Journal of Dharma 48, 4 (October–December 2023), 449–464

SELF-PROTECTED COMMUNITIES TOWARDS RELATIONAL COMMUNITIES: An Appraisal of Relational-Ethical Model for Social Concern

Zhengcan Huang and Enguo Wang♦

Abstract: The world is endowed with people who have plethora of talents and capabilities. This research pinpoints the relational-ethical theory concerning social and religious life of humans as well as their horizontal and vertical relations. It delves into the intricacies of relations, focusing on marital issues, women's rights, gender-based violence, and similar concerns. Simultaneously, it dismantles the mindset that seeks to transform the world into a Christendom driven by self-interest. The study draws on C. S. Song and Denise M. Ackermann's frameworks to envision the role of relational-ethical communities, challenging the narrow perspectives prevalent in today's world. Consequently, the research adopts the relational-ethical model to showcase its broader aspect, breaking down individualism and employing analogies from St. Paul to advocate for a more just world.

Keywords: Ethical, Relational, Sin, Self, Marriages, Christendom, Communities, Privilege

1. Introduction

Relational ethics is indispensable in our contemporary, fast-paced world dominated by instant communication and rapid advancements. While technological progress and conveniences

Zhengcan Huang is from the School of Faculty of Education and Liberal Studies, City University, Malaysia. Email: shicuicanya@163.com

♦**Enguo Wang** (Corresponding Author) is from the Institute of Psychology and Behaviour, Henan University, China. Presently, he serves as the doctoral supervisor and holds the distinguished professorship at Henan University. Email: enguowang2023@163.com.

like microwave meals cater to individual needs, there is a prevailing common belief that self-assurance is the key to success. While leading a pleasant and affluent life is essential, an excessive focus on self-centered comfort zones may not be beneficial for the broader community. In today's world, technological advancements and nuclear capabilities, while serving individual interests, have also contributed to global threats and disparities. The prevailing cultural worldview often prioritizes self-protected communities over relational ones. This paper unveils the fact that our narratives frequently revolve around personal agendas, gains, profits, and challenges, rather than fostering a relational approach grounded in communitarian goals and objectives.

Scot Mcknight, a biblical ethicist, emphasizes the importance of an ethically equipped mind that looks beyond immediate gains, envisions God's future, and actively shares resources with the world (Mcknight 99). The current popular tendency to prioritize self-centric stories over listening to others' narratives is lamented. This inclination results in individuals being absorbed in their own battles and ambitions, neglecting the unheard, unloved, unshared, and unreached corners of the world. This phenomenon was particularly evident in the recent past during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, where numerous researchers adopted individualistic approaches to address the challenges. In response to the crisis, various organizations revised their strategies, often prioritizing their own interests. This tendency was also evident in actions like the restructuring of workspaces to serve the interests of the organization itself (Hakim 206-207), rather than aiding individuals who were grappling with the challenges of existence during the pandemic era. The paper, thus, highlights the need to shift from *living merely in a community* to *living for the community*, recognizing the importance of a relational perspective in addressing the global challenges of hunger, marginalization, and the overall well-being of societies worldwide.

Further, this article critically examines one's individualistic attitudes that exhibit a disregard for others, prompting a reflection on the unintended transformation of marriage into a

narrower aspect of relationships, despite its profound significance. It delves into the social shift in the concept of a 'work ethic,' (Lee 567), emphasizing the contemporary emphasis on hard work and obedience rather than the ethical model of caring for fellow beings. The argument presented contends that our moral responsibility to the world should not stem solely from selfish motivations but rather from our interconnectedness with society as a whole. This perspective begins with an acknowledgment of the "depravity of humans, not their goodness" (McKnight, 94). In essence, true ethics is grounded in active participation in God's work and grace, transcending philosophical justifications or laws enacted by the intellectuals of the 18th and 19th centuries. How do we perceive relationships in the most difficult shift, when individuals have self-centered goals and attitudes? The article underscores the need for a relational-ethical model that prioritizes the well-being of communities. It prompts an exploration into whether such a model exists and, if so, whether it encompasses holistic implications for addressing the multifaceted concerns of the current social landscape.

