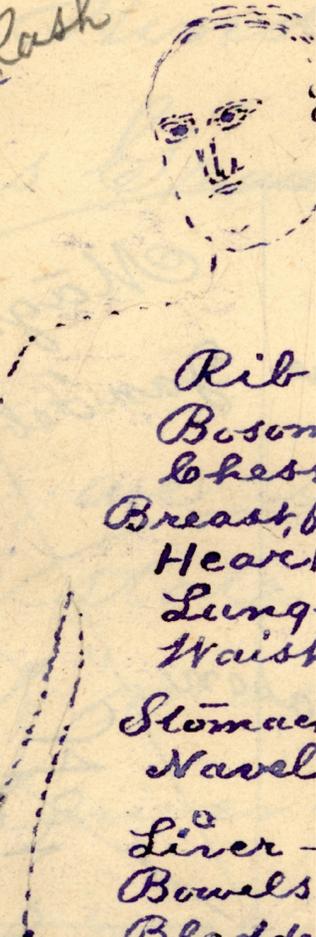


# The Asbury Journal

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Māthā	Forehead	
Kanpatī	Temple	
Bāl	Hair	
Chotī (१)	Cue or topknot	
Ānkh	Eye	
Bhaur	Eyebrow	
Palak	Eye lid	Cash
Palak Kīkes	Eye winker	
Putlī	Eye ball	
Kār	Ear	
Nāk	Nose	
Nāthnā	Nostril	
Thuddē	Chin	
Pīth (१)	Back	Rib
Kāndhā	Shoulder	Bosom
Rīth	Spine	ches.
Bāzū	Arm (gen. name)	Breast, b
Baghal	Arm pit	Heart
Bānh	} Arm above elbow	Lung
Bhūjā		Waist
Hāth	} Hand & forearm	Stomach
		Navel
Kalāī	Wrist	Liver
		Bowels
		Bladder



# The Asbury Journal

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# *The Asbury Journal*

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*The Asbury Journal* publishes scholarly essays and book reviews written from a Wesleyan perspective. The Journal's authors and audience reflect the global reality of the Christian church, the holistic nature of Wesleyan thought, and the importance of both theory and practice in addressing the current issues of the day. Authors include Wesleyan scholars, scholars of Wesleyanism/Methodism, and scholars writing on issues of theological and theological education importance.

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## *From the Editor*

When we think of cross-cultural interactions, we most often think of the classic foreign missionary learning a new language and exotic culture in some remote locale. On the cover of this issue, and in *From the Archives*, we see this traditional image in the story of E.F. Ward, the first Free Methodist missionary, and his wife who lived and worked in India. From his scrapbooks we see his drawing of the human body as he labeled words in English and Hindi, and some of his early scripts for Gospel talks given in the bazaars of India. But this is only one type of intercultural work needed in today's Church. There is also a growing need for scholars who can help us navigate the cultural boundaries of history, theology, and even the Bible itself. Every culture provides a unique lens through which one group of people sees the world, perceives God's work, and even reads scripture. These cultures might be ethnic, linguistic, or even generational. What might it mean to read the story of the woman at the well through African eyes, or understand a Christian theology of suffering through Chinese perspectives? What new, rich insights might we gain, not just to communicate the Gospel to people in other places, but also to help develop our own understanding of God at a deeper, more complete level?

On October 10, 2014 the Advanced Research Programs of Asbury Theological Seminary held their Advanced Research Interdisciplinary Colloquium entitled "Intercultural Hermeneutics," and in our regular practice, *The Asbury Journal* is publishing the four papers presented by the doctoral students, as well as the two presentations by Asbury faculty. Dr. Lalsangkima Pachuau introduces the topic of intercultural hermeneutics, explaining some of the complexities that come with reading scripture through different cultural lenses, while Dr. Craig Keener, in his keynote address explores the many layers of this subject, and demonstrates how intercultural hermeneutics work at the practical level in the cases of miracles and spirits/ witchcraft. Jeremy Chew examines how Naaman in 2 Kings 5 represents an Old Testament model of cross-cultural conversion in the socio-political world of his ancient Syrian context. Moe Moe Nyunt compares Eastern and Western modes of Christian mediation to demonstrate how they reflect the deep cultural foundations from which they emerged. Adrian Reynolds explores how his own background growing up in Zimbabwe enables him to interact more easily within

theological boundaries with other Christian scholars, in this case, Stephen D. Moore, an Irish postcolonial biblical critic. Hunn Choi presents how his own perspective as a Korean born pastor of a multicultural church, helps develop guidelines for reading scripture through other cultural lenses at the margins of society here in the United States.

Two more articles round out this fascinating exploration of understanding scripture and theology across cultural boundaries. Benjamin Espinoza explores how reimagining Phillip Spener's 1675 work *Pia Desideria* can help us develop stronger Christian pedagogy in our current context. J. Derrick Lemons looks at how the powerful cultural experience of table fellowship established in the first century can help bring a sense of community to marginalized people within our own church communities today. Reading scripture and developing theology almost always involves crossing borders of some type, be they historical, theological, or cultural. Especially in today's globalized and rapidly changing world, developing the skills to cross such borders has become an issue of critical importance to theological education, and indeed the growth and survival of the Church itself.

*Robert Danielson Ph.D.*

Lalsangkima Pachuau

*Intercultural Hermeneutics: A Word of Introduction*

**Abstract**

This paper introduces the theme of intercultural hermeneutics for the Advanced Research Programs interdisciplinary colloquium. By focusing on recent literature in the field of intercultural hermeneutics, this paper distinguishes this field of study from traditional cross-cultural communication and indicates its relevance to the current field of biblical studies and missiology. The importance of postcolonial studies to the field of intercultural hermeneutics is also addressed.

**Keywords:** intercultural hermeneutics, postcolonialism, biblical studies, missiology

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## Intercultural Hermeneutics in a Globalizing World

To deal with culture in relation to hermeneutics (or the science of interpretation), we have to approach that complex whole we call culture from a particular angle, namely the semiotic understanding of culture. The semiotics of culture studies culture “as a communication structure and process” and focuses on signs (Greek *semeia*) through which messages are communicated using particular cultural codes.<sup>1</sup>

In Christian theological circles, we take hermeneutics as a reference to biblical and theological interpretations. By adding “intercultural,” we specify the interpretive context to be an intercultural setting and an intercultural study. Can biblical and theological interpretations be done interculturally? If so, how? What biblical and theological parameters should be used in intercultural hermeneutics? We can also ask similar questions from the cultural angle. How do we interpret culture from a biblical-theological viewpoint? What can theological and biblical lenses provide to the study of cultures? To relate the two, we may ask, “Are interpretations ever immune from culture? Can there be a supra-cultural understanding or interpretation of the Bible? How best do we deal with cultural realities and biases in our interpretations of scriptures?” I raise these questions as challenges to stimulate further research explorations.

From a semiotic approach to culture, the concern is on communicative interpretation. Any form of communication has to deal with meaning, and meaning is something intended to be shared between a communicator and a recipient (interlocutors) in the process of the communication. At the most basic level, common understanding or meaning is sought in communication by bridging cultural codes. Communication across cultural boundaries is more complex than it first appears. If meaning acquired by individuals is explicable, meanings acquired by communities within their cultural context can be much more complex. What communities understand and what significance such meaning-production has across cultural groups is quite difficult to ascertain.

In the history of Christian missions, we have seen the outcomes of missionary communications of the Christian message bearing more meanings and significance than may have been intended or expected originally. Various examples can be cited both of positive and negative significances. In missiological circles, we have heard of numerous negative examples of unintended cross-cultural meanings in communications. I love the story of the initial reactions of my own Mizo people to the Christian message they first heard about 130 years ago. The missionary, who came out of the evangelical movement for whom redemption of human sinners by

the blood of Jesus Christ was so central in his Christian life, preached about “being saved through the blood of Jesus.” The people were amazed to hear about “the kind of magic there was in such blood.”<sup>2</sup> The missionary was quick to learn that he had to change his message.

There are also positive unexpected outcomes of cross-cultural communication in the history of missions and global Christianity. The role of the vernacularization of Christianity through Bible translation is particularly significant. As Kwame Bediako has rightly observed, “the emergence of Christian Africa” today is “a surprise story of the modern missionary movement” as a result of its “vernacular achievement,” which provided Africans with “the means to make their own needs and categories of meaning.”<sup>3</sup> After the period of missionary crisis, when the entire enterprise of modern world mission was shaken, who could have foreseen the shifting center of gravity to the global South of today? When many western missionaries were retreating with a sense of guilt and the number of missionaries was decreasing rapidly in the middle of the twentieth century, who could have predicted the spiritual vigor of Christians in Africa, Latin America, and some parts of Asia we are now seeing? Could anyone have foreseen what is going on in China some seventy years ago when all the missionaries were expelled from that country? We see the great works of the Holy Spirit in all these events, but we also admit the joyful surprises in the communication of the Gospel in our history. The Christian message communicated cross-culturally seems to have had more impact than expected by the communicators, and such impact came about in ways not expected or intended.

In the past, interest in cross-cultural communication has centered on how to bridge the cultural chasm between the communicator and the recipient of the communication. Cultural differences are seen to have played major factors in the understandings as well as misunderstandings of intended meanings. Among the oft-cited examples of cross-cultural miscommunication is the story of a stained glass window of the Catholic Cathedral in Kyoto, Japan. When the Cathedral was built in the 1950s, one of the stained windows depicted St. George killing a dragon. In narrating this example, Robert Schreiter wrote that the incident “caused an uproar.” If the dragon symbolized “evil” for westerners, in Japan it is a symbol of the emperor. To have St. George killing the dragon greatly demeaned Japanese cultural identity and is tantamount to destroying the “Japaneseness” of Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

In the age of globalization, which is characterized among others by “too much information” of everything, the world community has supposedly overcome such cultural chasms; and thus, it would be reasonable to expect the

riddance of such cross-cultural misunderstandings. If unity is understood in terms of interconnectedness, the world has never been as unified as today. Yet, the world is vehemently divided too. Our world is now compressed and our consciousness of the wholeness of the world has intensified tremendously.<sup>5</sup> It is a simple truism to say that in no period in history has the human community possessed better communication systems than we have today.

The globalization phenomenon of today has brought the different human communities face to face, so to speak. Massive migrations of people have brought people of different cultures into close physical proximity. For westerners, it is no longer necessary to travel far to learn another culture or language; they are available right in our “backyard.” Electronic communication superhighways have brought people in far off lands to close virtual proximity, and the great jumbo jets have made every part of the world physically reachable with ease. “Nowhere in the world is more than thirty hours from where you presently sit,”<sup>6</sup> said some global observers.

But, globalization has also brought great awareness that we do not always share the same values and that we differ greatly in our ways of life even as we also learn from each other every day. Furthermore, the closing of proximity among people of different cultures through globalization has also spurred a new hypersensitivity largely controlled by the politics of identity. Thus, the call for a healthy intercultural hermeneutics is increasingly urgent.

