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NECF

Chairman's Message

## Wanted: Phinehas

By Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng

**P**osters and newspaper advertisements to recruit men and women for the armed forces during the World Wars had words like, "I want you", "Your King and Country needs you!", "Wanted: You!" Today I sense a similar urgent appeal for brave men and women to be part of the King's army against the onslaught of "Balaamism".

Balaam, the seer summoned by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel in the final year of the Israelites' wilderness journey, was first mentioned in Numbers.<sup>1</sup>

Balaamism displays five notable characteristics: -

- The spirit of Balaam will be active in the last day Church.
- Balaam will not hesitate to work with the *Balaks* of the world.
- Balaam aims to draw the last generation into the miry clay of idolatry.
- Balaam strategizes with the world to seduce the Church into immorality of the worst kind.<sup>2</sup>
- He could prophesy about the star and sceptre (Num 24:17), yet in his madness (2 Peter 2:16) will not hesitate to betray the Church, for a fee.<sup>3</sup>

Let us not mistake Balaamism as an Old Testament phenomenon.

In the book of Revelation, we have the seven-fold portrayal of what the last day Church will look like. The church in Pergamos, also known as the *compromising church*, was engrossed in the doctrine of Balaam (Revelation 2:14). Scriptures forewarn us that the same Balaam who appeared in the last year before Israel's entry into the Promised Land, will rear his ugly head before the manifestations of the seals, bowls and trumpets judgement.

Fortunately, the book of Numbers gives us insight to deal with such an onslaught: a Phinehas generation must arise to stem the tide of compromise!

In Numbers 25:1-13 we learn that the children of Israel had adjoined themselves to Baal-peor. Possibly on the advice of Balaam, the king of Moab worked to stymie the rise of the Israelites by seducing them with the daughters of Moab and drawing them into worshipping the Moabite deity. This uncomplicated strategy worked, and soon a plague ensued (Numbers 25:9). It took someone named Phinehas to stop the plague.

After 39 years of marching in the wilderness, it seems the drilling and grilling by Moses had little impact on the moral fibre of the people. Prophetically, the Malaysian

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Church is in this vulnerable season when idolatry and immorality can and will *easily* destroy her spirituality.

Make no mistake; the last battle will be fought on the moral front. And we need modern-day Phinehases to spring into action, to uphold the purity of the name of the Lord. We need models like Phinehas to awaken today's idolatrous Church that has been enslaved by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

**Phinehas had initiative** – he did not wait for instructions. He knew God's heart and the commands of the Word of God.

Zimri, the Israelite, brought in a Midianite woman into his family tent in the sight of Moses and the whole community who were in the midst of a national assembly of mourning and repentance of their sins. The couple's brazen action was clearly defiant and showed total disregard for what God and Moses had ordered (they were in the midst of slaying the leaders for their sins–Num 25:5-6). How would you and I have reacted had we been one of the Israelites at the scene?

Given the lack of believers like Phinehas, I would hazard to guess the Church today would be ineffective and compromised in dealing with such a situation. In our dealings with the faults and sins of others, we usually fall into one of two extremes. We either over-condemn like the Pharisees or over-tolerate like the Corinthian church.

Phinehas was a man who understood when a public stand had to be made. His zeal was well-placed.

**Secondly, we note that Phinehas ran into the tent.** He made no excuse that what went on in the confines of the bedroom was a private matter. There are no "private" sins.

Phinehas did not hold back from entering the tent of the man and woman. He did not feel in any way uncomfortable to confront them. He had no misguided notion that it would be "judgmental" or that it was ungracious to do so.

Let us not allow our erroneous understanding of patience and grace to get in the way of true Christianity. Oh, how we need to regain this sense of the fear of God.

**Thirdly, Phinehas took quick action.** The life and death of God's people hung in the balance. Phinehas' quick action stopped the divine plague that had killed twenty-four thousand Israelites. The Lord lauded him for his godly zeal. No time was wasted on consultations, dialogues or reconciliation summits.

Too often the Church is blind to the crisis of "men dying." Already 24,000 had died that day. So flagrant and reprehensible was their sin that it attracted God's obdurate judgment.

He "went after" v8 NKJV, "rushed after" v8 NLT the man, into the tent.<sup>4</sup> Urgency to do His will is sorely lacking amongst His people. There should be no delay to obey His Word and to do His clear will.

**Lastly, Phinehas was thorough in his dealing with the sin Israel was facing.** The gravity of the sin and the openness of the rebellion caused such zeal to arise in Phinehas that he took the javelin and drove it through the man of Israel and the Midianite woman and made shish-kebab of them.

God had already told Moses and the judges to slay every man that had joined himself unto Baal-peor (Numbers 25:4-5). But it was *not* Moses who initiated the slaying in this instance of blatant disregard for the holiness of God. Phinehas, consumed by the zeal of God, led the charge.

Herein is the prophetic lesson to the last day Church – it is time for the next generation, the Phinehas generation – to be filled with hot jealousy, to be willing to make a stand for righteousness, to arise, to lead the fight against sin and *stop* God’s judgment.

The nursery rhyme “The Three Blind Mice” serves as a great analogy of the types of blind members we can find among our congregation today.

The first group is blind to the brevity of life. The second does not see that only what is done for Christ will last. The third serves blindly, not realizing it is not mere service that pleases God but serving with passion is what He desires of us.