The primary objective of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it aims to deconstruct the pervasive attitude of self-centeredness within communities that leads individuals to pursue their most valued objectives, often resorting to unethical actions such as theft or violence. Secondly, the article seeks to emphasize the importance of relational ethics, which prioritizes the well-being of other communities. The adoption of this model is proposed as a means to free from the grip of self-centeredness within our societies, addressing social concerns and redefining the significance and responsibilities associated with relational-ethical structure. A relational-ethical being exists in the community for the sake of others. The article advocates for a relational-ethical model as a strategy to dismantle individualistic and self-advertising theories and redirect relational-ethical communities towards the pursuit of a just world. St. Paul's model of 'God's family and the body of Christ' is suggested as a foundational framework for approaching this concept, aiming to build a comprehensive structure that guides individuals to become

relational-ethical beings in the broader context of human interactions.

2. The Root of Deconstructing Individualistic Approaches in Our Relations

Numerous well-developed approaches exist for challenging individualism in our contexts, and John Gray stands out as one who has undertaken the task of deconstructing the notion of individualism within marital relationships. Approximately thirty-one years ago, Gray authored a book that has profoundly impacted the lives of married individuals worldwide. In his work, Gray contends, "When men and women are able to respect and accept their differences, then love has a chance to blossom" (Gray, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, 14). Despite its widespread popularity, with millions of copies sold and translations into numerous languages, the concept presented in the book has been critiqued for potentially limiting relationships to personal gains and the purpose of procreating children. Similar to Gray's perspective, Constance Furey underscores the importance of not allowing a dichotomized worldview to shape our thinking in the realm of men and women's relationships. Furey advocates for a nuanced understanding, acknowledging that while gender, along with race and class, holds significant influence in shaping our perceptions and narratives about the world, it is more intriguing to explore the intricate and contradictory dynamics at play within the relationships among these factors (Furey 471).

Gray (2017) delved into the complexities of marriage, leveraging insights from nearly twenty-five years of research in this field. His work, titled *Beyond Mars and Venus*, addresses the changing dynamics of married couples. Additionally, a multitude of other books have explored this phenomenon, presenting various approaches to improve marriages, champion women's rights, and examine the evolution of gender roles, among other topics (see, DeSantis 2023; Allen Hanssen 2021; Strong 2021; Willoughby 2021). While recognizing the potential value of studies aimed at improving relationships, it contends that such

focus can be limiting, diverting attention from broader social responsibilities and neglecting other pressing concerns. A critical stance questions the confinement of relational-ethical concerns to the realm of heterosexual family connections, arguing that this perspective may exclude important dimensions. Some biblical experts go further, asserting that limiting relational focus to such bonds may even be considered a sin.

Dominique DuBois Gilliard and Mark Labberton provide a biblical perspective on privilege, suggesting that utilizing entrusted resources for advancing God's kingdom is not sinful. However, they caution that the misuse of privileges for self-satisfaction crosses into sinfulness. In essence, if resources, including education, status, wealth, and talents, are exclusively employed for personal gain or self-interest, individuals may be yielding to the temptation to disregard the needs of their neighbors. Gillard and Labberton further argue:

> When we see our access, assets, education, resources, status, social capital, talents, and wealth as solely for our benefit or the enrichment of our family[relationships], we sin because we exploit our privilege for selfish gain and therefore refuse to participate in the economy of the kingdom and the inbreaking reign of God. [In this way] we are called to prayerfully discern how we can relinquish privileges that can be divested as an act of loving obedience to God, in sacrificial fellowship with our [communities]neighbors (Gilliard 16).

Gilliard and Labberton advocate for a prayerful discernment of how one can relinquish privileges, viewing this act as an expression of loving obedience to God and a means of sacrificial fellowship with their communities. This broader viewpoint urges individuals to consider their privileges within the framework of relational-ethical concerns in our dynamic world, emphasizing the importance of acting beyond self-interests to foster a more interconnected and compassionate society.

