Rethinking Urban Mission in Terms of Spiritual and Social Transformational Change

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I. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to engage in missiological reflection on spiritual and social transformational change in urban context in the practice of Christian mission in terms of "relational interactionism" framework.

1.2 Definition of key terms:

- **Christian Mission** – The term "mission" (singular), derived from "*Missio Dei*," refers to the entire biblical understanding of the Church of Jesus Christ[1] to continue and carry out the *Missio Dei* of the Triune God at both the individual and institutional levels spiritually (saving soul) and socially (ushering in *shalom*) for redemption, reconciliation, and transformation.[2] Mission also is the divine activity of sending intermediaries, whether supernatural or human, to speak or do God's will so that His purposes for judgment and redemption can be furthered.[3]
- **Narrative Framework** - a story-based structure for describing a person's understanding of and approach to life. Narrative framework includes both macro and micro views of history. The macro view is God's eternal meta-narrative, centered around Christ and his redemptive relationship with creation. The micro view describes a person's individual story within that metanarrative, combining one's experiences and self-identity with their worldview, including their foundational assumptions, values, and beliefs.
- **Relational interactionism** - is an interdisciplinary narrative framework that develops from practical considerations of dynamic interaction of personal Beings/beings, forming realistic relational networks in multiple contexts (i.e. theo-culture, angel-culture and human-culture) and with various consequences.
- "**relationship**" - the interactive connection between personal being (Beings); whereas "relationality" is the generic quality of being connected.[4]
- "**relational realism paradigm**" - the systematic understanding that "reality" is primarily based on the 'vertical relationship' of God and the created order and secondarily 'horizontal relationship' within the created order. Reality and truth are

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[1] Harold A. Netland and Charles Edward Van Engen, "Missiology": *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2000).

[2] Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology and Practice,* IDS, 2014: 6-7.

[3] Netland and Van Engen, "Missiology": *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions,* (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2000).

[4] Enoch Wan, "The Paradigm of Relational Realism" EMS, *Occasional Bulletin*, Spring 2006:**1.**

best to be comprehended and experienced in relational networks of God and the created orders (3 systems in existence: angels, humanity and the natural order).[5]

- **Relational Transformational Paradigm** – the theoretical framework of transformational change relationally.

II. Understanding "relational transformational paradigm" within the "relational interactionism" framework

2.1 The narrative framework of "relational interactionism"

    A. Symbolic interactionism and relational interactionism

        i) Symbolic interactionism

In contrast to functionalism and conflict theory, symbolic interactionism[6] emphasizes the micro-processes through which people construct meanings around the mid-20th century. Symbolic interactionism is a major framework of the sociological theory viewing society as the product of everyday interactions of individuals. It analyzes human social behavior primarily in terms of its interactive and interpretative character.

        ii) Relational interactionism

        Relational interactionism is an interdisciplinary framework that develops from practical considerations of interaction of personal Beings/beings forming realistic relational networks, in multiple contexts and with various consequences. It is a narrative framework for building theory that sees:

- "society" - the consequence of dynamic interactions of personal Beings/beings, leading to the formation of a social entity.
- "culture" - the context/consequence of patterned interaction of personal Beings/beings[7]
- "relational reality" - the complex of networks formed by patterned interaction of personal beings at different levels (micro & macro), in multiple contexts (of socio-cultural variations)

Relational interactionism is a framework that helps understand how socio-cultural reality is formed, preserved, and changed through repeated and meaningful interactions between personal Beings/beings. Relational interactionism comes from an interdisciplinary perspective of anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistic and communication sciences. It is a study of the way that cultures being formed, social world being created through interaction between personal beings at micro (individual) and macro (institutional) levels. The relational process that occurs between interactions helps create and recreate social network and perceived meaning.

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[5] Enoch Wan, "Relational Theology and Relational Missiology," *Occasional Bulletin* 21, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 1-7, <www.emsweb.org> (July 15, 2009), 7n1. See also, Enoch Wan, "The Paradigm of Relational Realism," *Occasional Bulletin* 19, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 1-4, <www.emsweb.org> (July 15, 2009).