The compromising Church’s death knell was that she was *blind* and impervious to the plague devouring the beloved. Hence, she lacked passion.

Balaam, the diviner, was also *blind* to the wider scheme behind the diviner’s fee in Balak’s hand. Hence, he could not see the angel with the drawn sword which his donkey could see. He is the near perfect blind agent used by the devil in Israel’s final year in the wilderness. Beware, for in these last days he still has the same goal to frustrate our entrance into our promised land.

One of the last mentions of Balaam is in Jude 1:11: “like Balaam, they deceive people for money.” Worse than being deceived by Balaam is to be like Balaam, forfeiting our very own entrance into the kingdom because of our love for money.

May our good Lord have mercy on us all.

<sup>1</sup> Numbers 22:5–6 (NKJV) 5 Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which is near the River in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying: “Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me! 6 Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they are too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless is blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.”

<sup>2</sup> Revelation 2:14 (NKJV) But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

<sup>3</sup> Numbers 22:7 (NKJV) So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the diviner’s fee in their hand, and they came to Balaam and spoke to him the words of Balak.

<sup>4</sup> Numbers 25:8–9 (NKJV) 8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. 9 And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.

## NECF welcomes new members

Church	Pastor	City / Town
<b>Ordinary Members</b>		
Ekklesia Centre (Borneo)	Rev Gary Lean Kim Seng	Kota Kinabalu
Elijah House Malaysia Bhd	Rev Nancy Quay Kim Giek	Petaling Jaya
Gereja Baptist Pantai Bahasa (PBC) Malaysia	Pr Biography bin Tabangka	Petaling Jaya
Jalan Tiga Gospel Hall	Ms Rosie Kong Suit Yim	Petaling Jaya
Purelight Corporation Berhad	Mr Khoo Thieam Hock	Batu Pahat
Shalom Fellowship	Pr Doris Chou Siew Moy	Kuala Lumpur
Word of Life Sanctuary	Pr Jagatheswaran A/L Kondon	Kuala Selangor
New Life Fellowship A/G	Rev Alexander A/L R A Muthu	Klang

# A Malaysian Girl Who Dared to Obey

By Janice Wong

**“W**hen I was 21 years old, I had a very serious conversation with God about the plan He had for my future,” so shared Cheung-Ang Siew Mei, the speaker for the second #DestinyTalks2 organized by the NECF Women’s Commission, on November 2, 2019, at NECF.

Siew Mei is the Executive Director of Christian Action, a Hong Kong-based Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that provides services to the orphaned, disabled, abandoned and disadvantaged children in Hong Kong and Qinghai, China. She considers herself a true-blue Malaysian girl, and her story of how God led her into her destiny inspired those who heard her that day. It was full house at the Talk that included some men. Thirty-seven participants attended, including Datuk Paul Low, former Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department. The speaker also brought her own “entourage” of former schoolmates from St. Mary’s Secondary School, KL.

Siew Mei started her destiny story by describing how her formative years at St. Mary’s moulded her for leadership. She was multi-talented and a high achiever, excelling in dance, songs, sports, acting and academics. Amidst all these, her turning point was at sweet 16 when she made the critical decision to follow Jesus. From there, an unexpected blessing resulted when she was offered a KFC scholarship to study in England with no strings attached.



Part of the attentive audience.

When her UK studies were over, Siew Mei knew returning to Malaysia would mean entering the rat race. She decided to explore volunteer work for a year and see what would happen. The Lord multiplied the fruit of that decision. She gained experience in volunteerism, met her husband-to-be and eventually moved to Hong Kong, where after a few years

of service, she was asked to take up the leadership of an NGO involved in refugee work that was heading towards a closure.

This tenacious woman of God turned things around. She amazed us with a long string of her official positions and roles working with the Hong Kong and Chinese government as part of her humanitarian work – all these without knowing how to read or speak Mandarin! Siew Mei’s description of how God always protected her reputation and position really demonstrated divine favour.

In a big group photo with numerous Hong Kong and China leaders with national roles and responsibilities, she was just one row behind President Xi Jinping of China. Her animated story-telling of how people literally jostled for proximity to the powerful man had the audience in stitches. Siew Mei’s sharing of the many times when God used difficult circumstances to keep her humble and to build her faith had the audience listening carefully. Truly Almighty God brought Siew Mei from strength to strength despite numerous oppositions.

Just when she was prepared to return home to Malaysia, while seeking the Lord, God opened another door. He gave her a vivid dream to go to Qinghai, China, and help orphaned and disabled children there. Siew Mei reflected on Psalm 72:13 as one of the key verses that guided her decision to dedicate her life to helping vulnerable children: “He will have compassion on the poor and needy and save the lives of the oppressed.” What drives and motivates her is seeing the heart of God expressed through her ministry.



Siew Mei animatedly sharing her destiny journey.



A group photo of participants at the talk.

At this talk, the younger-generation women were involved from leading worship to listening attentively and then asking questions during the Question and Answer session. The meeting concluded with prayer for the Cheung family – father, mother and son – to carry on the Great Commission work that the Lord has destined them to execute for the Glory of His Name.



Janice Wong, a member of the NECF Women Commission, is a Youth and Leadership Coach, Founder of 5 Carat Character-Building for Teen Girls, and a facilitator for the No Apologies® Youth Programme by Focus on the Family Malaysia.



