Evangelical Missiological Society Series

no. 26

Majority World Theologies

Theologizing from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Ends of the Earth



Allen Yeh, & Tite Tiénou, Editors

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

Majority World Theologies: Theologizing from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Ends of the Earth
© 2018 by Evangelical Missiological Society. All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without prior written permission of the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with reviews in magazines or newspapers. For permission, email permissions@wclbooks.com.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV): Scripture taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION ®. Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan.

Scripture quotations marked NRSV are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Published by William Carey Publishing (formerly known as William Carey Library Publishers)
10 W. Dry Creek Cir | Littleton, CO 80120 | www.missionbooks.org

William Carey Publishing is a ministry of Frontier Ventures
1605 E. Elizabeth St | Pasadena, CA 91104 | www.frontierventures.org

ISBNs: 978-0-87808-088-5 (paperback)
978-0-87808-089-2 (mobi)
978-0-87808-090-8 (epub)

Melissa Hicks, managing editor
Andrew Sloan, copyeditor
Jay Matenga, cover design
Kathy Curtis, Mike Riester, interior design

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Yeh, Allen L. (Allen Leon), 1975-editor.
Title: Majority world theologies: theologizing from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the ends of the earth / Allen Yeh and Tite Tiénou, editors.
Description: Littleton: William Carey Publishing, 2018. | Series: Evangelical Missiological Society series; no. 26
Identifiers: LCCN 2018040950 | ISBN 9780878080885 (pbk.) | ISBN 9780878080908 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: Religions.
Classification: LCC BL80.3 .M2475 2018 | DDC 202—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2018040950

Printed in the United States of America
22 21 20 19 18 1 2 3 4 5 BP 750

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

CHAPTER 1

Allen Yeh

"Give Us Friends!": V. S. Azariah and the Call for the Four-Self Church

This chapter benefited from a research fellowship at Biola University's Center for Christian Thought, which was made possible through the support of a grant from the Templeton Religion Trust. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Biola University Center for Christian Thought or the Templeton Religion Trust.

> "Love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking together in the same direction."
>
> —Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of *The Little Prince*

C. S. Lewis' *The Four Loves* includes a line that has intrigued me from the moment I read it: "To the Ancients, Friendship [*philia*] seemed the happiest and most fully human of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue. The modern world, in comparison, ignores it" (Lewis 1960, 57). In the Christian world, I had always been taught (or perhaps I just assumed it due to the number of times I heard it emphasized) that God's love is expressed as *agape* (charity, or unconditional love), not *philia.* And in the secular world, certainly *eros* (romantic love) rules supreme—not just in Hollywood but in literature and poetry and psychology and music. I would even say that, though Christians give lip service to *agape,* in practice they are also all about *eros,* except exhibited in the marital context. There is nothing wrong with that, of course; but Christian colleges have the infamous "ring by spring" mantra where marriage is the ultimate achievement to be rushed into as quickly as possible, and consequently singles often feel like second-class citizens in the church.

Then, of course, there is the least-known Greek word for love to be mentioned, namely *storge,* translated as "affection" and often manifested as parent-child love (though it can also be used for love of a pet). This is also highly valued in Christianity—perhaps as an offshoot of marital *eros*—but it sometimes made me wonder why Christianity becomes so much about "Focus on the Family" when Paul exalted singleness (1 Cor 7:7ff) and Jesus said to "hate" your parents and your siblings (Luke 14:26); otherwise we are not worthy of him! Those verses are not often preached on in evangelical circles, though to be fair these ideas are taken seriously by Catholics.

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

The Bible does seem to suggest that friendship is the greatest of the loves, as Jesus said in John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends (ESV)."[1] But I remember quoting this to a non-Christian one time, and he replied: "I would think that laying down your life for an enemy would be more loving than laying down your life for a friend!" I did not have a good reply for him at the time, and it has stuck in my craw ever since. This chapter endeavors to address and answer that objection. Could the Ancients actually have been right?[2]

My thesis is that *philia* is, indeed, the greatest of the loves, and that Christians would do well to aim for this. Though *agape* may seem like the greatest of the loves in Christian theology, and while *eros* and *storge* are most often expressed in Christian praxis, *philia* is the most encapsulating of the nature of the Christian faith. All of those other loves can be one-sided—especially *agape*—but it is impossible for *philia* to be unilateral. One may object, "Doesn't it seem more noble to give without expecting anything in return?" This is the same kind of thought that drove my non-Christian friend to object to John 15:13. The fact that *philia* is the only love that demands reciprocity makes it seem self-serving. But I want to argue that reciprocity is the best and truest of loves. One-sided love is deficient, but reciprocity gives dignity and agency and honor and responsibility to the other, and as such makes friendship the greatest of the loves, because it is the greatest leveler and is the only one which has true partnership and *with*-ness.