Cross-cultural communication has become a part of our everyday life as we transcend our cultural differences through our everyday communications. While such a necessity to communicate across cultural boundaries as a part of our everyday life is a great achievement, bad cross-cultural communications seem to have hurt many cultural feelings too. In one sense, many of the current global terrorist threats have risen largely from such bad cross-cultural communication. One wonders if better practices of cross-cultural communication and the consequent healthier intercultural understanding among communities would help prevent what we now call “homegrown terrorism” arising from newer immigrant communities.

### **Approaches to Intercultural Hermeneutics**

How has intercultural hermeneutics been studied? Scholars from different disciplines have studied and approached it from different angles, and the different approaches seem to have influenced each other. The terms intercultural and cross-cultural are used sometimes quite closely and even interchangeably. How some social scientists use the two terms are often different from how the terms

have been used in the history of Christianity, especially in mission history.

1. Communication theorists and social scientists approached intercultural hermeneutics as a social-cultural study of meanings and interpretations. A good example of this approach is the publication of the *Journal of Intercultural Studies* (Routledge). Particular volumes, such as volume 30, no. 3 of 2009, focus on the theme of intercultural hermeneutics.
2. In comparative philosophy, Hans-George Gadamer is one of the most influential scholars whose works have influenced both theologians and philosophers in hermeneutics. Other influential theologians in hermeneutics include David Tracy, Jurgen Habermas, and Paul Ricoeur. Gadamer's influence spans across various theological disciplines including missiology and intercultural studies. Other European and Asian philosophers have also been engaging in intercultural hermeneutics as a comparative philosophy. A good example that combines the works of some European and Asian scholars is the book *Interculturality of Philosophy and Religions*.<sup>7</sup>
3. Among biblical scholars, two groups may now be identified as spurring intercultural approach in their hermeneutics.
  - a. The best-known biblical scholars are those employing a postcolonial approach as an intercultural hermeneutic. These are scholars mostly from the non-western worlds who employ a strong criticism of colonialism as a response to western colonial hermeneutics. We will comment on this below.
  - b. A few other biblical scholars have also employed intercultural hermeneutics to incorporate varied interpretive voices from different cultural backgrounds. One seminal work, *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible*,<sup>8</sup> is the outcome of a three-year project on intercultural readings of John 4 (Jesus' encounter with Samaritan Woman). The study incorporates readings by non-specialist lay Christians in different cultural settings and scholarly observations and interpretations. More recently, an evangelical group of biblical scholars produced another trailblazing work, *Global Voices*.<sup>9</sup> As the subtitle of the volume *Reading the Bible in the Majority World*, indicates, it is a volume of chapters by biblical scholars who originated mostly from

the majority (or non-western) world, intentionally bringing their distinct viewpoints from their cultural settings.

4. In the fields of theology and missiology, following the works of Hans-George Gadamer and Jurgen Habermas, several scholars have developed “intercultural hermeneutics” theologically and missiologically. In missiology, an impressive work done by Franz Xavier Scheuerer is *Interculturality: A Challenge for the Mission of the Church*.<sup>10</sup> Missiologist-theologian Robert Schreiter, (“Intercultural Hermeneutics: Issues and Prospects” in *The New Catholicity*) has provided a foundational piece on the topic, and an inter-religionist Wesley Ariarajah creatively used intercultural hermeneutics as an approach to study inter-religious encounters.<sup>11</sup>

Among European missiologists, intercultural theology has a long history of association with mission studies. As Werner Ustorf has shown, from the late 1960s, three European scholars Hans Jochen Margull (of Hamburg, Germany), Walter Hollenweger (of Birmingham, UK), and Richard Friedli (Fribourg, Switzerland) have teamed up in employing the term “intercultural theology” to explain the theological dimensions of mission.<sup>12</sup> In 2004-2005, the German Association for Mission Studies, together with “the Religious Studies and Mission Studies” section of the Academic Association for Theology (WGTh) in Germany proposed to supplement “mission studies” with “intercultural theology” saying, “the explanatory term ‘intercultural theology’ be added to the traditional term ‘mission studies’ without replacing the name ‘mission studies’.”<sup>13</sup> Yet, whether to replace “missiology” with intercultural theology has been debated fervently today in Europe.<sup>14</sup>

In using intercultural hermeneutics as an approach in biblical interpretation, we are bound by two principles. The first principle is about maintaining the integrity of the text. To what extent we can claim the objectivity of our interpretation of scriptural texts is a debatable question, but the intention to be objective and to maintain the integrity of the text cannot be compromised. Some scholars who employ hermeneutics of suspicion, especially in connection with the difficulty to be free of subjectivist interpretations of texts in the postmodern discussion, seem to have thrown away even the intention to maintain objectivity. Even if our objectivity is relative, there is no reason to submit to the principle of “anything goes.” It is reasonable to admit that our way of understanding and therefore interpretations are influenced by our culture, but that is not to say that we cannot therefore do anything about it. We can yield a great deal of objectivity if we are intentional.

The second principle is about the audience or hearer. While the communicator (or speaker) may be preoccupied with the integrity of the text, the cross-cultural hearer or audience is preoccupied with the impact of the communication. Studies on intercultural communication have shown that the main preoccupation is on identity and how the communication may impact it. Therefore, “intercultural communication is not just about maintaining the integrity of the message [or the text]; it is also about its impact on the hearing community.”<sup>15</sup>

Intensive dialogue is necessary to make sure of the appropriateness and effectiveness of communication.<sup>16</sup> As we have said, transmissions of messages in the history of Christian missions have taught us that the impact may be something the communicators do not expect. In intercultural studies, siding with the hearer when there are different meanings of cultural codes, and a lot of dialogue with the hearers to understand these cultural and social codes is crucial. As much as we are concerned with intercultural communication, we should also be concerned with “reception theory in hermeneutics.”<sup>17</sup>

Let me conclude with two points of observation on intercultural hermeneutics in the context of globalization as we have discussed. The first, and perhaps the most obvious one, is the need to transition from cross-cultural communication to intercultural hermeneutics. In the history of Christian missionary communication, the term cross-cultural communication or interpretation has been used largely in the context of a one-way communication, namely from a Christian to a non-Christian arena. In the new context we are describing, that kind of one-way communication is no longer possible or practicable. The act of communication and interpretation across cultural boundaries has to be conceived as a two-way or a multiple-way activity, and thus the name “inter-cultural.” Ideally, we can think of interpretation and communication as mutual actions between or among people of different cultures. This is not to envision or suggest that every interpretive exercise has to involve more than one person and more than one culture, but rather that interpretation has to be sensitive to cultures and should engage conceptions and viewpoints from other cultural settings.

Secondly, the role of power disparity and the politics of (cultural) identity must also be taken into account in intercultural hermeneutics. I think this is where postcolonial studies have contributed significantly. Beginning in literature studies, the enterprise of postcolonial studies positioned itself to do its studies from the viewpoint of the objects of colonial oppression. Postcolonial studies tend to represent the viewpoints of the colonized communities and offer intellectual resistance.<sup>18</sup> Its power lies in writing from the oppressed viewpoint and to reanalyze the same literature from that location.

Today, scholars in the non-western world have used the postcolonial approach popularly in biblical and theological studies. To these scholars, it is the intercultural hermeneutics of the day. Because of its focus on colonialism, several scholars have also employed the hermeneutics to do historical studies on mission.<sup>19</sup> While it helpfully creates a venue to analyze the texts or historical documents from a particular viewpoint, it also has significant limitations in the way it came to be used. For one, its emphasis on resistance in its *modus operandi* limits the approach from constructive operation. Secondly, as an approach focused on colonialism, it tends to see more colonialism to the extent of creating colonialism where it does not seem to exist. Employed to analyze Christian missions in history, it tends to pick up the negative impression, leaving out the very core of the Gospel's good-news event in the missionary enterprise. Much of postcolonial analyses of missions have missed or dismissed new and vigorous movements of missions in the period some called "postmodern."<sup>20</sup>

While we criticize postcolonialism in stretching its object of studies under the rubric of colonialism and its oppositional stature, postcolonial studies have also taught us some essential elements in intercultural hermeneutics. Hermeneutics cannot escape the problem of power disparity and must face it head-on.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Global and the Local* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 30.

<sup>2</sup> This was the story of D. E. Jones, the pioneer Welsh Calvinistic Methodist's pioneer missionary to the Mizos, reported by one of the succeeding missionaries. See J. Merion Lloyd, *On Every High Hill* (Liverpool: Calvinistic Methodist Foreign Mission Office, 1956; Aizawl: The Synod Publication Board, 1984), 24.

<sup>3</sup> Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 204-205.

<sup>4</sup> Schreiter, 33.

<sup>5</sup> As Roland Robertson aptly defines globalization as "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole." *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (Sage Publishing Ltd., 1992), 8.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen, and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2005), 25.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory D'Souza, OCD, *Interculturality of Philosophy and Religions* (Bangalore: National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Hans de Wit et al. eds., *Through the Eyes of Another: Intercultural Reading of the Bible* (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> Craig S. Keener, and M. Daniel Carroll R. eds. *Global Voices: Reading the Bible in the Majority World* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 2013).

<sup>10</sup> F. X. Scheuerer, *Interculturality: A Challenge for the Mission of the Church* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Intercultural Hermeneutics – A Promise for the Future," *Exchange* 34/2 (2005): 89-101.

<sup>12</sup> Werner Ustorf, "The Cultural Origins of 'Intercultural Theology,'" *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 25, 2 (2008): 229-231.

<sup>13</sup> See "Conversation on Mission Studies: Mission Studies as Intercultural Theology and its Relationship to Religious Studies," *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 25, 1 (2008): 104.

<sup>14</sup> For the debate, see Frans Wijsen, "New Wine in Old Wineskin? Intercultural Theology Instead of Missiology," in *Towards an Intercultural Theology: Essays in Honour of J.A.B. Jongeneel*, eds. Martha Frederiks et al. eds., Zoetermeer, the Netherlands: Uitgeverij Meinema, 2003), 39-65.

<sup>15</sup> Schreiter, 35.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>18</sup> See R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2003), p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> For an example, see Marion Grau, *Rethinking Mission in the Postcolony: Salvation, Society, and Subversion* (London and New York: T & T Clark, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 349-362. The rich and complex "elements of an emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm" outlined by Bosch following the postmodern paradigm.

Craig S. Keener

*Scripture and Context: An Evangelical Exploration*

**Abstract**

The first section of this paper addresses contextualization and scripture, suggesting the value of hearing texts from multiple cultural settings. The latter section offers two concrete examples where many majority world readings could help western readers to hear biblical texts more sympathetically and in ways closer to what the first audiences would have heard. In both sections, the two groups participating in the interdisciplinary colloquium—biblical studies and intercultural studies—are invited to learn from one another.