One might question how to reconcile the truth that the roots of human relationships are embedded in the beginning of creation, particularly in the context of the magnificence of marriage

and relational dynamics outlined in the book of *Genesis*. It is noteworthy that certain interpretations have often confined the significance of the first two chapters of *Genesis* to the realm of marital life, commonly emphasized in wedding ceremonies where couples commit to honouring God by serving each other throughout their lives. While serving as partners and helpers is crucial, the narrative of Adam and Eve in *Genesis* depicts a relationship that extends beyond the confines of marital bonds, impacting the broader community (Genesis 2:15, 18-25).

Brian Christopher Coulter highlights Eden's portrayal of Adam and Eve, emphasizing that their relationship is not exclusive to marriage alone but is intended for the benefit of the community or communities. Coulter argues that while the connection with marriage exists, this relationship transcends the marital context, serving and staying within the larger community (Coulter 88). Individualism, on the other hand, tends to monopolize blessings for personal gain, restricting them rather than sharing beyond oneself. Utilizing privileged positions solely for personal benefits, instead of for the greater good of God's world, is seen as inconsistent with reflecting God's image (Anderson 419).

In contrast to pursuing personal gains, the call is to use resources to uplift both local and global communities as part of God's creation for the overall benefit of humanity. This transformative process requires a painful spiritual discipline involving remembrance, confession, lament, and repentance, enabling individuals to discern what producing fruit in keeping with repentance entails (Gillard 18). Thus, confronting individualistic behaviors that have persisted throughout history necessitates a spiritual praxis to deconstruct self-interested attitudes and move towards a relational-ethical world. The subsequent exploration will delve deeper into addressing historically impactful movements associated with religions that have posed challenges and continue to exist, demanding critical examination and understanding.

3. The Problematic Shifts in History and the Power Structures

C. S. Song (1979), a prominent Asian theologian, points out that a pivotal moment in the history of God's people occurs in the Book of *Exodus* when the oppressors resist the departure of the Israelites. In his opinion, history is not merely a narrative from the past; instead, it serves as a "chief political paradigm" profoundly influencing the spirituality of any nation, particularly Israel (Song, *Third-Eye Theology*, 201). The cries and groans of God's nation evoke a response from God, prompting Him to send Moses to confront the power structures of the most formidable nation. In this human history, Song notes a troubling aspect wherein oppressors and slave owners are seemingly immune to perceiving what God hears, seeing what God sees, and feeling what God feels. He describes this phenomenon as a "classical language of the oppressor who scorns the oppressed" (202). Despite the oppressors openly defying God, Song emphasizes that God, who takes history seriously, graciously intervenes throughout the ages to liberate people from dehumanization and slavery. God is concerned about injustice and destructive systems, actively working to free people from all forms of oppression. Song further asserts that God's involvement goes beyond merely dismantling power structures and addressing injustice. It extends to liberating individuals from the various tools employed by oppressors, including false pretenses and manipulative tactics aimed at maintaining their dominance (218). This historical-biblical shift reveals God as an active force in history—past, present, and future.

Similar to the historical challenges faced by Israel, the approach of Christendom in spreading the Gospel through a crusade mentality represents a practice of false pretenses that has deeply influenced the mindset of reformers towards individualism. This method of perceiving the universe reflects an individualistic attitude, and the endeavor to convert the world into Christendom has had lasting repercussions for Christianity in Asian contexts. As the protestant church sought emancipation from the hierarchical structures of the church, there was a tendency to overlook the "limitation, blindness, and

forgetfulness" of its own misconstrued mission (Fernandez 137). In line with the triumphalist Christianity of the time, protestants adhered to existing concepts associated with Christendom-Christianity, creating a significant barrier. The influence of missionaries has led to the perception that local Christians in many Asian nations are still considered western agents (Hakim 71).