PHILIA AT EDINBURGH 1910 AND V. S. AZARIAH

Historian Mark Noll wrote a book called *Turning Points* in which he cited the twelve most important moments in church history (Noll 2001, 7).[3] The last of the twelve is the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference (Stanley, 2009). This was considered the "birthplace of the modern ecumenical movement," but unfortunately suffered from an overly Western presence. Considering the year was 1910, this was unsurprising; but basically, out of some 1,200 people, there were only 17 Asians in attendance and no Africans or Latin Americans.

However, the most famous speech delivered at that conference was by an Asian, namely V. S. Azariah, the first bishop of the southern Indian diocese of Dornakal. He spoke boldly about the condescending attitude of Western

[1] The Quakers officially call themselves the Religious Society of Friends because of the importance they place on this verse.

[2] This is essentially the missiological Principle of Redemptive Analogy as found in Don Richardson's book *Eternity in Their Hearts,* namely that pagan cultures can reach a great deal of truth through general revelation and conscience and observation and rational wisdom. This is why Augustine of Hippo was able to build so much of his Christian theology on top of Plato's philosophy, despite the fact that the latter was pagan.

[3] The first eleven are: 1. The Fall of Jerusalem (70 AD); 2. The Council of Nicaea (325); 3. The Council of Chalcedon (451); 4. Benedict's Rule (530); 5. The Coronation of Charlemagne (800); 6. The Great Schism (1054); 7. The Diet of Worms (1521); 8. The English Act of Supremacy (1534); 9. The Founding of the Jesuits (1540); 10. The Conversion of the Wesleys (1738); 11. The French Revolution (1789).

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

missionaries toward non-Western Christians. His speech included these words: "I do not plead for returning calls, handshakes, chairs, dinners and teas as such. I do on the other hand plead for all of them and more if they can be expressions of a friendly feeling, if these or anything else can be the outward proofs of a real willingness on the part of the foreign missionary to show that he is in the midst of the people to be to them not a lord and master but a brother and a friend. … Too often you promise us thrones in heaven, but will not offer us chairs in your drawing rooms," clearly wanting equal partnership that goes beyond paternalism.

Azariah concluded with his famous quote, "You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for love. Give us FRIENDS!" Those last three words, "Give us friends!" have echoed throughout time as the hallmark of Edinburgh 1910 and what it means to be in ecumenical partnership with other Christians (Robert 2011).

Unpacking a philosophy of *philia* can help us see how this can apply to Azariah's injunction for missions and the future of world Christianity.

GREEK WORDS FOR LOVE

Just as Eskimos have many words for snow, the Greeks have several words for love. Though this may not be the reason why Greek was the language chosen for the New Testament,[4] it does make Greek a more effective linguistic tool for understanding the theology of love than the English language.

Some biblical scholars, however, have questioned the validity of parsing out the specific meanings of these words too literally. For example, in his book *Exegetical Fallacies,* D. A. Carson said that the four most common fallacies are word-study fallacies, grammatical fallacies, logical fallacies, and presuppositional and historical fallacies. Regarding the first one, Carson says that an example of a word-study fallacy is to make too fine of a distinction between the Greek words for "love." He writes:

> Although it is doubtless true that the entire range of ἀγαπάω (*agapao,* to love) and the entire range of φιλέω (*phileo,* to love) are not exactly the same, nevertheless they enjoy substantial overlap; and where they overlap, appeal to a "root meaning" in order to discern a difference is fallacious. … The false assumptions surrounding this pair of words are ubiquitous; and so I shall return to them again. My only point here is that there is nothing intrinsic to the verb ἀγαπάω (*agapao*) or the noun ἀγάπη (*agape*) to prove

[4] Actually, for certain it is not: *koine* Greek was the common language of the day, and it was chosen by God for missiological purposes because it was the most widely spoken tongue of the Eastern Mediterranean. Aramaic, the language of Jesus and the Jews of the time, was a tribal language, so it was not effective or suitable to reach the Gentiles. Christianity has the distinction of being the only religion in the world in which the Scriptures are not written in the language of its founder. This missiological impulse is also the reason why Israel is located where it is, at the crossroads of three continents—Asia, Africa, and Europe—in order for Christianity to spread most efficiently and effectively in three different directions.

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

> its real meaning or hidden meaning refers to some special kind of love. (Carson 1996, 31–32)

Carson uses the example of Peter's reinstatement in John 21:15–17 to show that though, in the first two times that Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me?" he uses *agapao,* and the third time he switches to *phileo* (Peter uses *phileo* all three times in responding, "You know that I love you"), there really is no intended distinction and it is making too much of something to think that the word switch is anything significant. This argument is further strengthened by the fact that, in the same passage, Jesus also switches between "Feed my lambs [*arnia*]" (v. 15) and "Feed my sheep [*probata*]" (v. 17) without any discernable difference in meaning (ibid., 51–53).