[6] For additional info of "symbolic interactionism," see links below:
- "Sociological Paradigm #3: Symbolic Interactionist Theory" - https://courses.lumenlearning.com/alamo-sociology/chapter/reading-symbolic-interactionist-theory/ (accessed Oct.23, 2021)
- "Symbolic Interactionism," https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/symbolic-interactionism (accessed Oct.23, 2021)
- "Symbolic Interactionist Theory," https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Courses/Lumen_Learning/Book%3A_Introduction_to_Sociology_(Lumen)/04%3A_Module_1%3A_Foundations_of_Sociology/04.12%3A_Symbolic_Interactionist_Theory (accessed Oct.23, 2021)

[7] Enoch Wan, "A Critique of Charles Kraft's Use/Misuse of Communication and Social Sciences in Biblical Interpretation and Missiological Formulation," *Global Missiology*, October 2004:1. @ www.globalmissiology.net

Relational interactionism emphasizes the micro- and macro- processes through which relational reality of complex networks being dynamically formed, maintained and changed.

ONTOLOGY		CREATOR	CREATED	
	BEING LEVEL	TRINITY	ANGEL	HUMANITY
Macro (dimension)		horizontal	and	vertical
Micro	Horizontal	inward		
	vertical	downward	upward	upward

Figure 1. Narrative Framework of "Relational Realism" – dimension & direction

B. Relational interactionism and relational realism
   i)   The narrative framework of relational interactionism
        In evangelical missiology, "culture" is a reference to the closed system of human existence, whereas God and angel are designated to be "supra-cultural."[8] However, in this paper, culture is a reference to the convergence of three realms of God, angel and human being as shown in the figure below.
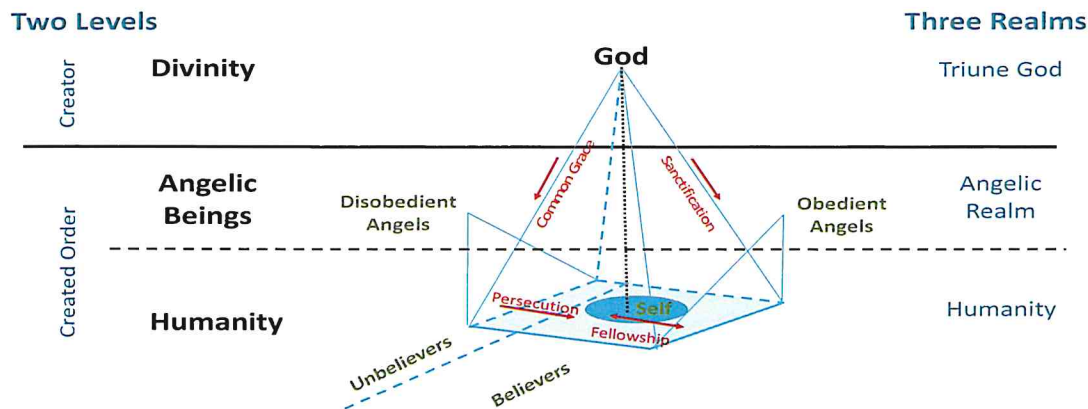
**Figure 2. Narrative Framework and "Relational Realism"
– Vertical and Horizontal Interactions[9]**

The figure above shows that there is a great divide between the Creator (transcending time and space) and the created order (limited by time and space). However, the Triune God is actively involved with the created order "For in Him we live, and move and have our being..."

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[8] See detailed discussion on the term and concept of "supra-cultural" in Charles Kraft in *Christianity in Culture*. Orbis, 1979: chapter 12.
[9] Enoch Wan, "Narrative Framework for Relational Transformational Change," EMS National Conference, Sept. 17-18, 2021. EMS National Conference, Sept. 17-18, 2021

(Acts 17:28). The interaction of Beings and beings crossing the boundary of the three realms creates extensive and complex networks of real relationship between the Triune God, angels (fallen and obedient) and human beings (believers and non-believers). Thus the name "relational realism" as a paradigm of reality.

   ii) Relational realism and Christian mission
      More than often, "Christian mission" is defined "the Great Commission" with the favorite text - Mt 28:19-20. Combined with Acts 1:8 and Mt 24:14, the popular view in summary form as follows:[10]

➢ THE GREAT COMMISSION: (DOING for God)
- What to do? (making disciples);
- How? (going, baptizing, teaching)
- Where? (Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria, end of the earth)
- When? The end of the age

The focus of this popular understanding of "mission" is on "doing" for God, whereas a relational understanding is an integration of "being" and "doing." Relational realism is a narrative framework focusing describing **Christian mission** as:

   being (God working in us) precedes doing (God working through us); but doing should be a natural outflow of being.

