

FOREWORD

In the summer of 2016, our family visited Seoul, South Korea. My wife and I are naturalized US citizens who emigrated from South Korea to the United States when we were children. Neither of us had been back to Korea in several decades. It was the first trip to Korea for our two teenage children. One of the more intriguing aspects of our time in Korea involved engaging the Christian community. We met a Christian academic who had been influential in Korean politics, we met with the president of World Vision Korea, attended a packed worship service at Yoido Full Gospel Church, and met Christians from across the spectrum of life in the city of Seoul. Christianity can be encountered in a myriad of expressions throughout the country.

Our family has lived in Chicago for over a decade. On a typical Sunday, we have attended an African American megachurch, a multiethnic and multigenerational church comprised of fifteen different nationalities, and a Korean American congregation that welcomes an increasing number of Latinx congregants. Both snapshots of our global and local ecclesial reality offer a hopefulness for the future church. They reveal a robust and vital

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Christianity that has moved beyond a cultural captivity to Western and white Christianity. The future church is a present reality.

As this book by Wes Granberg-Michaelson will clearly reveal, there is a notable decline of Christianity in the West. This decline has also been most noticeable among white Christians. Simultaneously, there has been an explosion of the church in Africa, Asia, and Latin America along with the growth of Christian communities of color in North America. These counter-prevailing trends have resulted in an acceleration of diversity on both a global and local scale. I noted these trends in *The Next Evangelicalism* (2008). I decried the cultural captivity of the American church but held out hope for the twenty-first-century church if the emerging diverse Christianity would be embraced. Now well into the twenty-first century, the picture of a diverse Christianity in the United States and throughout the world proves to be a challenge to many Western Christians. Instead of embracing the future church, American Christians may be threatened by the decline of Western white Christian greatness and supremacy.

These realities and the challenges they raise may be difficult to face. But they must be addressed. Many of us may choose to turn a deaf ear to this reality, but it will not stay hidden much longer. We need to hear these stories. We will not survive as a united Christian community moving forward into a new era of the Christian faith without engaging in these conversations.

I am thankful for my friend, colleague, mentor, and most importantly, fellow follower of Jesus, Wes Granberg-Michaelson, for offering this text to the church. A new reality requires a new

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vision. Because this Christian renewal movement is notably found outside of the Western world, it must be viewed through non-Western eyes. This experience of the Western gaze seeing the ecclesial realities through a non-Western perspective is severely lacking in our limited North American Christian experience.

Wes offers a thoughtful voice of integrity on this topic. He has traveled all over the world learning from the church around the globe. He has witnessed these changes firsthand and has discovered and experienced the move of God within them. He is a leader who genuinely loves the church, who has faithfully served the church, and who wants the church to flourish in the upcoming era. You may not agree with every conclusion he gestures toward, but that is what makes this book an important resource for conversation. In his attempt to bring truth to light, Wes offers a glimpse into a seasoned church veteran's journey into the future church. Will you listen to this story?

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