**Keywords:** intercultural hermeneutics, contextualization, postcolonial, spirits, miracles

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## Part I: Contextualization and Scripture

N. T. Wright, one of the most creative and prolific NT theologians of our generation, has argued that Mark 13 “is advice ‘more useful to a *refugee* from military invasion than to a man caught unawares by the last trumpet.”<sup>1</sup> While this verdict is certainly true of part of the passage, I asked my wife, who was a refugee for 18 months, about Mark 13:24-27. She replied that it sounded to her instead like “the end of the world,” and noted that that was how people in Congo-Brazzaville read the passage whether they are refugees or not.<sup>2</sup>

In terms of how we read Scripture, let us begin by offering two scenarios:

A. Let us say that one of you goes as a missionary to Katsina, Nigeria and requires any new convert who is polygynous to divorce his second wife, in a culture where divorce has rarely been known.<sup>3</sup> The second wife is then excluded from church membership because she is divorced; she also lacks means of support unless, if she is willing, she sells her body. Her children grow up loathing Christianity. You base your decision on “husband of one wife” in 1 Timothy 3:2. You are unaware that Ephesus, the city addressed in this letter, did not practice polygamy and the text probably instead refers to faithfulness to one’s marriage.

B. Tim Tennent dialogues with a Hindu in Uttar Pradesh, India, who has read the Gospel of John. The Hindu says, Jesus talked about being reborn; Jesus thus affirms reincarnation. Jesus uses language familiar from his ancient Jewish context to make a point for Nicodemus, but the Hindu does not know about this. Who is Tim Tennent to tell the Hindu that he has misinterpreted the Gospel of John? (Besides being my boss, I mean!)

What role should receptor contexts play in how we practice texts? What role should original contexts play in how we understand and communicate them?

## 1. Introduction: Scripture and Context

Culture makes a difference in communication.<sup>4</sup> Examples could be multiplied, but a particularly conspicuous one for my wife and myself comes in how we express love. In my culture, when a husband says to his wife, “I love you,” she typically responds, “I love you too.” But my wife Médine is from central Africa, and when I would say, “Je t’aime,” instead of responding, “Je t’aime, moi aussi”—“I love you too”—she would respond, “Merci”—“Thank you.” So early in our marriage I often walked around downcast, thinking that my wife did not love me. She, meanwhile, could not understand what was wrong with me. Finally another intercultural couple mentioned the same dynamic in their marriage, and we were able to understand better the cultural element. In her culture, the typical response is gratitude rather than reciprocity.

### *-Scripture as a cross-cultural canon*

Intercultural communication has complications, but hearing the messages of Scripture involves an additional cultural complication: what relevance theory calls “secondary communication.” When my wife and I communicate, we can clarify our meaning through discussion—this is sometimes called negotiating meaning. If we are simply reading a report from another culture with which we are unfamiliar, however, the words are translated, but the idioms, the literary forms, and so forth are not.

In secondary communication, the cultures of the receiver and the current communicator still matter. If we genuinely care to understand what the original communication was meant to communicate, however, we also need some understanding of the cultural context of the original communication. If the Scriptures are not just a decoration and prop for what we want to say, but themselves hold special authority for us, we want to hear what God inspired their authors to say. Yet these authors wrote in particular languages, cultures, and circumstances. This observation should highlight the importance of both disciplines gathered at this colloquium—biblical studies and intercultural studies. Each discipline works at different ends of the communication spectrum, but both are needed—and communication with each other is needed.

Cultural sensitivity in reading Scripture offers a foundation for believers across cultures, offering a common functional basis or canon for intercultural dialogue; it is a natural component of the same approach that invites us to listen to one another interculturally. As Christians, we share a common basis for conversation in the received canonical text. That text did not originate in a cultural vacuum,

but in a concrete linguistic, cultural and historical setting that may be explored.<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek words and even letters are unintelligible markings when extracted from the particular linguistic settings in which they originated.<sup>6</sup> Relevance theory, grounded in cognitive linguistics, approaches texts in terms of communications, taking into account the cultural assumptions that inform them.<sup>7</sup> Part of our transcultural goal should be listening honestly to the texts. The more effectively that we hear texts in their first contexts, the greater the confidence with which we may recontextualize the principles for other settings, and the greater our *shared* basis for dialoguing about what the texts say to us today.<sup>8</sup>

*-Insights on Scripture from diverse cultures*

Yet we also will hear the text more clearly when we listen to one another, because Christians in some cultures will intuitively hear customs and concepts in particular passages in ways closer to the original context. Even widespread customs such as brideprice or dowry, levirate marriage and so forth differ from one culture to another. Although a Ghanaian Christian may intuitively understand such customs better than a Westerner, she may still envision them somewhat differently than the way the biblical writers anticipated their first audiences understanding them.

We intuitively interpret people's actions or sayings in light of our broader knowledge or cultural assumptions; interpreters from other cultures provide alternative possibilities for understanding. Sometimes one culture's or interpreter's reading explains the text more satisfactorily than another's; sometimes the diverse interpretive options drive us to explore more deeply the original cultural context, or simply serve to make us more cautious about our *a priori*, especially when we lack means to reconstruct some details beyond the text.

Often alternative frameworks prove more accurate than those we started with, a situation that also appears within some biblical narratives. Why is it that bicultural Hellenist believers such as Stephen (theologically) and Philip (practically; Acts 6—8) were able to begin bridging cultural gaps before the Jerusalem apostles did? The apostles were the ones whom Jesus directly instructed to bring the good news to “the ends of the earth” (1:8), but initially they may have expected it to spread indirectly or by a sovereign miracle while they continued to work in Jerusalem. Yet once Peter and John witnessed and supported Philip's success in Samaria, they also began preaching in Samaritan villages (8:25). Is it possible that cultural lenses influenced who first understood Jesus's instructions most clearly?

Teachings about justice and sacrificial care for the poor constitute such a significant proportion of the Bible that they may be deemed among the Bible's most common themes.<sup>9</sup> Liberation theologians picked up on such important themes that

traditional Western systematic theology, for all its value, had typically neglected as a topic of disciplined study. If we make hamartiology a theological rubric, concerns about whether gluttony is a venial sin or whether street children in Brazil are abused represent different yet genuine contexts. I confess that being very *hungry* as an unpaid young pastor did affect my hermeneutical grid, but I think that experience highlighted for me a biblical emphasis (one that I already recognized in principle) rather than creating a bias analogous to that of those who have never experienced hunger.

*-Cross-cultural communication within Scripture: A case study*

Even within the Bible itself, cross-cultural communication could prove complicated. Thus when Jesus talks with the Samaritan woman in John 4, their conversation presupposes an undercurrent of hostility between Jews and Samaritans that John's audience probably took for granted. Jesus crosses three social barriers to communicate with this woman.<sup>10</sup> First, in Jesus' culture, conservative opinion frowned on men talking alone with women who were not relatives.<sup>11</sup> If anyone is tempted to doubt that this custom affected someone in the narrative, one need only recall the report of 4:27: Jesus's own disciples were amazed that he was "conversing with a woman." Of course, Jesus also transforms this situation, since in 4:29 she ends up inviting all her people to Jesus with virtually the same words ("Come and see") through which Philip earlier invited Nathanael in 1:46. That is, she becomes a witness for Jesus at an even more dramatic level—this in spite of the fact that women's testimony was usually demeaned in the wider culture.<sup>12</sup>

Second, both Jews and Samaritans agreed that upright people should avoid unnecessary contact with those known to be immoral. Jesus reaches across those barriers in the other Gospels, and he probably does so here as well. Granted, this woman could have been widowed five times and living with her brother (4:18),<sup>13</sup> but this would not explain why she comes to the well alone, whereas village women normally came to wells together.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, she specifically comes at the sixth hour (4:6)—noon—when, throughout ancient Mediterranean literature, people stopped work and rested in the shade, often even taking siestas.<sup>15</sup> She comes at the very time when no one else would come, probably because she was not welcome among the other women. That this woman must come alone to the well at the hottest hour of the day (4:6), instead of coming with the other village women, shows that she was unwelcome among the other women.

In cross-cultural settings, actions intended one way can easily be misconstrued. When Jesus tells the woman to "call" her husband (a term earlier

used, again, for Philip calling Nathanael, 1:48), she replies, “I do not have a husband” (4:16-17). Today we could read this response in various ways, but the reply may have struck John’s first audience less subtly. In Jesus’s milieu, people sometimes sought marital or sexual partners at wells;<sup>16</sup> the biblically informed would think of encounters with Rebekah, Rachel, and Zipporah (Gen 24:13-15; 29:10; Exod 2:15-21).<sup>17</sup> But if the woman suspects that Jesus’s intentions are sexual or conjugal, his elaboration of her own domestic situation (John 4:18) clarifies his interest, and she recognizes that he is God’s prophet (4:19).

The third barrier is the explicitly ethnic one. As John 4:9 puts it simply, “Jews do not associate with Samaritans.” Jewish teachers considered Jewish women unclean one week per month—but Samaritan women unclean every week of every month since infancy.<sup>18</sup> It is therefore no wonder she is surprised by his request for a drink from her vessel; it violated Jewish tradition.

And yet the woman herself also ventures beyond Samaritan tradition here. At least if our later sources are accurate, Samaritans did not believe in prophets between Moses and the future restorer who would be like Moses.<sup>19</sup> That is why, once she acknowledges Jesus as a prophet in 4:19, she immediately shifts into what might seem to us a different subject. “Our ancestors worshiped on Mount Gerizim here—but you Jews say that Jerusalem is the only right place of worship” (4:20). If he is a prophet, Jews are right and Samaritans are wrong. Yet ever since Samaritans desecrated the Jerusalem temple, they were unwelcome there; there was therefore no hope for her or her people. Her use of past tense for their ancestral place of worship is also deliberate, evoking the history of division between them: Jews had destroyed the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim more than a century earlier.<sup>20</sup> Jesus goes on to transcend this ethnic division by speaking of a greater place for worship than Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim: in Spirit and in truth (4:22-24).

Culture as well as language is encoded in this text, and if we have only a translation without the cultural context, we will miss some of the meaning. Cues in the narrative signaled this meaning for its first audience, but some of the meaning could be left implicit because certain information could be simply assumed as shared between the author and the audience.<sup>21</sup> (Returning again to relevance theory: communication often takes the simplest forms by leaving unsaid elements that those involved in the communication can take for granted.)<sup>22</sup> This happens elsewhere in Scripture as well. Mark, for example, explains a Jewish custom in Mark 7:3-4. When Matthew retells the same story in Matt 15:1-2, he omits the explanation because Matthew’s Jewish Christian audience would not need it. How often does the Bible leave cultural matters unexplained because its first audiences did not need these explanations, but we today do?

*-Contextualization within the Bible*

When I asked my missiology colleague at my former seminary, Samuel Escobar, where biblical studies could be helpful for missiology, he suggested that biblical scholars could help to define the boundaries between contextualization and syncretism.<sup>23</sup> Because the entire Bible has a cultural context, the entire Bible offers us models for non-syncretistic contextualization.

Those of us who embrace Scripture as divine revelation must recognize that God communicated cross-culturally. All communication has a cultural context; no one communicates or hears in a cultural vacuum. Insofar as we wish to hear the Bible as communication, then, we need to take into account its cultural context.<sup>24</sup>

The Bible provides countless examples of God identifying with cultures—sometimes down to the terms used for various kinds of sacrifices; literary forms used for oracles; or Proverbs, Jesus, and Paul using rhetorical forms of contemporary sages. Yet it also provides countless examples of God challenging culture, for instance in warnings against deity statues.