Christian mission = *missio Dei* (Relational Triune God + Relational Ministry)
   Grace & Love from God to man & Man Reconciling to GOD
                                                   Vertical ➡ Horizontal

As shown in the figure below, the relational and integrated approach ("**A + B**" in the figure below) in Christian ministry/mission is neither dichotomist nor dualistic; but "both-and," including **being** and **doing**, personhood and performance, witnessing and making disciples, the fulfilment of the Great Commission and the practice of Great Commandment of loving neighbor as listed in the table below.

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[10] Wan, Enoch. *Diaspora Missions to International Students*, IDS 2019: chapter 2.

#	(A) Relational Paradigm Great Commandment + Great Commission	(B) Traditional Missiological Paradigm (Great Commission)
1.	BEING: vertically God works **in us** →	DOING: horizontally God works **through us**
2.	PERSONHOOD: Christians being **in Christ** →	PERFORMANCE: Christians doing **for Christ**
3.	MESSENGER: saved/shepherd/sent **by Him**→	METHOD: making disciple **for him**
4.	WITNESSING: by life & living (**to serve**) →	WINNING: strategize to win the lost (**to save**)
5.	VERTICAL: Triune God & His own →	HORIZONTAL: enterprising & managerial
6.	RELATIONAL: vertical + horizontal →	FUNCTIONAL/PROGRAMATIC: vertical+horizontal
7.	PROCESS: open-ended and unpredictable, convergence of tri-systems[11] (i.e. theo-/angelic/human) without "excluded middle"→	PROGRAM: structured plan & procedure, lip service to vertical, secularized with "excluded middle"[12]

Figure 3. Relational Paradigm & Traditional Missiological Paradigm

From the table above we can list out the characteristics of relational paradigm as follows:
- Relational paradigm is sequential from A → B.
- It is processual from the left column → to the right column; not programmatically obsessed with outcomes of the right column. It is not formulaic nor mere pragmatic as shown in the right column.
- It is an integration of both A and B as shown in the figure below.

Figure 4. Relational Approach: Integrative of Primary and Secondary

2.2 The dynamics of "relational transformational paradigm"

For the sake of clarity, several key-terms are listed below for further discussion:

- **Relational transformational growth** - The process of "becoming" in the children of God (with *imago Dei*), brought about by the Spirit of God through the Word of God in the context of the faith community (*koinonia* and *ecclesia*) of God to the glory of God based on *missio-Dei* of the Triune God.
- **Personal Transformation** (being – ontological change) - God working in us towards being Christ-like and Spirit-led, breaking loose from autonomous operation

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[11] "A critique of Charles Kraft's use / misuse of communication and social science in biblical interpretation and missiological formulation," In Missiology and the social sciences: contributions, cautions and conclusions. Edited by Edward Rommen and Gary Orwin, p.121-164, Pasadena: William Carey Library. (1996)

[12] Paul Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," @ file:///C:/Users/ewan/AppData/Local/Temp/p-hiebert-flaw-of-excluded-middle.pdf (retrieved May 1, 2019)

(idiosyncratic and narcissistic style) and leading to change and growth (*imago-Dei* → *imago Christo*)

