

## ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the latest issue of the *Global South Theological Journal*, Volume 4, Issue 2. In this collection, we bring together three scholarly articles that illuminate Christianity's adaptation and resilience in South and Southeast Asia. These papers offer insights into how Christian faith has been shaped by, and has in turn shaped, the unique historical, cultural, and socio-political landscapes of India, the Philippines, and Burma. From its ancient origins to its contemporary expressions, Christianity in these regions is a testament to constant negotiation, robust resistance, and enduring transformation.

Here's a glimpse into the contributions awaiting you:

Allan Varghese Meloottu's article explores the evolution of Christianity in India from its traditional arrival with Apostle Thomas in A.D. 52 to its current status as a minority faith within a Hindu-majority nation. The study traces key transitional modes, including the early assimilation with Syrian traditions, robust resistance against Portuguese Catholic impositions in the 16th century, significant vernacularization through extensive Bible translations, and profound indigenization spurred by revivals and social reforms in the 1900s. Meloottu highlights the intricate interplay between foreign missionary influences and local adaptations, which collectively fostered a uniquely Indian expression of Christianity. The article identifies three distinctive features of contemporary Indian Christianity: its inter-religious nature, characterized by theological permeability with other faiths; its holistic approach to mission, actively addressing multidimensional poverty and social inequalities; and its resilience amidst rising persecution from radical Hindutva movements. This comprehensive analysis underscores Christianity's enduring adaptability and relevance in India's pluralistic and socio-politically complex environment.

Delfo C. Canceran examines how Christianity arrived in the Philippines as an external religion, introduced and imposed by Spanish Catholics and American Protestants, profoundly influencing Filipino society and identity over centuries. The article draws a compelling contrast between the Spanish Catholic approach, marked by Christianization through conquest, friars learning native languages primarily for control, and establishing an "abysmal relationship" that created social divisions, and the American Protestant strategy, which embraced a separation of church and state, emphasized public education and the English language, and inadvertently led to the marginalization of Filipinos as "Little Brown Americans." Canceran importantly emphasizes that Filipino Christianity developed as a hybrid entity, often blending with indigenous religious beliefs and practices, which is still evident in popular religiosity. Furthermore, the paper explores the significant ideological influences of Marxism, feminism, and postcolonialism on the Filipino church, and details the fluctuating societal and governmental influence of the Catholic Church in contemporary times, noting a discernible trend towards secularism, where individuals increasingly make independent moral choices, even contrary to hierarchical positions.

Pum Za Mang provides a detailed exploration of the faith's history in Burma and its profound impact on ethnic minorities, particularly the Chin, Kachin, and Karen populations. The article highlights the pivotal role played by American Baptist missionaries, who, beginning in the 19th century, were instrumental in introducing Christianity and significantly transforming these communities. Missionaries achieved this transformative impact by creating written scripts, translating the Bible into local vernaculars, and establishing vital institutions such as schools, hospitals, and printing presses, which collectively elevated literacy, education, and ethnic consciousness among the converted groups. Mang elucidates how the adoption of Christianity by many Karen, Kachin, and Chin groups served partly as a means to preserve their distinct ethnic identities against pressures of Burmanization and state persecution. Additionally, Christianity fostered urbanization and political organization among these communities. The study underscores that despite persistent challenges like ethnic conflict and religious persecution, Christianity remains central to the identity, resilience, and societal progress of many ethnic minorities in Burma, with native evangelism driving the majority conversion among groups like the Chin and Kachin today.

Together, these articles offer a rich and multifaceted understanding of Christianity's dynamic presence in South and Southeast Asia. They reveal a faith that is not merely received but re-shaped, indigenized, and actively lived out in complex contexts. The narratives of adaptation, resistance, social engagement, and resilience presented here are crucial for comprehending the global trajectory of Christianity. We invite you, our readers, to consider these analyses and discover the vibrant and complex realities of Christian life and witness across these pivotal regions.

The editors