God went further in relating to local cultures than many of us today are willing to do. In many cases God used forms that resembled forms used in the religious practices of Israel's neighbors, while infusing those forms with new meanings.

Although some of the Bible's examples represent limited cultural accommodation short of God's ideal (cf. Mark 10:5: "because of the hardness of your hearts"), others represent translation into the language and images intelligible in the host culture. For example, the Tabernacle<sup>25</sup> adapts the tripartite design standard in Egyptian and some Canaanite temples.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, like most ancient Near Eastern temples the Tabernacle has a sacred object in the innermost shrine.<sup>27</sup> Tent shrines were also part of their milieu.<sup>28</sup> The use of the most expensive dyes and metals nearest the ark may reflect a wider understanding of the gradation of holiness.<sup>29</sup> Such features would help Israelites—whom the Egyptians may have employed in temple construction—better relate to the Tabernacle as a temple.

Nevertheless, these cultural analogies heighten the significance of the explicit contrasts: for example, no bed for the deity,<sup>30</sup> because YHWH neither slumbers nor sleeps (Ps 121:4). Indeed, most strikingly, the climax of other ancient temples was the image of the deity, but no image is enthroned above the ark's cherubim.<sup>31</sup> The Lord reminds his people that they must have no images and other gods in his sight (Exod 20:3-5). Elements of culture can be helpful or harmful; good contextualization avoids syncretism.

The cross-cultural strategies of God's servants in Scripture can provide even more explicit models for contextualization. In seeking to win as many people

as possible, Paul says that he became all things to all people (1 Cor 9:19-23).<sup>32</sup> Paul preaches from Scripture in a synagogue (Acts 13:16-41), from nature in a farming community (14:15-17), and from Greek poets and philosophic themes that intersected biblical theology in Athens (17:22-31).<sup>33</sup> In his Gentile mission, Paul befriended Asiarchs, many of who would have participated in some aspects of public pagan religion (Acts 19:31).<sup>34</sup> Likewise, reaffirming his solidarity with Israel's heritage (but not their ethnocentrism) he offered sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple (Acts 21:24-26).<sup>35</sup> Paul's letters abound with sensitivity to local or cultural situations. For example, he affirms hair coverings, which to at least lower class persons in the Eastern Mediterranean represented sexual modesty.<sup>36</sup> Although most Christians today would recognize that Paul contextualized the principle helpfully for his setting, most of us would also feel comfortable expressing sexual modesty in different ways for very different cultures.

*-Recontextualization for a new context in Scripture*

Recontextualization was practiced already within Scripture. For example, NT writers recontextualized OT images for new settings. Thus Revelation adapts oracles against literal Babylon (e.g., Isa 21:9; 47:7-9; Jer 51:6-14) to apply them to Rome (Rev 18:2-8). This transference was logical because for Jewish people Rome constituted the Babylon-type empire of its day—what Jewish interpreters of the day construed as Babylon's ultimate successor among Daniel's four kingdoms (Dan 2:37-45; 7:3-14).<sup>37</sup> Some Jewish thinkers depicted Rome as a new Babylon,<sup>38</sup> since it had destroyed the temple and enslaved God's people like Babylon of old; people also *regularly* referred to Rome as a city on seven hills or mountains (Rev 17:9),<sup>39</sup> saw it as the city that ruled the kings of the earth (17:18),<sup>40</sup> the city that traded in the merchandise listed in Rev 18:12-13,<sup>41</sup> and so forth. Because Revelation's beast, however, blends all four of Daniel's beasts (Dan 7:3-14; Rev 13:1-7), it seems clear that John did not expect Rome to exhaust the image's significance. The spirit of evil empire outlived Rome—though it is ultimately as doomed as were Babylon and Rome.

Similarly, Paul applies the figure of Eve to some women in 1 Tim 2:13-14 but to the Corinthian church in 2 Cor 11:3. In 1 Tim 5:14, women ideally rule the domestic sphere, as in Greek ideals appropriate in Ephesus; in various OT passages, however, they sometimes work outside the home (Gen 29:9; Prov 31:16, 24; Song 1:6).<sup>42</sup>

## 2. Needing Other Cultures' Input

In seeking to distinguish the permanent *message* of Scripture from its concrete cultural *applications* to its original audience, many Christians are often tempted to resort merely to our own assumptions, which are often culturally informed.<sup>43</sup> Western churches and denominations often even divide today over which issues are cultural and which are transcultural, although all texts, whatever transcultural points they communicate, are communicated in culturally and linguistically specific ways.

### *-The need for contextualization*

Principles applied one way in biblical cultures may be expressed in different ways in different contexts. How many of us follow biblical building codes? Deuteronomy 22:8 requires a parapet or rim around the roof lest we incur bloodguilt. Israelites could perform various activities on their flat roofs and thus were required to have protection against someone falling off and getting hurt or dying.<sup>44</sup> Most of us today spend little time on our roofs, but the principle of caring for our neighbors' safety and following safety protocols remains.

Relating Scripture to target cultures, including our own, should also enable us to hear its message all the more graphically—hence not only its message of comfort, but sometimes also its offense. Thus, for example, so long as we do not understand the status expectations influential members of the Corinthian church faced from their peers, we can dismiss their spiritual immaturity easily. When we understand their situation better and find analogous situations in our own settings today, however, we cannot so easily evade the text's challenges to our own prejudices and behavior.

### *-Bad Contextualizations*

In the opening scenarios, some of you may have differed concerning what the missionary should have done, but probably most of you agreed that the Hindu reader of John's Gospel missed the Gospel's point. Counter readings of texts by reading them in the wrong context create a new problem. Reading Scripture in the way that they had learned, Paul's rivals in Galatia mixed their own culture up with the gospel. When they went so far as to impose this mixture on believers in another culture, Paul resisted their approach as heretical.

Years ago I was involved with a Messianic Jewish congregation where believers danced and the men wore *kipphahs*. Some Gentile critics complained, "You shouldn't dance at all, much less dance the *horah!* Keeping Jewish customs is going

back to the law, just like the Judaizers in Galatia did!” My reply was that the problem in Galatia wasn’t that someone was Jewish—after all, so was Paul—but that they were imposing their customs on a different culture—just like these Gentile critics were doing. “You’re imposing your own customs on others,” I explained to our critics. “It doesn’t make it any better just because yours *aren’t* in the Bible.”

Those of you who know missions history know that bad contextualizations have been rife. For example, nineteenth-century western missionaries tried to impose a covering for women’s breasts in one culture; by ignoring the covering’s function as a status marker they provoked social unrest.<sup>45</sup> Elsewhere the same missionary concern with covering skin deeply wounded the spirits of some Christians using a culturally indigenous way to express their faith.<sup>46</sup>

*-Culture shapes what we think is cultural*

These questions can arise in any culture. When I was teaching a course at the University of Jos in Plateau State, Nigeria, some students believed that the Bible commands women in all cultures to wear head coverings in church. Yet they laughed when I asked why none of them had greeted me with a holy kiss, commanded even more often in the Bible (Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14).<sup>47</sup>

Kisses did not function as a form of greeting in their culture, whereas head coverings functioned as markers of gender and modesty in their culture. As we explored the issues of sexual modesty, ostentation and class conflict in the text, however, most students recognized that the principles in the text went far beyond head coverings. Wearing head coverings was appropriate in their setting, but would not function the same way in all settings; some students complained that some other people even used head coverings ostentatiously or to attract cross-gender attention at times.

Some African friends have expressed surprise to learn that their cultures’ traditional customs of bridewealth and family-arranged marriages are more like the Jewish marriage arrangements of Jesus’ day than are expensive church weddings and wedding rings.<sup>48</sup> This insight proved valuable because some African Christians were living together for years while saving money for a church wedding. In this case, western missionaries imported the problematic custom.

Almost everyone today recognizes that at least some texts address local situations. Most Christians, for example, do not set aside money every Sunday to send to the church in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1-3). Still fewer have gone to Troas to try to find Paul’s cloak and take it to him (2 Tim 4:13). But texts have cultural and often situational contexts even when the case is not so obvious. As Christians, we

embrace all of Scripture as God's message, but we also must recognize that it is contextualized within languages and cultures. Indeed, the ultimate contextualization is the Word that became flesh as a first-century Galilean Jewish man, in a particularity that could better identify with us in our particularities than could an impossibly generic, cultureless person.

Much of the New Testament simply reinforces the basic message of the apostolic gospel and its ethical implications, contextualizing it for a variety of concrete situations. In so doing, the New Testament writers provide us with models for how to apply their teachings in often quite different concrete situations today, whether in Nigeria, Nepal, Nicaragua, or North America.

#### *-Blind Spots*

Many theological interests are contextual; but one generation's theologizing or apologetics can simply become the next generation's tradition. It is often mission and encounter with new cultures that liberate theology from captivity to theologians' cultures.<sup>49</sup> New cultural settings raise new questions that sometimes contribute to important theological insights. This happened in biblical times as well; Scripture probably first speaks of Satan by name, for example, in texts of the Persian period. Whenever the resurrection belief<sup>50</sup> began, it is first articulated most explicitly in the Persian period, when it became a more relevant issue. New situations and interaction with surrounding cultures sometimes raise new questions that open the door for fresh divine answers, answers that sometimes resemble and sometimes resist those of the surrounding culture.

We all have cultural blind spots, and too often we are ready to remove the splinter from someone else's eye before removing the log from our own (Matt 7:3). For example, most North American evangelicals are more inclined to think of syncretism in terms of, say, East Asian ancestor veneration than in terms of worshiping both God and mammon, though Jesus explicitly deemed the latter idolatry (Matt 6:24; Luke 16:13). In our culture, secularism and unbridled consumerism compete with Christian values; monotheism is not supposed to be one God or less.

Similarly, some western Christians quick to criticize allusions from Christians in other cultures to pagan traditions nevertheless tell their children about tooth fairies, an Easter bunny, divinatory traditions about seasonal activity of groundhogs, or recount tales of morally positive witches and wizards. Western Christians who are confident that they can isolate such story worlds from the sphere of faith often do not accord such confidence to mature Christians in other cultures.

This problem is normally most acute for members of a dominant culture. Members of minority cultures have to learn about a majority culture to survive, but members of a dominant culture can live their entire lives without knowing much about minority cultures. For years I tacitly assumed that the Civil Rights Movement had resolved most real race issues in the U.S. until I became part of an African-American circle of friends who trusted me enough to share experiences they faced on an almost daily basis.<sup>51</sup> I became ashamed of my ignorance—my brothers and sisters were experiencing wrongs that I did not believe happened because they were not part of my own experience.

Western Christian critiques of tribalism and ethnic strife in other parts of the world ring hollow to others who observe our own churches' racial segregation and ideological separation along racial and often cultural lines.<sup>52</sup> One close Nigerian friend studying in the United States was disillusioned when he realized the entrenched racial arrogance in some of the very churches that sent the missionaries who taught his people. He also noted that many of these churches allowed women to do almost any ministry in Africa but almost no ministry in the U.S., because they seemed to view both women and Africans as second-class Christians.