- **Social Transformation** (being → belonging[13] → becoming) – God working through an aggregate of transformed Christians (at both individual and institutional levels) spiritually (saving soul) and socially (ushering in *shalom*) for redemption, reconciliation, and transformation[14] in process of 3 phases:
- **Spiritual Transformation** (being→belonging→becoming) - God working in us, working among us and working through us for the fulfillment of His will to grow and glorify Him
- **Transformational change** – The dynamism and process of positive change, originated vertically from the Triune-God and ushered in the relational reality horizontally, through the process of interaction between personal Beings (the Triune God) and human beings (at micro and macro levels) multi-dimensionally, i.e. spiritual, moral, social, behavioral dimensions at personal and/or institutional levels.[15]

A. Relational transformational paradigm

Christian paradigms are to be re-examined from a scriptural and theological perspectives (see extensive critique elsewhere by Enoch Wan).[16] A simple comparison of two Christian approaches is shown diagrammatically in the table below. Relationship, especially the vertical connection with the Triune God, is foundational and dynamic to transformational change; though it is missing or neglected from the popular Christian approach. In Christian relational and transformative approach, relationships (both vertical and horizontal) are not to be exploited as a means to the end (i.e. quantifiable outcomes of "success") for the purpose of change.

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[13] "Belonging" – transformed beings in solidarity and with unity for His glory.

[14] Wan, *Diaspora Missiology*, 6-7.

[15] Enoch Wan, "Relational Transformational Leadership: An Asian Christian Perspective." *Asian Missions Advance*, April 2021:2-7.

[16] For critique of popular paradigms (chapter 7) and proposal of "relational paradigm" (chapters 13-14), see Enoch Wan, *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice.* (2nd ed.) IDS, 2015. (available @ Amazon.com)

Element	Popular	Relationally Transformative
What to be achieved? (dimension)	Skills, knowledge, etc. (horizontal dimensions)	Christian transformative change (first vertical then horizontal)
Focus	Program and process	People and relationship (Christianity – true to Scripture)
Strategy	Traditional	Interactive and personal (Beings of Triune God & beings)
Success/evaluation	Measurable outcome	Not lineal/individualistic; but holistic &communal
What to be achieved	A proficient leader with followers; leaving a legacy.	An exemplary follower of Christ who inspires others (1st character + 2nd career)
Focus	Making a leader according to prevailing cultural norms; success, authority and fame	Cultivating a leader according to the Kingdom of God: God's attributes & Kingdom values. Authority is based on humility (character) and mutuality (relationship).
Strategy (dimension)	Leadership style: programmatic, managerial and entrepreneur	- Primarily vertical and secondarily horizontal relationships - Convergence of vertical and horizontal dynamism, leading to transformational changes: levels (personal & institutional) & multiple dimensions (1st vert.+2^{nd}horizon.) -Process: inspiration → initiative → implementation → influence (chain of transformative change)
Success/evaluation	popular contest & quantifiable outcomes	1st Faithfulness to God vertically and 2nd fruitfulness by God's empowerment and provision horizontally

Figure 5. Two Christian Paradigms: Popular and Relationally Transformative[17]

B. Relational transformational change

Narrative framework in this paper begins with the internal interaction within the Trinity, as shown in the figure below, then extended to the created order in terms of Christians being transformed are agent of social change in urban context in the practice of Christian mission.

[17] Enoch Wan, "Relational Transformational Leadership — An Asian Christian Perspective," *Asian Missions Advance* (2021), http://www.asiamissions.net/asian-missions-advances/.6.

Approach / Level		programmatic/ managerial/entrepreneur	Relationally transformative changes at 2 levels
(discipleship) Individual	goal	Knowledge & skills	Personal relationship
	focus	Program & procedure	Personal brings/Beings interacting
	strategy	Event, formulaic	Relationship: 1st vertical + 2nd horizontal
	Desired outcomes	Quantitative success & measurable goal: bigger is better	Qualitative and relation-oriented growth and maturity
Institutional (pastoral & social)	goal	Effort-optimism: • Profit, benefit, fame • Win by all means & all cost	Network & nurturing relationships: vertical + horizontal • Building up the body • Growing in Christ • God-honoring growth
	focus	Popularity & fashionable	Triune God = foundation of being/doing & fount of blessings
	strategy	Careful planning, systematic, strategic, striving for success	-Networking & nurturing -relationships (as track) for leadership (function: the train) to move & perform
	Desired outcomes	- Measurable outcomes of success (i.e. obsess with quantitative growth); - Increase of power, prestige & property; - Bigger is better (non-transformative change that is merely horizontal) - Strive for success at all cost, including the sacrifice of relationship.	• All submit to the Lordship of Christ; • Guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit (who endows gifts) & Scripture • Godly relational network: edifying horizontally & God-glorifying vertically • Holistic transformative change with Kingdom-orientation