# Extending Greatly Needed Relief to Victims of Bombings

By Jack Cheah

*Pastor Kumaran from Zion Church at his son's funeral.*

A series of coordinated terrorist suicide bombings hit three churches and three luxury hotels in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019. Over 250 persons died, including more than 40 children and at least 500 were injured.

St. Anthony's Shrine Kochikade in Colombo and St. Sebastian's Church in Negombo which are Roman Catholic churches were affected by the bombings. Zion Church in Batticaloa, an Evangelical church and a member of the National Christian Evangelical Alliance Sri Lanka (NCEASL), was also struck. Shangri-la, Cinnamon Grand and Kingsbury, all hotels in Colombo, were hit as well.

The despicable attacks indeed have left behind not only many deaths but also loss of family members, loss of livelihoods, multiple permanent disabilities and long term physical and emotional wounds. In Zion Church alone, 32 people died of which 14 were under the age of 14. Another 73 persons were injured and underwent treatment.

On the following day, 22 April, the Police and the Government Analyst confirmed that the attacks which took place were perpetrated by suicide bombers affiliated to a radical Islamist group called the National Thowheeth Jama'ath.

NECF did not take long to respond to the need for relief aid to victims of the bombings. It appealed for donations from its members, particularly churches, and channelled the collection to NCEASL.

According to NCEASL, all the contributions collected from various sources, including NECF and its own funds, were utilized to extend assistance to those affected by the bombings. Emergency assistance was provided to the victims i.e. **32 families** to cover funeral expenses. Cash



*NCEASL staff visiting those affected by the blast.*



*Memorial Banner in remembrance of the deceased.*

grants were also given to **59 injured** individuals for medical expenses. The assistance provided varied such as providing equipment like a toilet wheelchair for the ones who were disabled as a result of the explosions, hospital beds for injured victims and medical health care needs. Families of the deceased victims also received assistance.

Besides emergency assistance, subsistence provision was given to those who had lost their breadwinners in the family. A total of **25 families** in Colombo, **25 families** in Negombo and **42 families** from Batticaloa were assisted through the distribution of dry rations.

Over **20 families** were also provided cash for either a toilet construction/a full option wheel-chair/or a commode chair for affected or injured victims, depending on the need.

In addition, NCEASL also provided counselling to affected families through its **five trained personnel**. Livelihood support through provision of grants and working capital to start businesses were also given to **47 people**. Provision of scholarships to children who had lost single or both parents were given as well. The beneficiaries were **26 children** in Batticaloa, **30 children** in Colombo and **22 children** in Negombo.



*Jack Cheah is the Executive Secretary of the Business & Economy Commission and the Education Commission, NECF*



*Pastor Jane with a delegate from Germany.*

# A Fruitful Learning Experience at the WEA General Assembly

*Personal Sharing by Pastor Jane Low*

I count it a great privilege to have attended the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) General Assembly in Jakarta, Indonesia, from 7 to 13 November 2019. WEA is a network of churches in 129 nations that has each formed an evangelical alliance. Over 100 international organizations have joined together to give a world-wide identity, voice, and platform to more than 600 million evangelical Christians.

Under the theme, "Your Kingdom Come", the discussions at the assembly revolved around disciple making.

Personally, I picked up a lot of lessons from the great time I had at the assembly. There are four lessons I would like to share:

## 1. Age doesn't matter when it comes to the kingdom of God

I met a number of wonderful older people (aged 65, 70, and 75 years), who are still energetic and strongly serving God in their respective ministries. They saw beyond themselves and made it a point to bring voice and impact to the people around them. One lady obtained her Bachelor and Master degrees at the age of 52 years. An 83-year-old speaker was full of compassion and excitement while sharing the closing speech at the assembly. His enthusiasm really humbled me.

## 2. Develop skills, gifts, and talents for the sake of the kingdom

There was a moment in my life when I told myself that I should learn more languages when I was young. I am glad now that I was able to realize the goal to master several languages; this has actually helped me to enjoy my time at the gathering. With three languages under my belt, I was greatly helped to connect easier and better with people and be part of God's big family.

The speakers who shared at the assembly are known for particular ministries they have been called to. Their gifts, talents and skills have been very well used for kingdom extension purposes. They indeed have very clear goals for their work. As a young pastor, I have to intentionally develop certain skills for the sake of the kingdom. As such, I need to be more conscious as to how I spend my time daily.



*A special art presentation at the Assembly.*

## 3. Be humble and have a thick skin to seek advice from experienced people

I had the opportunity to speak to various people from different age groups and backgrounds. They were so willing to share their experiences with me and also to give me some good advice. Life is truly too short to learn all about life, including mistakes, if I were to just keep to myself.

## 4. Disciple-making mindset

Intentional discipleship is for all. Discipleship is not the call for pastors or cell leaders only. Every Christian and every minister, indeed every follower of Christ, needs to have the disciple-making mindset. Basically, we need to impart biblical values into another person's life. We should aim to be a great influencer and impact another life for Christ in our daily encounters with people.

I am glad that I have had this rare opportunity to meet different leaders from different regions of the world at the WEA General Assembly. I am challenged and inspired not just to be an efficient but a more effective leader for the extension of His kingdom.



*Pr Jane Low is the Campus Pastor of Full Gospel Tabernacle Subang Jaya.*



# Re-engaging with the All-Time Global Best-Selling Book

## *A.D. 2020 Year of the Bible*

By Jack Cheah

### Standfirst

**This article is based mainly on what is shared on [bibleyear2020.com](http://bibleyear2020.com).**

**T**he 2020 Global Year of the Bible is a fresh movement to re-engage with God's Word at grassroots level all around the planet. A relational network of people from more than 200 countries and representing virtually all major Christian denominations, movements, and organizations initiated this move. They want every man, woman and child to have an opportunity to engage with God's Word, believing that "people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 8:3 NLT).