Rather than approaching the diverse identities and societies in the world through the lens of God's relationship with various communities, this individualistic mindset narrows down God's agenda by imposing western values, concerns, and objectives on other cultures, disregarding the unique significance of each context. Renowned South African theologian, Denise M. Ackermann rightly critiques this non-relational society, which views everyone as "with no story, no selfhood, no history" (15). Ackermann's observations are applicable to Africa as well, where missionaries failed to understand local stories, cultural traditions, and identities. The missionary desire to destroy cultures rather than learn about them rendered their approach non-relational and unethical in the eyes of other nations and civilizations. This critique sheds light on the negative implications of individualism in relationships, particularly evident in Eurocentric missionary efforts (18).

Despite the availability of ideas challenging individualism from philosophers like Martin Buber, Paul Ricoeur, John McMurray, and Emmanuel Levinas, the dominance of individualistic mindsets persisted in western thought, as evident in Hegel’s phenomenology and twentieth-century philosophical concepts (18). This historical backdrop illuminates the enduring influence of individualism and its impact on intercultural relationships, as seen in missionary approaches that failed to recognize the richness of diverse cultures and stories.

Missionary endeavors, often lacking an understanding of the diversity of other cultures, have contributed to a misconstrued mission that led to the loss of culture and identity for many local communities. The sentiment expressed by African Bishop Desmond Tutu (2014) vividly illustrates this point when he

reflects on the arrival of missionaries in Africa: "When the missionaries arrived, we had the land and they had the Bible. They said, 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them, we had the Bible and they had the land" (Tutu 9). Similar challenges have been faced in Asia, where missionaries' arrival did not mean the absence of existing power structures, self-interests, or policies aimed at gaining positions. Before missionaries, Asia grappled with realities such as "feudalism, dictatorship, and colonialization" (*Third-Eye Theology,* 205). However, C. S. Song contends that oppression has transformed in the twentieth century. Drawing a parallel to the mentality of the Pharaoh, who treated people with contempt and devaluation, Song asserts that the contemporary world is characterized by a focus on gaining power, economic advantages, political control, and technological advancements for personal gain. These, according to Song, have become the primary weapons of oppression in today's society (*Doing Theology Today*, 46).

Song's explanation revolves around the pervasive self-interested motives shaping the world, with political and technological advancements driving individuals to pursue their own interests. He argues that various forms of media, including thousands of TV shows and cartoons like the Flintstones, have had detrimental effects on people's lives in the twentieth century, diverting their attention from genuine human issues (47). This critique highlights how a self-centered approach, fueled by the pursuit of personal gain, has impacted societies globally, leading to cultural and identity losses as well as a neglect of pressing human concerns.

It is indeed disheartening to observe that humanity has not sufficiently learned from past mistakes, and the world continues to prioritize self-interest over the well-being of others. This self-centered attitude, seeking 'more for me' and 'less for others,' becomes a form of enslavement for communities, hindering them from seizing opportunities to benefit others. The lasting impact of missionaries is still evident in today's community structures, and regrettably, the contemporary world is not markedly different from the mindset of those missionaries. The persistence of self-

centered attitudes raises a critical question about humanity's preoccupation with its own glory. Despite the prevalence of global challenges such as hunger, marginalization, and abuses of power, there seems to be a reluctance to address these issues collectively. This reluctance reflects our failure to truly acknowledge the harm done to others—whether in interpersonal relationships or under the guise of religious endeavours (Ackermann 23). The ongoing prevalence of these issues emphasizes the urgent need for a shift in perspectives and attitudes, promoting a more compassionate and other-centered approach to address the challenges facing humanity.