Figure 6. Programmatic and Relationally Transformative Changes[18]

III. Spiritual and social transformational change in urban context in the practice of Christian mission

3.1 Relational Transformational Paradigm and spiritual transformational change

The figure below lists out the interaction between personal Beings (the Trinity) and beings (Christians within the Church), leading to transformational change.

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[18] Enoch Wan, "Narrative Framework for Relational Transformational Change," EMS National Conference, Sept. 17-18, 2021. EMS National Conference, Sept. 17-18, 2021

Connection / Person	Relationship	Example Scriptures
Father	Individual: Fatherhood	Matthew 6:9; Our Father in heaven
	Corporate: Fatherhood	1 Peter 2:17; Love the brotherhood
Son	Individual: Lordship	Colossians 2:6; as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him,
	Corporate: Headship	Ephesians 4:14-15; grow up into Christ, the head
Holy Spirit	Individual: body as temple	1 Corinthians 6:19-20; your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you
	Corporate: church as temple	1 Corinthians 3:16-17; you (plural) are God's temple; Spirit dwells in you (plural)
Church	Family	1 Timothy 5:1-2; Older man as father, younger as brother, etc.
	Koinonia	1 Corinthians 12:24-27; Body of Christ, individually members
	Ecclesia	1 Timothy 3:15; Household of God is church of the Living God

Figure 7. Narrative framework and transformational change[19]

The level of involvement of the Triune God in the life of the believer goes beyond the individual. In "relational realism paradigm," the term *perichoresis* is used to describe the reality of transformational change of Christians in both individual regeneration and maturation and also in the institutional church life in Christian faith and practice, originated from the transcendental Triune God. Using the term "vertical" to refer to relationships between God and people, and "horizontal" to refer to relationships between people, we would submit that God does His transformative work through both vertical and the horizontal relationships as seen in the figure below.

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[19] Enoch Wan, "Narrative Framework for Relational Transformational Change," EMS National Conference, Sept. 17-18, 2021. EMS National Conference, Sept. 17-18, 2021

CHANGE DIMENSION	TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE
vertical +horizontal	Transcendental & transformational – Divine + personal (will) *Perichoresis* transformed (being + doing)
horizontal	High level: interaction – formed (being) Mid-level: psychological, behavioral and social – forming & reformed (doing) Lower level: knowledge - informed (knowing)

Figure 8. Relational Transformational Leadership for Change in two Dimensions.[20]

Christian understanding of transformational change begins with the transcendent Triune God and the transformational power of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the lives of individual believers and the Christian Church; not merely at the horizontal level of humanistic efforts of cognitive information, psychological formation and behavioral reform, and socio-cultural formation in enculturation, socialization and maturation. Our theological conviction of transformational change is as follows: God at work both in and through His people that brings transformation. The transformative nature of Christian life bears fruit both in the individual and in the Church: the impact of transformation takes place both through His immediate agency and as He works through His Church.

Transformational change varies at different levels of involvement of the Triune God in the life of individual believer and the organized congregations and the Church. The figure below is a macro narrative of the dynamic interaction of the Triune God with believers in terms of "being," "belonging," and "becoming," both vertically and horizontally.

Figure 9. Transformational Change (macro): Being, Belonging and Becoming[21]

[20] Enoch Wan, "Relational Transformational Leadership — An Asian Christian Perspective," *Asian Missions Advance* (2021), http://www.asiamissions.net/asian-missions-advances/.6.

