

EXCERPT



Inalienable

How Marginalized Kingdom Voices Can Help Save the American Church

May 31, 2022 | \$18, 220 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0304-6

That Which is *Inalienable* Is Essential and Undeniable

That which is *inalienable* is essential and undeniable. That word resonates for some Americans because of its role in the Declaration of Independence, where it is used to describe the rights to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”¹ That commitment was, at best, what Martin Luther King Jr. described as a “promissory note” to be claimed by future generations of Americans, since it clearly was not applied by the founders to *all* men (to say nothing of all women) at the time of the nation’s founding.²

Our goal is not to examine what’s admirable or not in the foundation of our nation, but rather the core, inalienable truths about God that we must recover if the American church is to save our sinking ship—namely his kingdom, image, word, and mission—truths at the very center of the biblical narrative.

Drawn from the Latin word *alius*, meaning “other,” to call something inalienable means that *there is no other*: what is inalienable has been established by God and therefore cannot be removed or abolished. There is no other God (Ex 20:3) and thus we must reject idolatry, whether of our nation, our security, or our privileged position in society. In God’s kingdom, there is no “other”—neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, citizen nor immigrant, White nor Black, Latina/o, Arab, Asian or Indigenous. Instead we “are all one in Christ Jesus” and of equal worth and importance (Gal 3:28). “God does not show favoritism” (Acts 10:34; Rom 2:11; Gal 2:6) and that faithful discipleship requires us to emulate our Lord.

We’ve written this book because we believe American Christians are at a critical crossroads, and the very soul of the American church is at stake. Jesus Christ promised that his church will endure until he returns again (Mt 16:18). He did not make that promise to the American church, however. If we are to stem this tide of decline and decay, it will take all of us—and it will take humility to listen to voices of the church beyond the White American evangelical stream of the faith which has long assumed leadership.

—Adapted from chapter one, “Why the American Church Needs Saving”

¹In the drafts of the Declaration of Independence written by Thomas Jefferson and housed in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, the word *inalienable* is used rather than the synonymous *unalienable*, which appears in the official copy displayed at the National Archives in Washington, DC. *Inalienable* is more widely used in contemporary English; see more from the Independence Hall Organization at www.ushistory.org/declaration/document/unalienable.html.

²Martin Luther King Jr., “I Have a Dream,” August 28, 1963, Washington, DC, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mlk01.asp.

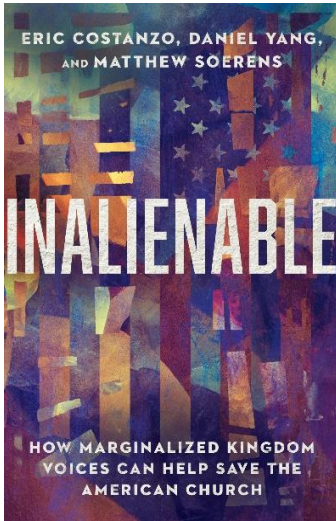


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BIO



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Pastor, Missiologist, and Nonprofit Leader Who Are Not Ready to Give Up on the American Church

“We are a trio of friends who all care deeply about, and are not ready to give up on, the American church. We want to stop the drilling and follow God’s direction to begin patching some holes in our ship—and in some cases replacing entire rotten planks. We have little to offer if we are no longer on board. As James K. A. Smith observes, “You cannot be a prophet on your way out the door. You cannot shake the evangelical dust off your feet and then hope that your criticisms lobbed from elsewhere will somehow *change* things.”

Eric Costanzo (PhD) is a pastor and teacher from Tulsa, Oklahoma, who writes about biblical, cultural, and historical topics along with global issues affecting the church. Eric is executive chair for RisingVillage.org, an organization with initiatives to help marginalized people become full participants in their communities. He is also the author of *Harbor for the Poor*. Eric and his wife, Rebecca, have four children who have wonderfully compassionate hearts for others.