#### *-Prioritizing Texts*

Most Christians function with a canon within a canon, prioritizing some texts and teachings above others. Martin Luther's analogy of faith hermeneutic created a canon within the canon fairly plainly, but various church traditions have functional canons all the time. Messianic Jewish believers thus, for example, rightly call Gentile Christians' attention to positive texts about the law or the Jewish people that we have historically neglected. Because of traditional Confucian values, Chinese and Korean believers rightly highlight for us westerners the values of honor and respect found in Scripture. In our western individualism, it is easy for us to neglect biblical teachings about honoring parents and those in authority; indeed, it seems almost a North American duty to criticize political leaders even when we voted for them!

At the same time, those of us shaped by the western Jesus revival of the 1970s or by some revolutionary contexts in Latin America may contribute emphases on justice and liberation even when these emphases lead to prophetic challenges to authority. The Confessing Church in Nazi Germany and antiapartheid Christians in South Africa rightly raised such challenges to churches subservient to demonic political ideologies. Too often Christian readings domesticate the Bible in ways acceptable to our own settings, but listening to Christians from different settings helps challenge our hermeneutical blind spots and canons within the

canon. This is true whether the corrections come from studying the history of interpretation (reception history) or from global voices of living churches today. We are the body of Christ, and each member brings needed gifts and insights.

### 3. Contextualization of Scripture versus cultural imperialism

Listening to other Christians today means listening to the global church. Western academics have long privileged their own readings and approaches and need to be made aware of their blind spots. At the same time, hearing Scripture means that we do not privilege the reading of any one culture. We all do our best to gather around the text and bring our varied readings to the table to learn from one another. Some traditional academic approaches have much to contribute, so long as they become much more culturally sensitive.

#### *-Hearing today's global church*

Today interpretive communities are far more diverse than they were a century ago. As we noted in the introduction to *Global Voices*, “Many estimate that in 1900 ... 16.7 percent of Christians lived in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. By 2010 it was 63.2 percent, and by 2025 it will be nearly 70 percent.”<sup>53</sup> In the past half-century, evangelicals on these continents have multiplied roughly twelve times over, and already represent more than 80 percent of evangelicals in the world, far outnumbering those in the West. Nevertheless, western evangelicals continue to control a majority of evangelical theological education, so as long as this remains the case they must take whatever steps necessary to serve the needs of the larger global church.<sup>54</sup>

Meanwhile, “independent” churches have grown from 1 percent of Christians in 1900 to an estimated one-quarter by 2050.<sup>55</sup> Overlapping with this group at many points, charismatics and Pentecostals by 2050 will likely constitute one-third of Christians and 11 percent of the global population.<sup>56</sup> Addressing the future of global Christianity, Moonjang Lee notes, “The growing churches in the non-Western world are mostly Pentecostal-Charismatic, as seen in the Pentecostal movements in Latin America, Independent Churches in Africa, and Charismatic movements in Asia.” Observing that Christianity is losing its traditional western forms, Lee warns that it will need to fully recover its early charismatic character to survive and flourish.<sup>57</sup>

Mainline historian Robert Bruce Mullin observes that already by the end of the twentieth century, there were “more Pentecostals worldwide” than mainline Protestants.<sup>58</sup> Sociologist Peter Berger contends that Pentecostalism, presumably

in the broad sense, “accounts for something like 80 percent of its [evangelical Protestantism’s] worldwide growth.”<sup>59</sup> Although such claims actually include an amorphous array of groups in their figure, it remains significant that many estimate nearly half a billion charismatics worldwide; a recent article in *IBMR* even estimates 614 million.<sup>60</sup> If such estimates are accurate, the charismatic branch of Christendom is now second in size in Christendom only to Roman Catholicism (with which it overlaps).

As the center of world Christianity has shifted to the Global South, the dominant Christian perspectives in the world have shifted with it.<sup>61</sup> The interests of mid-twentieth-century western biblical scholarship are no longer the issues of most of the global church. The mushrooming church in the majority world is in desperate need of more biblical scholarship, but it must be a biblical scholarship in touch with the genuine issues confronted by the global church. The median Christian today is a young woman with limited education from the Global South, whose interests may well lie more with understanding biblical narrative than with parsing the details of *Formgeschichte*.<sup>62</sup> As much as I appreciate and use historical-critical methods when addressing historical questions,<sup>63</sup> the hegemony of interest in whatever is the latest critical methodology the professor has learned are often taught to students as the best way to do scholarship, and then exported into contexts all over the world where those issues are utterly irrelevant to the lives of the churches.<sup>64</sup> Following R. S. Sugirtharajah, Davina Lopez warns that this approach has itself served as an intellectually colonizing activity.<sup>65</sup>

Keep in mind that I am not referring to simply reading Scripture in its historical context, which we *must* do if we are to be consistent in genuine cross-cultural listening, as suggested above. The critics remain correct, however, that many of our traditional critical methods were designed to answer questions that prevail or prevailed in particular contexts (e.g., addressed to Enlightenment skepticism). Such questions remain valuable in their appropriate contexts, but other concerns take priority for believers in other contexts. Earlier Chinese church leader Watchman Nee, for example, warned that some western Christians’ theological acumen would benefit them little in his country “if when the need arose you could not cast out a demon.”<sup>66</sup>

Moreover, as noted above, some of those readings are from cultures with values more like those directly addressed in Scripture, and sometimes ask questions more like the questions that the authors of Scripture were directly answering. Thus, for example, when Médine and I during our engagement did devotions in Genesis, I contributed insights on some passages from my limited knowledge of ancient Near Eastern sources. Médine, however, contributed more insights based on her

intuitive grasp of the cultures, especially in the patriarchal narratives. The births that I found so strange in Genesis were in fact not unfamiliar in her culture. Whereas I passed out at the only childbirth I ever witnessed—and that was only from a photograph—Médine had been present for midwifed births. Although the biblical patriarchs were seminomadic, Médine's experience of rural village culture allowed her to grasp their lifestyle better than I could with my almost exclusively suburban and urban experiences (until I moved to Wilmore).

*-Bible teaching and cultural imperialism*

Even outsiders who know a culture better than other outsiders come to it with blind spots. Historically many missionaries overcome many of the prejudices of their sending culture to identify with indigenous cultures, such as many Jesuit missionaries in East Asia, William Carey in India or much of Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, other missionaries often imposed their culture, most forcefully where they supposed indigenous cultures inferior (such as in much of Africa), and sometimes conquerors introduced forms of Christianity by means of the sword (such as in much of Latin America).<sup>68</sup>

To be sure, the caricatures of some nineteenth-century missions by some modern anthropologists often neglect the fact that nineteenth century anthropologists tended to be at least as racist and culturally imperialistic as other westerners.<sup>69</sup> Even in the heyday of colonialism, European evangelical missionaries to Africa were often the least ethnocentric of the Europeans (even if in some cases that was not saying much).<sup>70</sup> Missionaries who did not come from state churches aligned with colonial authorities also faced frequent opposition from these authorities, as did indigenous Christian movements like that of Prophet Braide in West Africa.<sup>71</sup> Although many western missionaries accepted colonialism, some others fought its evils, including the slave trade, and faced the ridicule of their intellectual contemporaries in Europe who thought race theories had a scientific basis.<sup>72</sup>

Nevertheless, westerners very often conducted missions from a culturally insensitive and even imperialistic standpoint.<sup>73</sup> Such approaches are not unlike Paul's opponents in Galatia who demanded conformity to the sending culture's norms for the converts to be fully integrated into the people of God.

*-Cultural imperialism and postcolonial readings*

Some sorts of texts readily address cultural imperialism, such as texts that provide positive models for mission (e.g., Paul in Acts)<sup>74</sup> or condemn negative models of mission (e.g., Paul's letter to the Galatians).<sup>75</sup> Postcolonial readings of

the Bible<sup>76</sup> highlight the presence of the empire,<sup>77</sup> which is relevant to various biblical texts. Many scholars, for example, see the imperial cult as part of the regular experience of the seven churches of Asia Minor in Revelation.<sup>78</sup> Some NT language of “peace” may also challenge the hollow Augustan *Pax Romana*.<sup>79</sup>

Postcolonial approaches vary, but their examination of social power dynamics can be fruitful.<sup>80</sup> Although some early postcolonial studies did not value studying texts in their ancient context, such neglect is not inherent in postcolonial approaches per se;<sup>81</sup> certainly social power was regularly an issue in ancient contexts, as both sociological and social-historical approaches often highlight. Neither needs postcolonial approaches to oppose biblical liberationist readings, although again early studies were sometimes used this way.<sup>82</sup>

At the same time, some scholars have warned uncritical users of the postcolonial label to keep in mind that not all empires are the same; one cannot impose grids from one empire onto another without sensitivity to the differences.<sup>83</sup> Further, NT scholars’ use of “imperial studies” often needs to acquaint itself better with the diversity even in the Roman imperial cult, with its range of local and generational variation.<sup>84</sup> A wider concern from a traditional textual perspective, however, may be simply the danger of reading all texts through the same grid.<sup>85</sup>

Particular postcolonial approaches vary among interpreters, often depending on their differing sociopolitical locations;<sup>86</sup> thus, for example, some Jewish feminists have complained about many majority world postcolonialists’ appropriation of western anti-Semitism in treating ancient Jews as religious colonizers.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, in some scholars’ hands, postcolonialism has become another opportunity for an educated elite to speak in the name of an underclass, and sometimes profit in academic status by so speaking, without relinquishing personal privilege or helping the oppressed.<sup>88</sup>

#### *-Post-postcolonial readings?*

At the same time, part of the genius of postcolonial approaches is that they embrace readings from diverse social locations. Although the seminal works remain highly influential, as students continue to develop their own approaches for a range of contexts, one might even come to speak of emerging postcolonialisms, and to evaluate each on its own terms. Just as postcolonial approaches rightly challenge the hegemony of traditional western cultural assumptions, their very diversity should welcome voices that diverge from the views of some leading postcolonial thinkers.<sup>89</sup> That is, majority world biblical scholars should continue to feel free to forge their own ways based on their own convictions and communities

of interpretation, not beholden to anyone else's consensus, including that of groups within the academy.<sup>90</sup>

Not everything done in the name of global readings truly involves cross-cultural listening. Some interpreters have created almost uniform interpretive grids through which they then filter all texts, often forcing awkward texts to serve incompatible political agendas just as earlier colonial readings often did (whether by forced readings or counter readings). Like colonial readings, they can serve as assertions of power within their limited framework.

*-Brief excursus on method*

Deconstructionists posited that the range of possible meanings of texts was unlimited, given the range of possible contexts in which to read them. Reader-response critics followed by observing the ways those texts are read in different settings. As a descriptive tool, reader-response criticism that identifies different interpretations in different interpretive communities can be helpful, laying new questions and interpretive options on the table for consideration.<sup>91</sup>

But in a more radical form, reader-response criticism locates meaning in the heads of interpretive communities. Interpretation thus becomes a political act, prescribing meaning for communities; its success rests not with correspondence to implied communicators' interests, but with interpreters' social or political power. Most communication and aesthetic literary artifice thus deconstruct into propaganda to achieve the interpreter's ends; critical readers now become those who resist implied authors' persuasive strategies and instead manipulate texts for the readers' own goals. When reader-response criticism moves from its descriptive role to a prescriptive one, it ranks some meanings as more authoritative than others, except that the new authority lies in the interpreter, the head of the interpretive community, or the socially constructed values or politics favored by the interpreter.