Bishop Efraim Tendaro, Secretary-General of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) launched the global campaign on September 16, 2019. Founded in 1846, the WEA represents over 600 million Christians worldwide with national alliances in 130 nations.

Projected to be one of the most collaborative movements in Christian history, the Year of the Bible is also supported by His Holiness Pope Francis of the Catholic Church, the global Lausanne network, the United Bible Societies, The Seed Company, Biblica and many more.

The year-long initiative is expected to achieve the greatest global Bible engagement in history, as billions follow a call to read the Bible and engage in a global conversation on its message.

According to Bishop Tendaro, "Year of the Bible will highlight the importance of living our lives as a narrative shaped by the unchanging Word of God. We will demonstrate that the Bible's story—infused with the power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit—is the foundation for the recognition of the dignity of every individual. It inspires hope, purpose and a right relationship with God."

The WEA's initiative came with an endorsement from renowned author and speaker Ravi Zacharias, who said, "There is no book in history that has been so studied and so critiqued as the Holy Bible. God has revealed Himself in its page as the very source of truth and love, the eternally existent one from whom we draw all definitions for life's purpose and destiny... I wholeheartedly commend the World Evangelical Alliance earmarking 2020 as Year of the Bible. It is a timely tribute for a timeless book."



The Year of the Bible has been declared with three emphases as follows:

### 1. Recognize and Celebrate

This is with regards to the unparalleled role that the Bible has had over thousands of years in history. Besides being the all-time global best-selling book, it has been translated into more languages than any other book in history and has been read or listened to by more people in more places than any other literary work. It has inspired more songs and led to more works of art being painted than any other book. It has also motivated myriads of social reformers and philanthropists to love their neighbors and do good in their societies.

### 2. Educate and Inspire

People the world over have been moved to study, learn, and engage with the Bible through private and public activities of reading and/or listening to the words of the Holy Scriptures and considering how to apply them to their own lives. People who know and love the Bible believe that this will enable them to better love God and neighbor. People of the Word believe that this will inspire them to live according to the Golden Rule, "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12 NLT) and thus create more harmonious cities and communities wherever followers of the God of the Bible may live.

### 3. Motivate and Encourage

Followers of the God of the Bible have been led to share graciously the Word of God with their neighbors in many culturally-appropriate ways. In order for all to have access to God's Word, Christians everywhere need to encourage the translation, publication, and distribution of the Bible, and help educate and motivate people so that everyone can engage with the life-giving words of the Holy Scriptures. Through all these various endeavors, people of the Word hope to see Bible poverty ended in this generation, resulting in greater good for our families and neighborhoods globally.



Jack Cheah is the Executive Secretary of the Business & Economy Commission and the Education Commission, NECF



# A Global Vision for Outreach GO 2020

By Jack Cheah



## Standfirst

**This article is based mainly on what is shared on [go2020.world](http://go2020.world).**

**G**lobal Outreach (GO) 2020 is a special edition of Global Outreach Day, which has been taking place every last Saturday of May since 2012. On this day, every year, believers worldwide have stepped out together in faith to share the Good News.

GO 2020 is a global vision to activate the whole Body of Christ – millions of individual believers, churches and large global ministries – to pray and share the Gospel all over the world in a joint effort of evangelism during the month of May 2020.

The Great Commission is not an “optional assignment” for the Church. Matthew 9:37 says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” GO 2020 aims to turn those numbers upside down ... to pursue the following vision and goal:

**Vision:** To activate and train every Christian believer everywhere to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through a unique partnership effort involving many different

denominations and parachurch organizations, this massive movement is meant to train and inspire every believer to live a lifestyle of evangelism.

**Goal:** Mobilize 100 million believers to reach 1 billion people with the Gospel in May 2020.

Through a strategic partnership network built over nearly a decade, GO2020 will carry out the following:

- **Encourage ordinary believers to share the Gospel** through personal conversation and to demonstrate God’s love through prayer, caring, and sharing in numerous different ways.
- **Equip churches** with training and materials in evangelism, discipleship and church planting.
- **Promote Kingdom partnership** as churches, denominations and ministries from many different backgrounds work together to reach the world.
- **Invite every church to be part of a church planting** initiative during the year 2020. Every church is planting a church – together we can establish 1 million new faith communities.
- **Make the Gospel visible** through thousands of “Freedom Flash Mobs”, GO 2020 Events, March for Jesus and more.

Besides World Evangelism Alliance (WEA), partners in GO2020 include the Baptist World Alliance, Assemblies of God, Alpha Global, Evangelism Explosion International, Campus Crusade for Christ, Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International, Global Day of Prayer and many others.

