

Proposal for Paper at IAMS Assembly, Sydney 2020

Study group: Religious Freedom, Persecution and Mission

Topic: «Forced happiness? Joy, suffering and European deficiencies.»

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Abstract:

A common theme when Christians in Norway encounter Christians in other parts of the world who suffer because of their faith, through various forms of persecution and challenges, is the surprise of how happy people can be in the midst of such suffering. There are also responses of surprise or wonder at the biblical texts that describe how the followers of Jesus responded to suffering for his sake. This first reaction can be followed up by the question of: «How would I react in such a situation?» or, more authoritatively: «How should one react in such a situation?».

My paper will approach this theme through the lens of certain aspects of the European cultures, to discover how people in other cultural settings today or historically might have been better equipped to experience joy in suffering than European Christians are today. My question for research is: «What are the cultural traits that stand in the way for European Christians to understand and experience joy in suffering for Christ, and what can we gain from understanding how our cultural base affects our view of suffering? »

I will focus on cultural traits as individualistic or community focused cultures, epistemology and approach to the void between theory and practice, as well as motivational forces and general understanding of various forms of suffering.

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