[21] Enoch Wan, "Narrative Framework for Relational Transformational Change," EMS National Conference, Sept. 17-18, 2021. EMS National Conference, Sept. 17-18, 2021
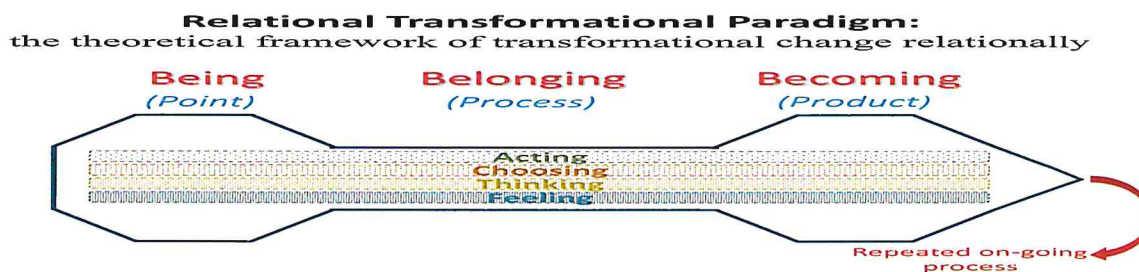
In the figure below at two levels (micro and macro), "being" is the beginning point of the process of transformational change, whereas "belonging" is the process moving towards "becoming" as the outcome of change. The vertical arrows of each column in the figure below indicates the integration at micro-level and macro-level.

Tr. change Level	BEING (Point)	BELONGING (process)	BECOMING (Product)
Macro	• Condemned →justified (Rom. 8:1-2) • Incarnation & new humanity (Eph. 2:15) • Shalom between Jews & gentiles (Eph. 2:14-18)	• Kingdom-orientation & allegiance (Col. 1:13-14) • Church is Temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. 3:17)	• Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12) • Existential reality: maturity, stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 3:14-21, 4:10-16) • Eschatological reality: Bride of Christ (Rev. 21:2,9)
Micro	• Anyone in Christ is new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) • Reconciled with God (2 Cor. 5:18-20)	• Faith communities: koinonia & ecclesia. (1 Pet. 2:9) • Bodies are Temple of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:14-20) • One-another commands (John 3:34, etc.)	• Image of Christ (Rom. 8:29, 1 Cor. 15:49, 2 Cor. 3:18, 4:4, Col. 3:10) • "From glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3:18) • New self (Eph. 4:20-24)

Figure 10. Transformational Change (Macro & Micro): Being, Belonging and Becoming[22]

3.2 Relational Transformational Paradigm and social transformational change

The figure below shows the process of relational change with 3 components, i.e. from left to right, including: point →process→product/outcome. There are various dimensions involved, i.e. will (volition/choosing), mind (cognition/thinking), feeling (affection), manifestations in action, attitude and expression.

Relational Transformational Paradigm:
the theoretical framework of transformational change relationally

Being (Point)   Belonging (Process)   Becoming (Product)

Acting
Choosing
Thinking
Feeling

Repeated on-going process

Figure 11. Relational Transformational Paradigm: Being→Belonging→Becoming

Relational transformational change can idealistically usher in "whole-person transformation." Transformative change involves one's core values change, and in turn change the way in which we feel, think, act, and relating as shown in the figure below.

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[22] Enoch Wan, "Narrative Framework for Relational Transformational Change," EMS National Conference, Sept. 17-18, 2021. EMS National Conference, Sept. 17-18, 2021
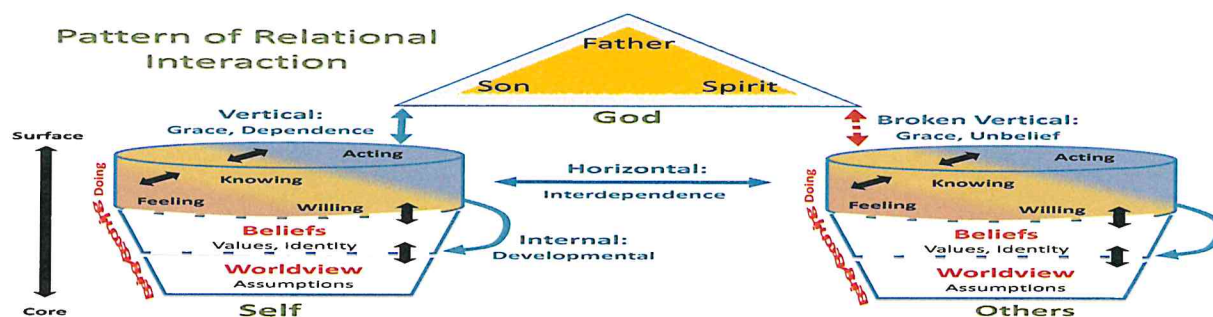
Figure 12. Whole Person Transformation