The following is the **GO2020 timeline**:

### **January to May**

Focus on Prayer, Mobilization and Training

### **May**

Commission and Outreach Month

### **May 30**

Global Outreach Day

### **June to November**

Discipling of New Converts and Ongoing Outreach

### **November**

Baptism Month (Goal of GO2020)



*Jack Cheah is the Executive Secretary of the Business & Economy Commission and the Education Commission, NECF*





# Preserve and Defend Harmony at ALL COSTS

By Jack Cheah

*Archbishop Julian opening the reception with a speech.*

The Annual Christmas Hi-Tea Reception of the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM)'s was held on 25 December 2019 at Rumah Uskup Agung, Kuala Lumpur. Organised by the Catholic Church of Malaysia, a CFM component member, the guest of honour was Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Abdullah. CFM Vice-Chairmen Bishop Dr. Ong Hwai Teik, also the President of the Council of Churches (CCM) of Malaysia, and Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng, also National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) Chairman, were present. Also in attendance were Primary Industries Minister Teresa Kok, politicians, diplomats, religious and community leaders.

CFM chairman Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur Julian Leow in his opening speech as the event host stated that the Christmas message of peace is for all people, regardless of their faith. Peace for Christians is a gift from Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace as stated in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you..."

He stressed that peace is more than just a concept as it is to be shared. Jesus says in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God." It is clear that there is a need to work for peace in our society and community guided by love for our neighbours.

According to him, the challenge for all Malaysians is to be peacemakers, to find common ground and to engage in respectful dialogues, whether in politics, race relations,

economic crises or disputes among families and local communities. In this regard, we must never allow race and religion to separate and create fear amongst us. **Religious harmony**, the cornerstone of a prosperous Malaysia, **must thus be preserved and defended** by Malaysians of all backgrounds.



*VVIPs at the main table.*

The ability of mankind to live in harmony is implied by peaceful co-existence. This is elaborated in the message entitled, "Peaceful Co-existence the Right Way" penned by Kuala Lumpur Mufti Datuk Seri Zulkifli Mohamad Al-Bakri who could not attend the event. The message read out by Archbishop Julian stated that existing peacefully with non-Islamic beliefs is an essential Islamic principle that is clearly



stated in many Quranic verses and has been practised by Muslims throughout their history. There is no contradiction between Islam and devotion to civil society, social culture and co-existence with others.

Archbishop Julian expressed his hope that common sense will prevail amongst religious leaders to promote more ways of promoting harmony among Malaysians of different faiths rather than driving a wedge among them. We must be able to continue to wish Merry Christmas to Christians, Happy Deepavali to Hindus and Happy Wesak Day to Buddhists.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin in his speech said that a more progressive understanding of harmony in terms of knowing each other should not be only limited to peaceful co-existence. Tolerance, respect and acceptance should lead to actually liking each other.

He further said that we can be seated next to each other, and just respect and say nothing. Neither will we cooperate to work together and live peacefully with each other.

Thus, it is crucial to like each other in order to be able to understand one another and to work together. Then and



*Datuk Seri Saifuddin with wife, Archbishop Julian and other VVIPs in a group photo.*

then only, peaceful co-existence, as stated by the Kuala Lumpur Mufti will become relevant.

The Hi-Tea reception was attended by about 300 people and there were special performances by a dance group, singing of Christmas carols by a choir and also the reading of Scripture.



*Jack Cheah is the Executive Secretary of the Business & Economy Commission and the Education Commission, NECF*

# The Church's One Mandate

*By Dr Leong Tien Fock*

## Standfirst

**This is a reprint of an article as it appeared on October, 2010 in the Malaysia Bible Seminary newsletter, Connections. It is reproduced here with permission from the writer.**

**W**E KNOW THAT the Old Testament authors bore witness to Christ. To appreciate the extent of this witness we need to consider how the New Testament authors re-interpreted the Old Testament in the light of Christ.

To illustrate, we will consider Hebrews 2:5-10, which is a re-interpretation of Psalms 8:4-6.

In its original context, Psalms 8:4-6 is about the creation of Adam (and Eve) in the image of God and the mandate given to them to rule over the whole earth (Gen 1:26-28).

In the context of Hebrews 2:5-10, it is about Christ and the authority given to Him to rule over the heavens and the earth.

A superficial reading may mislead us to think that the author of Hebrews twisted Psalms 8:4-6 to suit his purpose.

To understand what is happening we need to go back to Genesis 1:26-28, to which Psalms 8:4-6 refers.



This text records what is often called the Cultural Mandate, which was given to Adam before the fall. In order to rule over the whole earth Adam and Eve were commissioned, beginning with the Garden of Eden, to build a global civilization that is in fellowship with God and consistent with His will. But when sin entered the world this mandate could not be fulfilled as intended.



Unless we assume that God was thus defeated by Satan we expect the original mandate to be given a new life.

So when the Spirit-inspired author of Hebrews applied Psalms 8:4-6 to Christ, thus replacing Adam with Christ, he was simply recognizing a truth that was staring at him: the Eternal Son has become the Second Adam so that He could reclaim the pre-Fall mandate for the human race.

In other words, because of sin, human beings "in Adam" could not fulfill God's original purpose. Therefore there is a need for human beings to be redeemed "in Christ" so that the original mandate could be fulfilled. This involves restoring them to a position of glory and honour (Heb 2:7; Ps 8:5).

Hebrews 2:9-10 specifically says that the Son of God became Man so that "He might taste death for everyone," thereby "bringing many sons to glory."

Hence the text connects the fulfillment of the Cultural Mandate directly to the Gospel.

For our purpose here, we will not consider the marvelous truth that what we regain in Christ far exceeds what we lost in Adam. We will only consider the implication for Christian mission.

If Christ came to reclaim the Cultural Mandate, where then does the Great Commission fit in?

The Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) is usually understood as a new mandate given to the Church to be fulfilled in addition to the Cultural Mandate. It has even been called the Missionary Mandate. The Church then has two mandates: the missionary (spiritual) and the cultural (secular).

But is this way of thinking biblical?

Let us take a fresh look at the Great Commission in light of the Cultural Mandate.

The Great Commission is prefaced with the affirmation that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Christ. In re-interpreting the Cultural Mandate, the author of Hebrews said the same thing about Christ (Heb 2:8).

The Great Commission is about making disciples of all nations, who would observe everything Christ has commanded in every sphere of their lives. This amounts to rebuilding a global civilization that is consistent with God's will.

The Great Commission also comes with the promise that Christ will be with His disciples even to the end of the age. He does this through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, this global civilization is also in fellowship with God. The biblical evidence thus points to the conclusion that the Great Commission is actually the New Testament version of the Cultural Mandate.

Since the Cultural Mandate spells out God's purpose for His creation, it is better to call it the Creation Mandate.

The Creation Mandate is indeed a cultural mandate. But given the present tendency in the Church to dichotomize

the spiritual from the secular, when we call it the Cultural Mandate, it will likely be misunderstood as a contrast to the Missionary Mandate. And there are serious consequences to this misunderstanding.

For instance, as presented in Hebrews 2:5-10, Christian salvation (see especially verse 10) is synonymous with the fulfillment of the Creation Mandate. Therefore, Christian salvation affects not just the spiritual and the individual but also the secular and the communal. It affects an entire civilization. This is what we expect when the Great Commission is carried out as Christ intended.

For when Christ's disciples of all nations, through the empowering of the Holy Spirit, observe everything He has commanded in every sphere of their lives, they collectively form a civilization that is in fellowship with God and consistent with His will. Such a civilization, which is in this world though not of this world, cannot help but make a Christian impact in the world.

Of course, the Great Commission will not be perfectly fulfilled until Christ returns. But if it is misunderstood as distinct from the Creation Mandate, it will be reduced to world evangelization.

And Christians will think that the Church has been faithful to Christ's commission as long as they are making converts instead of disciples.

Culturally the Church will then not be significantly different from the world.

So when the Church seeks to make a Christian impact in the world, supposedly to fulfill the "Cultural Mandate," it lacks power as well as credibility.

It is amazing that this is exactly what has happened even though the Great Commission as expressed in Matthew 28:18-20 explicitly emphasizes the making of disciples by teaching them to observe everything Christ has commanded.

In fact, evangelism is not even mentioned, only implied. This consequence alone should cause us to rethink the assumption that the Church has two mandates. This assumption can so blind us that we do not even see what is explicitly emphasized.

The Church's one mandate and mission is the Creation Mandate, rephrased as the Great Commission.

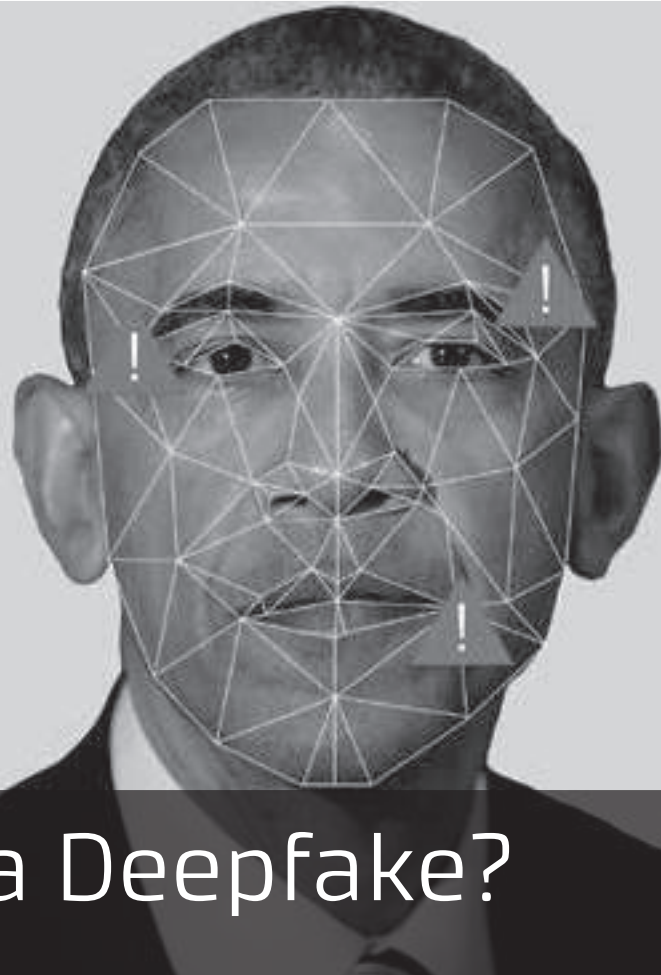
This understanding forces us to recognize that unless we see a cultural and communal transformation in the Church we are not fulfilling the Great Commission.

This also means that the Church as a community has not really experienced the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The potential of the Church has yet to be unleashed.



*Dr Leong Tien Fock is Research Director of Malaysia Campus Crusade for Christ. He is a member of NECF's Research Commission and worships at Beacon Presbyterian Centre, Menjalara, Kepong*





# What is a Deepfake?

By Jason Thacker

## Standfirst

**This is a reprint of an article as it appeared on February 4, 2019 on <https://erlc.com>, the website of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention, USA. It is reproduced here with permission from the website's Managing Editor of Content.**

## Introduction

**Y**ou're probably familiar with the viral video series called "Bad Lip Reading," where people ranging from the president of the United States to the Super Bowl MVP "say" some of the craziest things. These video dubs have the audio replaced and then aligned with the lip motion of the speaker—and are obviously fake.