The descriptive approach is valuable by bringing all voices to the table; the prescriptive approach, however, raises questions for those who seek to hear the text as God's word. If we have the Spirit, do we really need to control politically the reading of texts in God's community, the church, where the least should be the greatest? Is it the voice of the most powerful interpreters or the divine Author's voice for which we relentlessly pursue the canonical texts? We recognize (descriptively) the reality of social power dynamics in influencing interpretation, a reality that confronts us on both popular and academic levels. But we resist these not by establishing our own following but by seeking to hear the biblical texts in ways faithful to its first contexts that also challenge us afresh in our own, and helping others to do so.<sup>92</sup>

*-Avoid new ethnocentrism*

Listening to other voices is crucial; making any particular set of voices normative, however, can bring us back to the ethnocentric approach with which we began.<sup>93</sup> Proponents can end up imposing their group's ideology uniformly on texts and calling this ideological lens a method.<sup>94</sup> One danger, regardless of how commendable one's ideology might be, is that one simply rearticulates the same ideology in multiple ways, rather than being challenged by new insights from the text that stand outside one's range of vision.

Popular readers have often made a study Bible's notes the norm. Some readers today make patristic interpreters the norm through which we must read Scripture.<sup>95</sup> Some feminist or liberationist interpreters make their hermeneutical grids the norm for responsible interpretation, sometimes challenging other liberationist readings as deficient in a particular version of liberationism.<sup>96</sup> Some make majority world voices the norm, although in most cases westerners are listening only to the voices of a published, educated minority within the majority world rather than voices from the grassroots.<sup>97</sup> In many cases academicians listen only to fellow academicians, and often of those of the same basic theological persuasions, whatever their cultures.

Whenever new voices are made the transcultural norm, we weaken our case against Eurocentric interpreters continuing to assume, as they often have, that their own perspective is the norm. If any group constitutes the new dominant norm for all, we have returned to ethnocentrism, nationalism, racism, sexism and the like.

It should nevertheless be pointed out that most contemporary voices—say, African theology, or Latino/a theology—do not seek to make their own voice the transcultural norm, but only to have a place at the table. Western readings have been so long privileged that western readers who really want to hear other voices now have an obligation to wear hearing aids or to provide non-western voices with superior sound systems. Providing safe space and a better hearing for non-dominant voices is needed to transcend the blinders of the dominant culture.

Each culture has contributions to make as well as some blind spots; dominant cultures tend to be blinder because they alone have had freedom to function without attention to other voices. The point is that our ultimate goal is not any single group's hegemony, but conversation, engaged in the loving and humble spirit of Christ.

## Part II: Examples where majority world interpreters bring us closer to the text

In principle, many of us are willing to learn from believers in a range of cultures. But what happens when their input challenges centuries-old assumptions in our own cultures? We are not obligated to abandon our assumptions uncritically, but often believers from other cultures can help us in the areas where our assumptions reflect cultural blind spots.

Here I summarize two sample areas where believers in many parts of the world may help the western church and western seminaries challenge traditional modern western materialism: the issues of spirits and miracles. Not everything that all believers say in these contexts is compatible with biblical revelation, but much of it poses a potent challenge to the typical western academic dismissal of these notions.

### 1. Case Study I: Spirits<sup>98</sup>

Missionary anthropologist Paul Hiebert notes that Christians in India addressed a cultural blind spot that he carried: his scientific training stressed a naturalistic, empirical approach; his theological training emphasized theistic explanations. But he had lacked a functional category for superhuman activity other than that of the supreme God, despite its prevalence in parts of Scripture as well as many cultures' belief in it. In recent centuries, western thought had left no intermediate category between God and the natural world, but in his dialogue with Indian Christians he came to believe that such a sphere existed.<sup>99</sup>

There are dangers of seeing spirits more pervasively than Scripture warrants; it should be noted that cultures that believe in possession by a spirit are more likely to generate more cases of the phenomenon so interpreted.<sup>100</sup> Still, one suspects that most Western Christians probably recognize spiritual realities far less than Scripture suggests.

#### *-Global experiences*

John Pilch suggests that 90 percent of the world today accepts both "ordinary reality and non-ordinary reality," the latter including God and spirits.<sup>101</sup> Further, anthropologist Erika Bourguignon points out that belief in spirit possession is widespread in varied cultures around the world, "as any reader of ethnographies knows."<sup>102</sup> Already four decades ago she could attest spirit possession beliefs in nearly three-quarters of representative societies studied;<sup>103</sup> some subsequent studies

speak of altered states of consciousness in some 90 percent of societies.<sup>104</sup> Diverse cultures offer an array of different interpretive matrixes for these experiences,<sup>105</sup> although their experiences often do produce some similar beliefs even in very different societies.<sup>106</sup>

Many early twentieth-century Presbyterian missionaries to Korea learned in seminary that spirits were not real, but most came to believe otherwise in the context of ministry alongside local Korean believers.<sup>107</sup> A generation ago noted western missiologist Stephen Neill warned that it was next to impossible to convince most majority world Christians “that evil spirits do not exist.”<sup>108</sup> More recently, Peruvian missiologist Samuel Escobar reports a conversation with an indigenous teacher from the Peruvian jungle. When local people noticed demons in the western linguist’s translation of Mark, the western linguist explained that such spirits were only for the first century. While the local teacher respected the linguist, however, he insisted that their local environment matched better what they found in Mark’s Gospel: “we know that there really are demons and spirits; they’re around here.”<sup>109</sup>

African scholar John S. Mbiti dismisses the ignorance of westerners who deny spirits and witchcraft, which are local realities.<sup>110</sup> Africans often report encounters with spirits as genuine experiences. A Ghanaian physician trained in the west, for example, found his arm paralyzed by electricity for a few hours after touching a patient who had been to “fetish priests.”<sup>111</sup> Power encounters have often sparked church growth; thus tens of thousands of followers of traditional religions became Christians after early twentieth-century African figures such as Garrick Sokari Braide or William Wadé Harris contested the older spiritual powers.<sup>112</sup> Such power encounters are widely reported in the spread of Christianity elsewhere, such as in Haiti, India and the Philippines.<sup>113</sup> In many cases such power encounters have even led to priests of traditional religions becoming Christians.<sup>114</sup>

Not surprisingly, such experiences influence how believers approach what they view as analogous accounts in the biblical text.<sup>115</sup> In one African theological journal a Tanzanian Lutheran writer notes, “the phenomenon of demon possession is a hard reality with which a good number of East African Christians struggle daily.” In contrast to westerners, East Africans thus hear “the biblical accounts ... not as myths, but as objective accounts of actual experiences.”<sup>116</sup>

*-Western academic versus indigenous interpretations*

Paul Stoller, an anthropologist working among Songhay Muslims, was warned that he would face an attack of sorcery; that night he felt pressed down by a suffocating weight and heard threatening creatures on his roof. The affliction stopped only when he recalled the locally prescribed cure (reciting some Qur’anic

verses). This experience changed his perspective; indigenous understandings rather than his anthropological training enabled him to cope with the local reality.<sup>117</sup> Publication of his experience initially stirred controversy and disdain from some peers, though it eventually led to accolades.<sup>118</sup>

Likewise, Solon Kimball, a noted anthropologist,<sup>119</sup> notes his own completely unexpected experience of encountering an apparition during his fieldwork in Ireland.<sup>120</sup> He learned only afterward that many local people had encountered the same figure.<sup>121</sup> Anthropologist Edith Turner confesses that “anthropology marveled briefly at Solon Kimball’s ghost story,” but then neglected its implications until other such stories began to be published.<sup>122</sup> Turner herself became a believer in genuine spirits in 1985 when she witnessed what she calls “spirit substance” ejected from a patient during a Zambian spirit ritual.<sup>123</sup> From a pro-shamanist perspective, she now rejects her former dismissal of spirits as cultural imperialism.<sup>124</sup> She complains that some academics “believe that trained anthropologists ... understand aspects of a culture” better than people from that culture.<sup>125</sup>

Anthropologists today often try to study experiences with alleged spirits from societies’ indigenous perspectives, rather than imposing a western interpretive grid on them.<sup>126</sup> In contrast to theologians and parapsychologists, most anthropologists seek to study not spiritual phenomena but indigenous *beliefs* about spirits.<sup>127</sup> Thus one study offers as a working definition of spirit possession “*any altered state of consciousness indigenously interpreted in terms of the influence of an alien spirit.*”<sup>128</sup> More recent studies work harder than most of their predecessors to take into account the indigenous frame of reference;<sup>129</sup> while traditional western categories, often from a medical perspective, make cross-cultural comparison easier, more contextualized and phenomenological approaches prove more epistemologically open.<sup>130</sup>

Yet the approaches of anthropologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and indigenous interpreters often vary considerably from one another.<sup>131</sup> Even in the west, there is no unanimity regarding the meaning of possession experiences. Thus, for example, anthropologists have criticized psychologists and psychiatrists for ethnocentric understandings of altered states of consciousness, whereas others have criticized anthropologists’ limited competence in psychological and psychiatric matters.<sup>132</sup> Although reports from a range of sources provide valuable data, interpreting the data is often a matter of worldview. In many cases, indigenous approaches prove closer to the deliverance narratives of the Gospels than do western materialist interpretations.<sup>133</sup>

*-Witchcraft*

Despite frequent abuses and exaggerations,<sup>134</sup> some people in many African societies do seek to practice malevolent sorcery, as is inevitable in cultures that believe in sorcery.<sup>135</sup> Whatever the actual degree of efficacy, practitioners themselves, and often most of the culture, believes in their efficacy.<sup>136</sup> Despite the stigma in many places, some confessions of murder by sorcery appear in various societies.<sup>137</sup> One western lecturer, after having denied the existence of witches, was corrected by an African student who noted that he was a witch and believed that he had an effective record of killing people through witchcraft.<sup>138</sup> Many others believe that witchcraft in their context kills.<sup>139</sup> Voodoo deaths, associated with spirits, are a real phenomenon,<sup>140</sup> though western observers, usually seeking psychological rather than spiritual explanations, typically associate them with terror.<sup>141</sup>

Western missionaries from desupernaturalized Europe, which had declared belief in witchcraft heretical because of its own earlier excesses, often taught ideas unworkable for an African context.<sup>142</sup> Local people often mistrusted traditional missionaries for ignoring sorcery.<sup>143</sup> Indeed, witchcraft beliefs fulfill roles within societies that if unaddressed by newer religious cultures can persist and grow.<sup>144</sup>

Although harmful use of spiritual power may take different forms in different contexts, not all of which actually exercise the same degree of power, improper local accusations and responses to accusations may lead westerners to too readily dismiss all indigenous beliefs about witchcraft. Negative spiritual power and sometimes power encounters with its practitioners appears in a number of biblical texts (including Exod 7:10–12; Acts 8:9–13; 13:8–12; 19:11–20; 2 Thess 2:9; Rev 13:13); the early centuries of Christianity include often still more elaborate stories of power encounters. My own views on the subject were forced to shift after an unexpected and worldview-shattering experience of power related to African traditional religions in December of 2008.<sup>145</sup>

## 2. Case Study II: Miracles<sup>146</sup>

Some western Christians made invaluable contributions to the world's improvement during the early English Enlightenment, especially through experimental science. Nevertheless, strands of the radical Enlightenment created false dichotomies that remain with the west to this day.