4. Relational Beings Towards Relational Communities

Relationships are what hold us together " like the strands of a web, spinning out in ever widening circles, fragile and easily damaged, yet filled with tensile strength" (Ackermann 17). Beverly Harrison's assertion that "relationality is the heart of all things" reinforces the idea that embracing relationality is intrinsic to our humanity, reflecting the image of God (Harrison 17). While Ackermann acknowledges the limitations of relationships, cautioning that not all connections are inherently good and some may be one-sided, oppressive, or abusive, she emphasizes the transformative potential of relationships grounded upon love and mutuality (18). Mutual ties are essential when it comes to caring about the interests of others (18). 'The notion of mutuality makes sense; yet, in relational ethics, does mutuality demand anything in return'? As we can see in the preceding pages, ethics has been measured by labour and renamed to "work ethic." To refute such notion of 'work ethic' it is noteworthy to mention that 'accountability and commitment' are inseparable in any community. We are responsible for the well-being of our surroundings. At the same time, we are committed to sharing our resources without expecting anything in return (Block 75-76).

The act of serving others without expecting anything in return aligns with the concept of being created in the image of God. Serving others is not driven by personal interests or human agendas but stems from the recognition that every individual is

made in the image of God. David Bosch's definition of the image of God as "to participate in the movement of God's love toward God's people" emphasizes that love is rooted in God and extends to others as an expression of God's grace (Bosch 390). This perspective challenges the notion of serving for the sake of humanity alone and calls for a deeper realization of the divine source of love. It implies that we do not love people based on our personal preferences, agendas, or their mere human existence; rather, our love is deeply grounded in God and intricately connected to His abundant grace. In this way, our love for God overflows through our lives, manifesting in the care and love we extend to His people on earth. The communitarian aspect of this image of God is highlighted by Todd W. Hall and M. Elizabeth Lewis Hall, who assert that while the 'image includes the capacity for dyadic love, it finds its fullest expression in community' (257).

St. Paul has frequently used the metaphors of God's family emphasizing the significance of relational connections in his epistles (1 Cor 12; Ephesians 4; Philippians 4; Philemon, etc.). Rather than relying on marital relationships to illustrate stronger communities, St. Paul utilizes the metaphor of sibling relationships, grounded in love. This imagery becomes clearer when this relationship with God closely ties with other relational beings. This love extends beyond personal connections and involves caring for the marginalized and becoming a voice for the voiceless (Ackermann 20). Embracing Christ's kenosis, where he became poor for the poor, reflects an ethical perspective centered on relationships. Stephen Seamands highlights the ethics of kenosis, asserting that a society driven by greed, self-gain, and capitalism can lead people to lose relationships (Seamands 27). St. Paul's argument for 'being relational-ethical' revolves around helping others grow personally and corporately through deeply rooted familial connections and recognizing each other's unique abilities (Hall 262). In contrast to missionary endeavors, St. Paul's analogy suggests that the Church should invest its privileges for the prosperity of others, intersecting with the unheard, unshared, unreached, and unloved world through listening to their stories.

Aftab Yunis Hakim argues that "Jesus' model to interact was not only based upon being more open and listening rather 'positive and constructive" (69). Jesus' dialogue with the Samaritan woman serves as an example, demonstrating how a humble and gentle approach can change hearts and reach communities beyond traditional boundaries. This approach, rooted in humility, positivity, and constructiveness, is more effective in winning the hearts of people compared to a superior, negative, and confined attitude (69-70). Reaching communities for the betterment of the world involves caring for the well-being of communities, irrespective of different faiths and beliefs (Ackermann 25).

The mystery of 'being relational-ethical' lies in practicing mutual relationships, with the understanding that knowing others and investing in them is foundational. The more one knows others, the more familiarity is gained with oneself, echoing the sentiment, "I see myself in the face of the other" (Ackermann 23). This profound connection is reflected in Jacob's encounter with Esau in the book of *Genesis* (33:10), where Jacob sees "God face-to-face" in Esau (Puttagunta Satyavani 95). The countenances of both God and Esau affirm God's approval of Jacob, emphasizing a divine blessing in their neighborly interaction. This interaction signifies that without others, individuals are incomplete beings. (Amos 74).