But there is a newer AI technology that allows someone to not only replace the voice of the speaker but alter their facial characteristics in order to make them say whatever you want. While it might make for a funny YouTube video to share online, the potential use of this new technology will have disturbing and profound effects on society in the years to come.

## What is a Deepfake?

A deepfake is a video of someone saying and maybe even doing things that they never did in reality. These fake videos are created on computers using AI technology that allows the creator to use existing footage of an individual. These videos can be created by anyone who has access to the right computers, software, and knowledge. They are incredibly realistic and pose a real threat to society.

In April 2018, actor and producer Jordan Peele created a deepfake of former President Obama. It initially fooled a number of viewers online until Peele revealed the power of

this technology. Many in government and the intelligence community are deeply worried about how it will be abused. As of today, we still don't even have the ability to detect these fake videos, but developers are working furiously to design detection tools, which can be complicated. The speed at which our society operates means that a deepfake may do lasting and irreversible damage before it's exposed.

## How does it work?

Deepfake technology has been around for a number of years, but the recent advances have led to concern. Apple's Memoji technology and Snapchat's infamous video filters use a similar type of technology. These rudimentary consumer versions are designed to make you look like a talking robot, give you dog ears, or even swap faces with your friends. This technology has also been used for years in the production of celebrity sex tapes.

The name deepfake comes from the popular use of "deep" with artificial intelligence, which means that something is extremely complex, as opposed to shallow or simple. To create a deepfake, video content of one subject is analyzed and mapped by a form of artificial intelligence that utilizes a machine-learning technique called a recurrent neural network. A digital map is made of the subject's face, mouth, and other defining features. The body of the subject may also be included, which allows the computer to place a person in a different place as well as changing what they say. Finally, a map of the new audio and video is created.

Then, an AI meshes the content together to make a hyper-realistic fake video. When the meshing occurs, the computer automatically blends facial features, light, and other elements to match the new and old content. As computers



and algorithms become more sophisticated and powerful, it will become next to impossible to detect a fake video. This will inevitably lead to a deeper mistrust in the media we consume.

### How might a Deepfake affect our society?

Given the viral and unverifiable nature of content shared on social media, deepfake technology has the potential to wreak havoc on societal order and even disrupt international relations. Imagine a scenario where you are on social media and come across a video that many of your friends have shared. You click on the video and see the president declaring a national emergency or an international crisis.

Given the algorithmic nature and structure of our society, cable news channels decide to announce the “breaking news,” the stock market reacts immediately, and an already divided society turns on itself, assigning blame to someone who never said the things purported in the video. This doesn’t take into account what our allies and enemies across the world would begin to think or how they may prepare to engage, either. These fake videos could disrupt our entire society and world within minutes. While this scenario might seem like the plot of the latest action movie, deepfakes present this kind of a threat.

### What do we do about them?

We are not well prepared as a society for the potential misuse of deepfake technology. Though it has yet to been used in a malicious way with widespread consequences, we don’t have the correct preparations in place for the possibility. In addition to lacking the resources to detect the videos, the U.S. doesn’t have legislation on the state or federal level to prosecute those using this technology with the intentions of disrupting society.

The day before the government shutdown in December 2018, Sen. Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) introduced a bill that would criminalize the malicious creation and distribution of these fake videos. Sasse told Axios that these videos “can be tailor-made to drive Americans apart and pour gasoline on just about any culture war fire.” Other lawmakers such as Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.) and House Oversight Chairman Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) are also considering legislation on this controversial and potentially dangerous technology.

In addition, Bill A081155 was filed by the New York State Assembly last May and was the first of its kind introduced at the state level, but not without pushback from entertainment companies that declared the bill to be overreaching and hurtful to the creative storytelling industry that uses this technology in film production.

### How should Christians prepare for this technology?

First, we should be aware of the subtle and often hidden dangers that rise out of technological development. Although technology is a gift from God that can be used in ways that honor him and help us love our neighbors, we

need to be cognizant that these tools can and will be used in ways that seek to defame or denigrate our fellow image-bearers. We shouldn’t pursue technological innovation for innovation’s sake, but as a way of living out our calling by God to take dominion and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:26-28).

We are accountable to God for the ways that we steward the gifts he has given us and for the ways that we love our neighbors. There will always be ways to misuse and abuse technological developments, but being aware of these issues now can allow us to combat the rise of deepfakes and fake news. We have a responsibility to understand these developments in order to love our neighbors and allow our society to flourish in the pursuit of truth.

Second, Christians should pursue truth in all aspects of our life and test the validity of something before we share it online or in our communities. In our world of constant connectivity, we should think twice before sharing or commenting on a video that we see online. Given the recent explosion of fake news sites and the abuse of social media, Christians need to be wise about how we use our voice online, especially in light of how things can be taken out of context or edited to fit a political agenda.



Even though videos like the one of the Covington Catholic High School boys and Native American protestors at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial were not deepfakes, the explosion of anger and hatred online after the videos released did lasting damage to the credibility of news sources and the livelihoods of all of those involved. In a world of deepfakes, this danger will only be escalated. We must heed James’ advice to “be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger” (James 1:19).