The figure below shows the dynamics of transformational change that begins from the Triune God to impact the whole person.
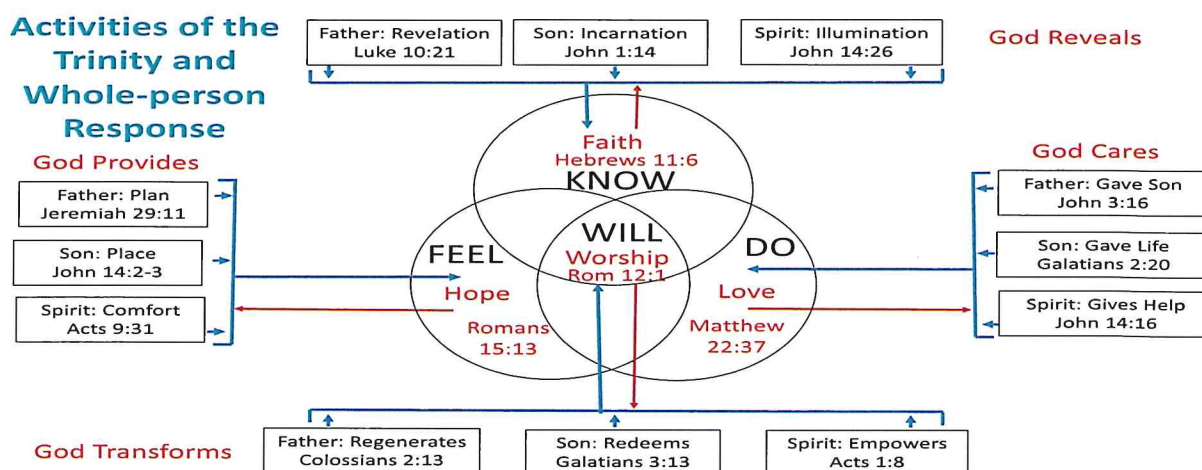

Figure 13. The Triune God and Transformational Change of the Whole-person

As shown in the figure below, individual Christians being transformed is the result of "**God working in us**." They are to join the faith-community for fellowship and worship, with solidarity in goal, unity in the Spirit, harmony in love, mutuality in edification – all because of "**God working among us**."

Figure 14. Relational Transformational Paradigm and Social Transformational Change

The figure above shows that the dynamics of social transformational change begins from the Triune God to individual Christians (micro-level), local congregations (messo-level) and the Church (macro-level). Christians are to be transformed by the Triune God (i.e. **God working in us** vertically in terms of regeneration and sanctification), enjoying *koinonia* within the context of *ecclesia* with unity, solidarity and harmony due to the fact that "**God working among us**" horizontally. As the fact of **God working through us,** being the agents of God's transformational power, we are to be salt and light of the world. Together, we are to glorify God as stated below:

> "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9, NIV)

IV. Conclusion

In this paper, we have engaged in a missiological reflection on spiritual and social transformational change in urban context in the practice of Christian mission in terms of "relational interactionism" framework. The relational networks narratively described in this paper on Christian transformational change include the Triune God (vertical) as the primary cause and dynamic power, and secondarily human relationships (changed being becoming an agent of change) and gives special place to the local Christian community (*ecclesia*).

If we practice Christian mission relationally, we then can ushering in *shalom*[23] at individual and institutional levels for personal and social transformational changes as summarized in the figure below.