Many westerners doubt the possibility of miracles, an issue of no little importance for biblical studies, where, for example, some 30 percent of our earliest Gospel involves miracles and exorcisms.<sup>147</sup> An influential essay of David

Hume that most philosophers today regard as circularly argued heavily shaped this skepticism toward miracles.<sup>148</sup> The most relevant point for the present essay is that one of Hume's key arguments is explicitly ethnocentric, rejecting all testimony from nonwhites and non-western cultures, which Hume dismissed as "ignorant and barbarous."<sup>149</sup> Hume's racism is well documented, and it plays a significant role in his argument against miracles.<sup>150</sup> (His ethnocentrism included anti-Semitism, thus prejudice against ancient Jewish civilization.)<sup>151</sup>

Yet medical anthropology now rejects "mediocentrism," the ethnocentric view that only current western views of sickness and healing are authentic and that disputes the many claims to cures outside western views.<sup>152</sup> Medical anthropology is a burgeoning field that has generated vast scholarship.<sup>153</sup> It also offers promise for biblical scholars; medical anthropology, John Pilch argues, "could help the exegete to adopt a transcultural stance"<sup>154</sup> when addressing healing claims in the NT.

#### *-Widespread experiences*

Social scientists have noted that, despite a variety of interpretations, "people from all cultures relate stories of spontaneous, miraculous cures," based on experiences that they have had.<sup>155</sup> In addition to differing in their paradigms involving paranormal phenomena, many other cultures are in general more holistic, expecting spiritual beliefs to impinge on physical needs in ways that western culture has often found uncomfortable.<sup>156</sup>

Results from a recent Pew survey of Pentecostals and charismatics suggest that even in just the ten countries surveyed, some two hundred million Pentecostals and charismatics claim to have witnessed divine healing.<sup>157</sup> However we construe many of these experiences, the number is certainly too high to accommodate Hume's default claim of no reliable witnesses as a starting point for discussion. Although a large proportion of mainline Christians in the majority world fit the broad western definition of charismatic,<sup>158</sup> such beliefs and practices are not limited to Pentecostals and charismatics. In the same Pew survey, more than one-third of Christians worldwide who do *not* identify themselves as Pentecostal or charismatic claim to not simply believe in healing but to have "witnessed divine healings."<sup>159</sup>

Western scholar of global Christianity Philip Jenkins notes that in general Christianity in the Global South is quite interested in "the immediate workings of the supernatural, through prophecy, visions, ecstatic utterances, and healing."<sup>160</sup> Historian Mark Noll observes that western Christians working in the majority world "consistently report that most Christian experience reflects a much stronger supernatural awareness than is characteristic of even charismatic and Pentecostal circles in the west."<sup>161</sup>

*-Reading miracles with the global church*

The above observations have some relevance for how we approach biblical narratives involving healings. Not surprisingly, readings of Scripture in the Global South often contrast starkly with modern western critics' readings.<sup>162</sup> Thus a western writer with experience in Africa suggests that African culture offers better foundations for understanding biblical texts addressing such issues.<sup>163</sup>

Most Christians in the majority world, less shaped by the modern western tradition of the radical Enlightenment, find stories of miraculous phenomena far less objectionable than do their western counterparts.<sup>164</sup> These other cultures offer a check on traditional western assumptions; as Lamin Sanneh, professor of missions and history at Yale Divinity School, points out, it is here that western culture "can encounter ... the gospel as it is being embraced by societies that had not been shaped by the Enlightenment," and are thus closer to the milieu of earliest Christianity.<sup>165</sup>

Western missionaries to one region in Africa who merely left behind Gospels reportedly returned to find a flourishing church with NT-like miracles happening daily, "because there had been no missionaries to teach that such things were not to be taken literally."<sup>166</sup> An indigenous reading of Scripture often noticed patterns there "that the missionaries did not want [local believers] to see."<sup>167</sup>

Thus, for example, one anthropologist recounts the experience of a fellow anthropologist named Jacob Loewen, who was doing Bible translation among the Choco people in Panama.<sup>168</sup> The wife of his host, Aureliano, was dying, and medicine was unavailable. While Loewen had translated the promise of healing in James 5:14–15, he felt that he lacked faith to pray. Nevertheless, reading this passage, the local believers prayed with him for her healing, and she rallied slightly. By the next morning, however, she was dying again, so the local believers anointed her with oil, without inviting Loewen, and this time she rose from the bed completely well. When Aureliano declared happily that God's Spirit had chased away the fever spirits, Loewen observed that they had not invited him and his western colleague to pray this time. Aureliano apologized but noted, "It doesn't work when you and David are in the circle. You and David don't really believe." Loewen was a devoted Christian, yet found "himself unable to transcend the secular assumptions and understandings of his particular birth society."<sup>169</sup>

*-Challenging western skepticism about miracles*

As Justo González remarks in his commentary on Acts, the frequent denial of narratives' historicity because of their miracle reports employs a questionable epistemological criterion. Bultmann denied that modern people who

use scientific inventions could believe in miracles,<sup>170</sup> yet “what Bultmann declares to be impossible is not just possible, but even frequent.” Miracles are, González points out, affirmed in most Latino churches, despite the influence of the mechanistic worldview from much western thought.<sup>171</sup> Cuban Lutheran bishop Ismael Laborde Figueras notes that it is hard to find Latin American Christians who do not believe in miracles.<sup>172</sup>

Cross-cultural studies suggest that socialization rather than exposure to science accounts for most of the skepticism in some circles.<sup>173</sup> African psychologist Regina Eya warns that all claims to extranormal healing are dismissed by many western scholars, the credible along with the spurious, because of the inappropriate application of traditional western scientific paradigms to matters for which they were not designed.<sup>174</sup>

Some Asian theologians have likewise complained that the approach of Bultmann’s school is irrelevant to Asian realities. The recent Methodist bishop of Malaysia, Hwa Yung, notes that Asian worldviews affirm miracles, angels, and hostile spirits.<sup>175</sup> It is actually the western, mechanistic, naturalistic Enlightenment worldview that is culturally and historically idiosyncratic.<sup>176</sup>

## Conclusion

Western interpreters have often accumulated historical insights helpful for reading Scripture, insights that, when properly evaluated and applied, should become property of the whole global church. Likewise, some cases where most western interpreters may learn from many majority world believers include the latter’s more common experiences with spirits, miracles, poverty, injustice, and so forth. The relative strengths and weaknesses of different parts of the global church will shift over time as we grow together, so long as we are all humble enough to learn from one another.

Because of our cultural blind spots, we all need one another’s help to hear Scripture fully. This is work for the entire global body of Christ, each bringing the contributions we are currently best equipped to contribute while also learning from others. The long-term hegemony of western interpreters often yields less humility, and thus greater blind spots, but all of us may learn from one another. This is the best way to forestall future hegemonies of different kinds.

We cannot understand the message of the inspired authors apart from the social and linguistic contexts in which they communicated; the message came to us already concretely enculturated. Neither can we fully engage or communicate their message, however, without grasping how it can engage us in our various

cultures today. Scripture's principles will be illustrated and reapplied in diverse ways in different cultures who hear and enculturate its message afresh.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 359, citing his teacher, G. B. Caird.

<sup>2</sup> Médine Moussounga Keener, Wilmore, KY, Sept. 19, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> For this issue, see further e.g., Marvin K. Meyers, *Christianity Confronts Culture: A Strategy for Cross-Cultural Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 91-92; Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity and Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979), 10, 21, 127, 130; M. G. Smith, "After Secondary Marriage, What?" *Ethnology* 19 (3, July 1980): 265-77, here 276-77.

<sup>4</sup> Ancient Mediterranean peoples also readily recognized that different peoples had different customs; see e.g., Cornelius Nepos *Generals* pref. 5; Plutarch *Themistocles* 27.2-3; Sextus Empiricus *Eth.* passim.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g., James D. G. Dunn, "Reconstructions of Corinthian Christianity and the Interpretation of 1 Corinthians," 295-310 in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (ed. Edward Adams and David G. Horrell; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 296. The ancient Mediterranean world was a "high context" culture that presumed "a broadly shared, generally well-understood knowledge of the context of anything referred to in conversation or in writing" (Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social-Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006], 5).

<sup>6</sup> With e.g., Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 242. Some critics have complained that reading in historical context is a modern notion irrelevant to Greco-Roman texts. Even a cursory survey of Greco-Roman sources will expose the fallacy of this complaint, even if many interpreters were inconsistent in their application of the principle; see e.g., Aeschines *Ctesiphon* 33; Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Thuc.* 29; Quintilian *Inst.* 10.1.22; Aulus Gellius 20.1.6; Galen *Grief* 24b-26; Hermogenes *Issues* 60.13-14; 66.12-13; Heraclitus *Hom. Prob.* 79.8; Proclus *Poetics* Essay 6, Bk. 1, K145.27—K146.1; K150.12-13; Libanius *Maxim* 3.9. For literary context, see e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Dem.* 46; Quintilian *Inst.* 10.1.20-21; Seneca *Ep. Lucil.* 108.24-25; Apuleius *Apol.* 82-83; Philostratus *Hrk.* 11.5; Hermogenes *Method in Forceful Speaking* 13.428; for sensitivity to genres, e.g., Quintilian *Inst.* 10.1.36; Maximus of Tyre *Or.* 38.4; Menander *Rhetor* 1.1.333.31—334.5; Philostratus *Vit. soph.* 2.33.628. Many modern theories have analogues in ancient philosophy; see Stephen M. Pogoloff, "Isocrates and Contemporary Hermeneutics," 338-62 in *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy* (ed. Duane F. Watson; JSNTSup 50; Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 338-62.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g., Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); idem, "Précis of Relevance: Communication and Cognition," *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* 10 (1987): 697-754; Deirdre Wilson and Dan Sperber, "Representation and Relevance," 133-53 in *Mental Representations: The*

*Interface between Language and Reality* (ed. Ruth M. Kempson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); in biblical studies, see e.g., Karen H. Jobes, "Relevance Theory and the Translation of Scripture," *JETS* 50 (4, 2007): 773–97; Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); Gene L. Green, "Relevance Theory and Theological Interpretation: Thoughts on Metarepresentation," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 4 (2010): 75–90.

<sup>8</sup> This is the purpose for my *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (rev. ed.; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> See e.g., Ronald J. Sider, *Cry Justice: The Bible on Hunger and Poverty* (New York: Paulist, 1980); idem, *For They Shall be Fed: Scripture Readings and Prayers for a Just World* (Dallas: Word, 1997); in Wesley's teaching, see Theodore W. Jennings, Jr., *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990).