Thus, it is by embracing the path of interdependence, one becomes relational-ethical being. St. Paul has firmly urged the church, as the body of Christ, to rely on one another, connecting with the head, Jesus Christ, and connecting with one another, as the parts of the body are interwoven and interdependent. (Ephesians 4). The metaphor of the body of Christ extends beyond mere interconnectedness; it also emphasizes a willingness to endure hardships for one another (1 Corinthians 12). Without such interconnection and interdependence, there is a risk of drifting towards self-sufficiency, independence, and brokenness. This state of self-sufficiency, independence, and brokenness can lead people astray, fostering self-assurance, self-interest, and selfish gains. We are the heartbeat that beats in the dedicated service of others.

Finally, inspired by Ackermann's Eucharistic model, every community is urged to actively participate in a healing praxis, uplifting one another while recognizing the "gifts and capacities" (Block 175) bestowed by God on each individual. The Lord's table serves as a sacred space for both acknowledging our shortcomings and appreciating the unique gifts and capacities given by God. Ackermann's Eucharistic theology invites reflection on the sacrificial journey of Jesus—His incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection—forging a profound connection with those in the suffering community at the altar and those seeking renewal (26). This model encourages us to collaborate with Jesus as co-workers at the Eucharistic table, lamenting the sins of omission, especially neglecting the needs of our brothers and sisters—such as those affected by HIV/AIDS, neglecting environmental stewardship, perpetuating economic injustices (26-27), mistreating other religions in historical and contemporary contexts, maintaining non-relational attitudes toward the world, and misusing technological advancements. Therefore, in our pursuit of becoming relational-ethical beings committed to the betterment of the world, we are called to function both as a family of God, demonstrating love and grace amidst our differences, and as the body of Christ, interdependently sharing our gifts and capacities to mutually nurture each other.

5. Conclusion

The profound reality of being created in the image of God emphasizes our inherent relational nature with His beings. Relational-ethics, in this context, involves caring, protecting, and sharing resources with others, mirroring God's care for His community. People believe in individuality; however, the power of individuality lies in community. The more people know others, the more they grow. In essence, the more we express love towards God's people, the more we manifest our love for God (1 John 4:20). The early Church experienced remarkable growth due to its strong interconnectedness and interdependence. This is evident in Acts 4:34, which highlights that because of the mutual support and shared resources among the members, there was an absence

of poverty within the community. However, in contemporary communities, minor issues often escalate into sources of irritation, leading to distrust and a lack of meaningful connections. Some individuals prioritize sharing their own experiences over listening to others, mistakenly valuing their stories as more significant. Notably, the Asian culture places great importance on storytelling as a means of cultivating relationships. As Ackermann (272) observes, stories play a pivotal role in shaping relationships, serving as a means for individuals to connect with one another. Through storytelling, listeners' imaginations become engaged, allowing them to absorb and enhance the narrative by incorporating the stories of others. This storytelling method often places the listener in the shoes of the storyteller, fostering empathy for the suffering and the downtrodden. It is through this shared narrative experience that individuals become integral parts of the stories of the oppressed, marginalized, and underprivileged, contributing to transformation and being transformed in the process (24).

The paradigm of Jesus' incarnation reveals a selfless act of sharing Himself with the world. He willingly emptied Himself to become part of the narrative of our world. This act reflects true relational ethics, aimed at liberating individuals from sickness and sinful nature. Jesus' interactions with sinners led to repentance and belief, integrating them into a broader community that could collectively combat poverty, as seen in the narrative of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). In his redemptive work on the cross, Jesus reached out to the unreached, loved the unloved, heard the unheard, and shared generously with everyone. This empowers present-day communities to be co-liberators and co-workers for the betterment of the world. Consequently, the history of Jesus stands as a testament to God's active providence on earth (Davies 131). However, a pertinent question arises regarding whether Jesus embraced relationality in every circumstance or if there were instances of rejection. Jesus unequivocally rejected any self-serving element of individualism that prioritized personal interests over the well-being of communities, as exemplified in Mark 1:36-38. Unfortunately, those who were self-centered

ultimately crucified the Lord. The message is indeed obvious: only a relational-ethical society finds peace and fulfillment in assisting other communities, utilizing its resources to embody the principles of the kingdom of God for the overall well-being of the community.