Daniel Yang is the director of the Send Institute, a think tank for evangelism and church planting in partnership with the North American Mission Board and the Wheaton College Billy Graham Center. He has pastored and helped plant churches in Detroit, Dallas-Fort Worth, Toronto, and Chicago. He earned an MDiv from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, a BS in computer science from the University of Michigan, and is currently a PhD student in intercultural studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Matthew Soerens is the US director of church mobilization and advocacy for World Relief and the national coordinator of the Evangelical Immigration Table. Previously Matthew served as a Department of Justice–accredited legal counselor with World Relief’s local office in Wheaton, Illinois. He is the coauthor of *Welcoming the Stranger* and *Seeking Refuge*.

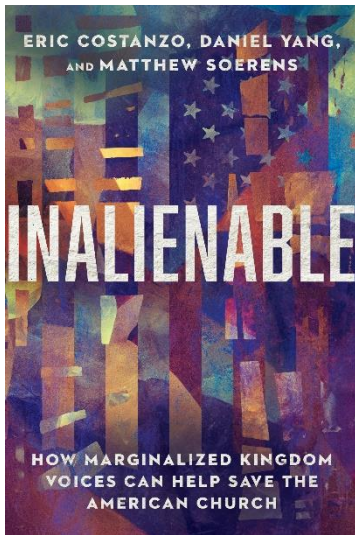


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Q & A



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Pastor Eric Costanzo, missiologist Daniel Yang, and nonprofit leader Matthew Soerens find that for the church to return to health, we must de-center ourselves from our American idols and re-center on the undeniable, inalienable core reality of the global, transcultural kingdom of God. Our guides in this process are global Christians and the poor, who offer hope from the margins, and the ancient church, which survived through the ages amid temptations of power and corruption. Their witness points us to refocus on the kingdom of God, the image of God, the Word of God, and the mission of God.

Saving American Christianity

What events and discussions led you to write *Inalienable*?

Daniel Yang: In recent years much ink has been spilled on the problems we're seeing in American Christianity and evangelicalism in particular. Many of them have focused on how American Christianity has been compromised by racism, American nationalism, patriarchy, celebrityism, etc. While we may largely agree with many of their assessments and are sobered by them, we want to provide a more hopeful and constructive approach to this subject. And because of the nature of our work and ministries, we believe our insights and the collected stories in this book contribute toward that end.

What is the distinctive idea within this book?

Daniel: The crisis facing American Christianity can be overcome by a radical refocus on the inalienable attributes of the kingdom of God, the image of God, the Word of God, and the mission of God. However, this is not a simple fix from the inside out. It requires drastic consideration and influence from Christian voices that are typically marginalized in American Christianity, specifically women, people of color, immigrants, and the global and ancient church.

What is the unique approach you take to this topic?

Daniel: *Inalienable* provides a combination of sound biblical exegesis as well as appropriate input and commentary from well-respected Christian voices that are from marginal people groups relative to white American Christianity. While it is not predominantly written for those who have lost hope or who have left American Christianity, it is written to those who feel uncertain about its future and to the leaders from within it who need a hopeful word to continue in their ministry leadership.

What are some key points you hope readers take away from *Inalienable*?

Daniel:

- Although American Christianity may not yet be facing an existential crisis, it must seriously deal with the idolatrous internal factors causing a diminishing witness and a loss of trust from an oncoming generation.
- Things like systemic racism in the church, a resurgence of Christian nationalism, and Christian celebrityism are among many indicators that American Christianity has lost its focus on the inalienable attributes of the kingdom of God, the image of God, the Word of God, and the mission of God.
- White American Christianity has been de-centered around the world and American Christianity needs to re-center the kingdom of God.
- The increasing influence of Christian voices that are typically marginalized in American Christianity is a part of what is "saving" American Christianity.
- Listening and learning from the margins in our discipleship will indelibly change how American Christians approach advocacy for the vulnerable and the Great Commission.



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