The AI age is one of unparalleled growth and opportunity, but it is

also an age of misinformation, split-second reactions, and hyper-realistic fake videos. Though we may long for simpler days, God has placed us in this time to be his ambassadors, proclaiming the kingdom of God until he returns. Our role in society is to be the type of people who reflect our Creator in our minds, speech, and actions.

Deepfakes will certainly be used for malicious purposes in the future, and we must rise above the fray and seek justice for those affected by deepfakes. So next time you see a video online that seems a little outlandish or peculiar, you might take an extra moment to consider whether or not is a deepfake. Chances are you will fall for one in the near future and won’t even know it.



*Jason Thacker serves as creative director and associate research fellow at ERLC.*



## Introduction

**A**t a seminar held on 11 November 2019, retired Court of Appeal Judge, Justice Dato' Seri Hishamudin Yunus, asserted that based on the Federal Constitution, Malaysia is a secular state, not a theocratic Islamic state. The assertion was made in his speech titled "Religion and the State: Secular or Theocratic."

The Dayak National Congress organised the seminar titled "Religious Freedom and Nation Building – Religion without Compulsion." in response to the Malay Dignity Congress (MDC) held in Shah Alam on 6 October 2019. One of the MDC's demands is that positions of power be limited to Muslims, supposedly because Malaysia is an Islamic state.

## The Case for a Secular State

Justice Hishamudin's grounds included material from the Cobbold Commission Report, the Government Paper: Malaysia and Sarawak, the Memorandum on Malaysia, the Intergovernmental Committee Report, the Government Paper: Malaysia and North Borneo, the Sabah 20 Point Memorandum and the Sarawak 18 Point Memorandum.

His assertion is based on **ten points** as follows:

- (1) While Islam is declared to be the State religion, the Constitution stipulates that [the position of Islam] is subject to the provisions on fundamental liberties, citizenship, the separation of the legislative, executive and judicial powers in Malaysia, federal-state relations, finances, elections, public services, etc. [Article 3(4)]
- (2) The Constitution proclaims itself to be the supreme law of the Federation, as opposed to the holy book of any religion. [Article 4(1)]
- (3) The Constitution guarantees the Rule of Law and Separation of Powers i.e. Malaysia's laws are made, executed and interpreted by three secular institutions, namely, Parliament, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (or the Cabinet or any other person as determined by Parliament) and the Courts respectively. [Article 39, 44 and 121]

- (4) The Constitution confirms that decisions in Parliament are made by a majority; a basic feature of Democracies, and not Theocracies. [Article 62(3)]
- (5) The Constitution regards "written law" and "common law" as the applicable laws in Malaysia. Substantive Islamic law is not considered "law" under the present legal framework; it must be legislated for. [Article 160 and 74(2)]
- (6) The creation of key religious authorities i.e. the Majlis Agama, the Mufti and the Syariah courts, are all pursuant to laws passed by a secular institution i.e. the State Legislative Assembly. [Item 1 of State List]
- (7) All Ministers of Cabinet, members of the Houses of Parliament and Judges take an oath of office which requires them to "preserve, protect and defend" the Constitution, as opposed to any religion. [Sixth Schedule]
- (8) The Constitution guarantees freedom of religion for all persons. [Article 11(1)]
- (9) The Constitution does not create a Head of the religion of Islam for Malaysia.
- (10) There is no religious qualification with respect to office(s) in Government; thus, a person of any religious affiliation can be a member of the Legislature, Executive or Judiciary in Malaysia.

The learned judge's presentation at the seminar clearly pointed out that Malaysia is a secular state. Thus, to suggest otherwise is simply not right. It can also be adduced from here that both the state and federal governments have misrepresented the constitution for decades. Islamization of the laws and institutions of our land then has no bases to fall upon. Truth truly matters and must prevail.



*Jack Cheah is the Executive Secretary of the Business & Economy Commission and the Education Commission, NECF*



# Giving Due Recognition and Encouragement to Widows

By Rev Daniel Loh

The NECF Tamil Commission together with Widows with Mission (WWM) has been organizing the Christmas gatherings for Tamil pastors' widows every year since 2016. Under the leadership of Rev. Geetha Rajagopal, the WWM has taken upon itself this special ministry to meet the needs of widows.

This year's event was held on 30th November 2019 at Olive Tree Restaurant, Kuala Lumpur. Rev. Gabriel Jabanathan, Advisor to the Tamil Commission, gave a word of exhortation and encouragement to the widows – that they continue to do their good work in order to fulfil their mission in Christ.

The Christmas lunch was sponsored by Rev. Bernard Papuraj, Vice-Chairman of the Tamil Commission. The Tamil Commission brought Christmas cheer to the 25 widows who attended by blessing each one of them with a Christmas love



Group photo of pastors' widows.

gift of RM 500.00. Rev Daniel Loh, the Executive Secretary of NECF Tamil Commission, presented the Christmas love gifts.

As coordinator of the WWM ministry, Rev. Geetha Rajagopal expressed her gratitude to NECF Tamil Commission and the donors for organizing the event. She also expressed appreciation for the much-needed support and encouragement given to the widows.



Some of the participants with leaders at the gathering.



Rev Daniel Loh presenting the love gift to Rev. Geetha.



Rev Daniel Loh is the Administrator and Executive Secretary of the Tamil Commission, NECF



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