Reference

Ackermann, Denise M., "Becoming Fully Human: An Ethic of Relationship in Difference and Otherness." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, vol. 102, 1998, pp. 13-27.

___, "Found Wanting And Left Untried?"Ragbag theologies : essays in honour of Denise M. Ackermann, a feminist theologian of praxis, Pillay, Miranda N., Nadar, Sarojini, Le Bruyns, Clint, Ackermann, Denise (ed), Stellenbosch: SUN Press, 2009.

Allen Hanssen, Jessica, et al. *Marriage Discourses : Historical and Literary Perspectives on Gender Inequality and Patriarchic Exploitation*, München ; Wien : De Gruyter, 2021.

Amos, Clare. "Christ Is Our Reconciliation' Icon : The Story of Jacob and Esau." Current Dialogue, vol. 52, 2012, pp. 74-79

Anderson, Christian J. "Beginning at the Beginning: Reading Missio Dei from the Start of the Bible." Missiology, vol. 45, no. 4, 2017, pp. 414–425.

Block, Peter, *Community : The Structure of Belonging*, Second edition, revised and updated, Oakland: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Incorporated, 2018.

Bosch, David J., *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 2011.

Coulter, Brian Christopher, *Be Holy: Find Identity/Find Belonging/Find Purpose*, St Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2014.

Davies, Oliver, *Theology of Transformation : Faith Freedom and the Christian Act*, 1st Edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

DeSantis, Kristal, *STRONG: A Relationship Field Guide for the Modern Man,* U.S: Illimify Media Global, 2023.

Fernandez, Eleazar S., *Toward a Theology of Struggle*, Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994.

Furey, Constance, "The Selfe Undone: Individualism and Relationality in John Donne and Aemilia Lanyer", The Harvard Theological Review, vol. 99, no. 4, 2006, pp. 469–86.

Gilliard, Dominique DuBois, and Labberton, Mark *Subversive Witness: Scripture's Call to Leverage Privilege*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2021.

Gray, John, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus: A Practical Guide to Improving Communication and Getting what you Want in Your Relationship*, New Delhi: Harper Collins India, 1992.

____, *Beyond Mars and Venus: Relationship Skills for Today's Complex World*, Dallas, TX : BenBella Books, Inc., 2017.

Hakim, Aftab Y., "Journey Amidst Covid-19: A Theology to Direct the World's Path" The American Journal of Biblical Theology, vol. 5, no. 2, 2022, pp. 206-31.

____," The Impact and Challenges of Asian Christianity in a Pluralistic Setting: A Biblical Approach to Changing the Situation", The American Journal of Biblical Theology, vol. 5, no. 2, 2022, pp. 49-74.

Hall, Todd W., *Relational Spirituality : A Psychological-Theological Paradigm for Transformation*, Westmont : InterVarsity Press, 2021.

Lee, Monle, et al. "Does the Individualist Consume More? The Interplay of Ethics and Beliefs That Governs Consumerism Across Cultures." Journal of Business Ethics, vol. 93, no. 4 (2010): 567–81.

McKnight, Scot., *1 Peter (The NIV Application Commentary)*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1996.

Puttagunta, Satyavani, *Seeing the Face of God: Exploring an Old Testament Theme*, Carlisle: Langham Monographs, 2014.

Song, Choan-Seng, and Lukas Vischer, *Doing Theology Today*, Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1976.

Song, Choan-Seng, *Third-Eye Theology : Theology in Formation in Asian Settings*, Eugene, Or. : Wipf and Stock, 2002, ©1979.

Strong, Bryan, Cohen, Theodore F., *Marriage and Family Experience Intimate Relationships in a Changing Society*, Boston, Mass.: Cengage, 2021.

Tutu, Desmond, *In God's Hands: The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2015*, London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Williams, David T., *Have This Mind: following the example of Christ*, Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2007.

Willoughby, Brian J., *The Millennial Marriage. Routledge*, New York: Routledge, 2021.