action.

Third, the work of Philip Jenkins who has argued that the Christian understanding of Easter, in both death and resurrection, is a more Christian paradigm for understanding religious change than that of progress.

Each of these missiological approaches to religious change will be applied to *Silence*, both the novel and movie (if released in time). The argument is that missiological approaches that speak of silence are consistent with the Apostle Paul, who asks the church in Philippi to “regard as valuable” the story of Epaphroditus.

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