This allows for an escape clause from an objection about John 15:13, when Jesus says, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (ESV)—because the word used there is *agape,* not *philia!* Using the word-study fallacy, one could make the case that it is *agape,* not *philia* at all, that is representative of God's love. But it seems the Apostle John likes to use the two words interchangeably. The thrust of the verse is clearly toward friendship love, especially shown two verses later in v. 15: "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" (ESV). Jesus' elevation of the disciples' status from "servants" to "friends" is a switch from *agape* to *philia,* from a lower role to a peer role.[5] So even though the word *agape* is employed in v. 13, the concept of *philia* is the operative one. It is about friendship that Jesus says, "Greater love has no one than this."

The sisters Mary and Martha exhibited this distinction of which is better. Gary Thomas, in *Sacred Pathways,* says that "*Servant* is a 'doing' word; *friend* is a 'being' word. What do servants do? They cook, clean, and so forth. A friend, however, is something you are, not something you do. A servant is Martha; a friend is Mary" (Thomas 2010, 192).

All this being said, though it is true that many biblical scholars do make too much of the distinction between the two Greek words, perhaps Carson swings the pendulum too far in the other direction. It may be entirely accurate that in the passage about Peter's reinstatement, *agapao* and *phileo* are synonymous; however, in other passages they are not. Probably the truth is more like a Venn diagram: as Carson himself states in the quote above, the two words enjoy substantial overlap. But this implies that, at points, they do not overlap at all. The non-overlapping definitions of *agape, philia, storge,* and *eros* are ways I will be using these terms in the remainder of this chapter. When I use the word *philia* (or its verb form *phileo*), I am talking strictly

[5] This is not to suggest that Jesus was making mankind equivalent to God; rather, he was lifting them up from a status of learners (disciples) to co-ministers (apostles).

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

about friendship, just as *agape* will be referring to charity, *storge* will be about affection, and *eros* will designate romance.

EROS VS. *PHILIA*

Sigmund Freud popularized the psychological theory that humans' strongest urge is toward *eros* and the libido. Even though he has been largely debunked, it seems that he may have been right, at least as far as how society expresses itself today. Tim Keller, in a sermon about friendship, said:

> Every culture will be putting friendship on the back seat, and yet it's irreplaceable. … A liberal, individualistic culture like ours always puts erotic love, romantic love, sexual love, first. Take a look at our culture: Do we have all these glossy magazines, you know, plastered across the front of these glossy magazines: "Who's best friends with who?" No, it's "Who's sleeping with who?" . . . [As another example,] in this stack, let's put all the CDs of songs about romantic love, and over here, let's put all the songs about friendship. Or, you know, interesting, for just a quick example: the one blockbuster trilogy, the one blockbuster set of movies that has ever been made, not about romance, not about family, but about friendship, is *The Lord of the Rings.* The beauty of friendship is the main theme of it. However, if you read the book you'll know, the romantic stuff is in the appendices. But of course, for Hollywood, we had to pull that out of the appendices and we had to stick it center. We have Aragorn and Arwen, the love affair had to be right in the center. It wasn't in the book. Why? Well, you see, our culture isn't turned on by friendship; it's not the most important thing. To Tolkien, that's what the book was about!
>
> In a liberal, individualistic culture, romance is the most important relationship. In a traditional, conservative culture, family—father, mother, sibling, brother, sister—that's the most important. In a socialistic, communitarian culture, it's the civic relationship; it's your relationships with your neighbors. But every culture will always put friendship into the second [place]—into the back seat. Why? Because friendship is not a biological or sociological necessity. It's the only love that is absolutely deliberate. It will not push itself on you. …
>
> If it wasn't for erotic love, you wouldn't exist. If not for family love, you wouldn't have been reared. If not for neighbor love, you couldn't survive—crime and oppression, that sort of thing. Therefore in an incredibly busy culture like ours, where we're working long hours and we're traveling, all the other loves, all the other relationships, will push themselves upon you. You still gotta deal with your family, you still gotta have civic relationships, you gotta have vocational networking to have a job, you still want to have romance. But friendship, which takes incredibly deliberate amounts of intentionally spent time, over time will always get squeezed out. And yet the book of Proverbs says that you won't make it without friends. (Keller 2005)

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.

Thank you for reading this preview.
To purchase a copy of this book, visit:

https://missionbooks.org/products/majority-world-theologies-ems-26

William Carey Publishing. Copyrighted content.