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[23] That is the essence of "doxological missiology" which can be defined as:
"a missiology that is grounded in and motivated by the biblical imperative to see the Triune God glorified by redeemed people from among all of His creation. "doxological missiology" is, in many ways, an integration of the Glory of God with the *imago Dei* and the *missio Dei*. In this sense, "doxological missiology" is the glory of God being spread through the world (*missio Dei*) by God's image-bearers (*imago Dei*)." - Enoch Wan and Jace Cloud, *Doxological Missiology: Theory, Motivation, and Practice*, Western Academic Press. 2021:3.

Relational Approach and transformational change

Being		Doing
God working in us	**God working among us**	**God working through us**
Vertical	Vertical and horizontal	Horizontal
Primary		Secondary

Christian Mission for spiritual and social Transformation Change is:

- Serving in Christ's name (motivation)
- Doing it for His sake (attitude)
- Operating by His power (serving)
  guidance/power/enablement/empowerment
- Best stewardship for His glory (ultimate goal)

Figure 15. Relational Interactionism and Transformational Change

It is important to acknowledge the active involvements of the Triune God in our lives and ministry. Those who have been transformed are to be agents of divine transformation in spiritual and social change. Consequently, in addition to praying "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done…," we are to serve "*in his name, for his sake, by his power, for his glory.*"

APPENDIX – Relational Interactionism

Below is additional information of relational interactionism.
Methodologically, relational interactionists generally conduct research through various qualitative approaches, such as narrative studies (e.g. ethnography or participant observation), action research (e.g. individual research and collaborative research) and analytical studies (e.g. dynamics of relational interaction and complexity of networks).

Focus of study
Relational interactionists continue to investigate the complex relationships between individuals and institutions, societies and cultural units, relational phenomena and contexts, peoples and places at both micro- and macro- levels.

Assumption and concept of "culture"
The figure below shows the assumption and the concept of "culture" of relational interactionism. It is helpful to compare relational interaction with selected theoretical frameworks to highlight the differences of these five approaches.

THEORY	ASSUMPTION	"CULTURE"
Functionalism	-Social stability is necessary to have a strong Society and adequate socialization and social integration are necessary to achieve social stability. Society's social institutions perform important functions to help ensure social stability. Slow social change is desirable, but rapid social change threatens social order. -Functionalism is a macro theory.	Culture is an integrated system of in which all parts work (function)together to create society as a whole
Conflict Theory	-Society is characterized by pervasive inequality based on social class, gender, and other factors. Far-reaching social change is needed to reduce or eliminate social inequality and to create an egalitarian society. -Conflict theory is a macro theory.	Culture is the inherently unequal social structure, based on power differentials, e.g. gender, race, and age.
Symbolic Interactionism	-People construct their roles as they interact; they do not merely learn the roles that society has set out for them. As this interaction occurs, individuals negotiate their definitions of the situations in which they find themselves and socially construct the reality of these situations. In so doing, they rely heavily on symbols such as words and gestures to reach a shared understanding of their interaction. -Symbolic interactionism is a micro theory.	Culture is a meaning creating system based on the interactions of individuals (between the "I" and manifested others)
Relational Interactionism	-Dynamic interaction of personal Beings/beings, forming realistic relational networks in multiple contexts and with various consequences. -Relational interactionism is a micro & macro theory	Culture is the context/consequence of patterned interaction of personal Beings/beings
Utilitarianism (rational choice theory or exchange theory)	-People act to maximize their advantages in a given situation and to reduce their disadvantages. If they decide that benefits outweigh disadvantages, they will initiate the interaction or continue it if it is already under way. If they instead decide that disadvantages outweigh benefits, they will decline to begin interacting or stop the interaction if already begun. Social order is possible because people realize it will be in their best interests to cooperate and to make compromises when necessary. -Utilitarianism is a micro theory.	Culture is the context where people make choice & operate to maximize self-interest for personal gain

Figure 16. Comparison of Five Selected Theories[24]

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[24] Adapted from "1.3: Theoretical Perspectives n Sociology," The LibreTexts libraries," the UC Davis Office @ https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Sociology/Introduction_to_Sociology/Book%3A_Sociology_(Barkan)/01%3A_Sociology_and_the_Sociological_Perspective/1.03%3A_Theoretical_Perspectives_in_Sociology (accessed Oct. 4, 2021)