<sup>10</sup> I give more detail on this section of John in Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:584–628; more briefly, cf. idem, "Some New Testament Invitations to Ethnic Reconciliation," *Evangelical Quarterly* 75 (3, July 2003): 195–213, here 195–202; most briefly, idem, "The Gospel and Racial Reconciliation," 117–30, 181–90 in *The Gospel in Black & White: Theological Resources for Racial Reconciliation* (ed. Dennis L. Ockholm. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), 124–25.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., m. Abot 1:5; Ketub. 7:6; t. Shab. 1:14; b. Ber. 43b, bar.; Erub. 53b; cf. Sir 9:9; 42:12; T. Reub. 6:1–2; y. Abod. Zar. 2:3, §1; Sot. 1:1, §7; among earlier Gentiles, cf. Euripides *Electra* 343–44; frg. 927; Theophrastus *Char.* 28.3; *Livy* 34.2.9; 34.4.1.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g., Justinian *Inst.* 2.10.6; Josephus *Ant.* 4.219; m. Yeb. 15:1, 8–10; 16:7; Ketub. 1:6–9; t. Yeb. 14:10; *Sipra Vayyiqra Dibura Dehobah* pq. 7.45.1.1. For qualifications of this general practice, see Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), 163–66; Robert Gordon Maccini, *Her Testimony Is True: Women as Witnesses according to John (JSNTSup 125)* (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 63–97.

<sup>13</sup> For arguments against this, see Keener, *John*, 606–8.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. e.g., Gen 24:11; Julia Pizzuto-Pomaco, "From Shame to Honour: Mediterranean Women in Romans 16" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 2003), 50; Dale F. Eckelman, *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach* (2nd ed.; Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989), 163.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Sus 7 (Dan 13:7 LXX); Joseph and Asenath 3:2/3; *Life of Aesop* 6; Virgil *Georg.* 3.331–34; Columella *Trees* 12.1; Plutarch *Them.* 30.1; Longus 1.8, 25; 2.4; Aulus Gellius 17.2.10; Suetonius *Aug.* 78.1; Vesp. 21; Pliny *Ep.* 1.3.1; 7.4.4; 9.36.5. For the heat, see e.g., Aeschylus *Seven Ag. Thebes* 430–31; Sophocles *Antig.* 416; Apollonius *Rhodium* 2.739; 4.1312–13.

<sup>16</sup> See e.g., Menander *Dyskolos* 200; Arrian *Alex.* 2.3.4; Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece* (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2003), 88; cf. Cicero *Pro Caelio* 15.36; probably Lam. Rab. 1:1, §19.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. consideration in Jo-Ann A. Brant, "Husband Hunting: Characterization and Narrative Art in the Gospel of John," *Biblical Interpretation* 4 (2, 1996): 205-23 (here 211-16).

<sup>18</sup> See m. Nid. 4:2; t. Nid. 5:1-2; cf. m. Toh. 5:8.

<sup>19</sup> See F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), 37-38; cf. John MacDonald, *The Theology of the Samaritans* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 15. The possible exception in Josephus Ant. 18.85-87 is apparently an eschatological prophet, who might be regarded as the prophet like Moses.

<sup>20</sup> For the conflicts over these holy sites, see e.g., Josephus Ant. 11.310, 346-47; 12.10, 259; 13.74; 18.10; War 1.62-63; 2.237.

<sup>21</sup> For the return of the "implied author" in interpretation, see Jeannine K. Brown, *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 69-72.

<sup>22</sup> See e.g., Ernst-August Gutt, *Relevance Theory: A Guide to Successful Communication in Translation* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics; New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 33; note above.

<sup>23</sup> For some earlier Western evangelical discussions of contextualization and hermeneutics see e.g., the essays in D. A. Carson, ed., *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: The Problem of Contextualization* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985); Craig Blomberg, "The Globalization of Hermeneutics," *JETS* 38 (4, Dec. 1995): 581-93; for some more recent contextual approaches, see e.g., Samuel Jayakumar, *Mission Reader: Historical Models for Wholistic Mission in the Indian Context* (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, 2002); Ivan Satyavrata, *God has not left himself without a witness* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> Some of these examples reflect a response paper I presented to the Institute of Biblical Research, Orlando, Nov. 1998.

<sup>25</sup> See more fully my "The Tabernacle and Contextual Worship," *Asbury Journal* 67 (1, 2012): 127-38.

<sup>26</sup> Harold H. Nelson, "The Egyptian Temple," 147-58 in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader* (ed. G. Ernest Wright and David Noel Freedman; Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 147; John Atwood Scott, "The Pattern of the Tabernacle" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1965), 314; Alexander Badawy, *A History of Egyptian Architecture: The Empire (1580-1085 B.C.)* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1968), 176-77. In the Levant, see J. Gray, "Ugarit," 145-67 in *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, ed. D. Winton Thomas (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 146-7; William G. Dever, "The MB IIC Stratifications In the Northwest Gate Area At Shechem," *BASOR* 216 (Dec. 1974): 43.

<sup>27</sup> Nelson, "Temple," 148-49; Badawy, *Architecture*, 177.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., Kenneth A. Kitchen, “Some Egyptian Background to the Old Testament,” *TynBul* 5 (16, 1960): 4–18, here 8–11; Nelson, “Egyptian Temple,” 148–49; Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 220.

<sup>29</sup> Menahem Haran, “The Priestly Image of the Tabernacle,” *HUCA* 36 (1965): 191–226 (here 202, 206).

<sup>30</sup> See e.g., Margaret A. Murray, *The Splendor That Was Egypt* (New York: Hawthorn, 1963), 183–84; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (trans. Israel Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967), 322–23; O. R. Gurney, *The Hittites* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972), 149–50; Meyers, *Exodus*, 221.

<sup>31</sup> Also contrast the adjoining shrines for tutelary deities in many Egyptian temples (Badawy, *Architecture*, 180).

<sup>32</sup> See e.g., Craig Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 80–81. Adapting to local customs could be viewed positively (Cornelius Nepos 7.11.2–6), because it was widely understood that customs varied in different lands (e.g., Apollonius Rhodius 2.1017). Aristocratic ideology regularly opposed, however, any pandering to the masses, which they viewed as demagoguery (e.g., Aristophanes *Acharnians* 371–373; *Frogs* 419; Aristotle *Pol.* 4.4.4–7, 1292a; Diodorus Siculus 10.7.3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 7.8.1; 7.45.4; 7.56.2; Livy 6.11.7; Appian *R.H.* 2.9; 3.7.1). Philosophers and moralists who appealed to the masses thus risked alienating those of higher status (Aristotle *Rhet.* 2.20.5, 1393b; Walter L. Liefeld, “The Wandering Preacher As a Social Figure in the Roman Empire” [Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1967], 39, 59, 162), which Paul probably did in Corinth (cf. Dale B. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* [New Haven: Yale, 1990], 92–116).

<sup>33</sup> Adapting to one’s audience was good rhetoric (Quintilian *Inst.* 3.7.24; for examples, see Suetonius *Rhet.* 6; Eunapius *Lives* 495–96).

<sup>34</sup> See more fully my “Paul’s ‘Friends’ the Asiarchs (Acts 19.31),” *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 3 (2006): 134–41.

<sup>35</sup> See discussion in Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (4 vols. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012–15), 3:3113–43, esp. 3141–43.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Charillus 2 in Plut. *Saying of Spartans*, *Mor.* 232C; Valerius Maximus 5.3.10–12; *m. Ketub.* 7:6; cf. in traditional Middle Eastern culture, Carol Delaney, “Seeds of Honor, Fields of Shame,” 35–48 in *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (ed. David D. Gilmore; American Anthropological Association Monographs 22; Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 42; Dale F. Eickelman, *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989), 165. See more fully Craig Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 19–69; Ramsay MacMullen, “Women in Public in the Roman Empire,” *Historia* 29 (1980): 217–18; and especially my “Head coverings,” 442–47 in *Dictionary of New Testament Background* (ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. e.g., Josephus *Ant.* 11.276; 2 *Bar.* 39:4–7; Sipre *Deut.* 317.4.2; 320.2.3; Tg. Neof. 1 on Gen 15:12. Note also the probable interpretation of

Daniel's Kittim in the latest Qumran texts as Romans; see Dupont-Sommer, A. *The Essene Writings from Qumran* (trans. Geza Vermes; Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973), 349; Geza Vermes, "Historiographical Elements in the Qumran Writings: A Synopsis of the Textual Evidence," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 58 (1, 2007): 121-39. Earlier Greeks and Romans envisioned four eastern empires—though replacing Babylon with Assyria—before adding Rome; see Velleius Paterculus Compendium 1.6.6 (though some view this as a gloss); Doron Mendels, "The Five Empires: A Note on a Propagandistic Topos," *American Journal of Philology* 102 (3, 1981): 330-37; cf. Sib. Or. 8.6-11.

<sup>38</sup> E.g., Sib. Or. 5.143, 159-61; probably 1 Pet 5:13 (with Papias frg. 21.2); 4 Ezra and 2 Bar. passim. See discussion in e.g., Theodor H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 318; J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 218; J. Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse (JSNTSup 132; Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 149-50.*

<sup>39</sup> See e.g., Sib. Or. 2.18; 11.113-16; Dionysius of Halicarnassus Ant. rom. 4.13.2-3; Varro Latin Language 5.7.41; Ovid Tristia 1.5.69-70; Pliny N.H. 3.5.66; Silius Italicus 10.586; 12.608; Statius Silvae 2.3.21; 4.1.6-7; Symmachus Ep. 1.12.3. For the annual festival celebrating Rome's founding on these hills, see Suetonius Dom. 4.5.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., Diodorus Siculus 1.4.3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus Ant. rom. 1.9.1; Cicero Phil. 4.6.15.

<sup>41</sup> See e.g., Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 352-66; especially Pliny N.H. 37.78.204.

<sup>42</sup> I elaborate these questions further in my Paul, *Women & Wives*.

<sup>43</sup> Of course, most scholars are much more nuanced in their hermeneutic; see e.g., William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (foreword by Darrell L. Bock; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001).

<sup>44</sup> E.g., Peter C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 289.

<sup>45</sup> Penelope Carson, "Christianity, Colonialism, and Hinduism in Kerala: Integration, Adaptation, or Confrontation?" 127-54 in *Christians and Missionaries in India: Cross-cultural Communication Since 1500, with Special Reference to Caste, Conversion, and Colonialism* (ed. Robert Eric Frykenberg and Elaine M. Low; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 148-49; Jayachitra Lalitha, "Postcolonial Feminism, the Bible and Native Indian Women," 75-87 in *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations: Global Awakenings in Theology and Practice* (ed. Kay Higuera Smith, Jayachitra Lalitha and L. Daniel Hawk; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 82. For missionaries' insistence on local women covering their breasts, see also e.g., Clifford Putney, *Missionaries in Hawai'i: The Lives of Peter and Fanny Gulick, 1797-1883* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2010), 41.

<sup>46</sup> Marvin K. Meyers, *Christianity Confronts Culture: A Strategy for Crosscultural Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 204 (cf. 207).

<sup>47</sup> The kiss was a form of greeting widely practiced in ancient Mediterranean culture (e.g., Homer *Od.* 21.224-27; Euripides *Androm.* 416; Virgil *Georg.* 2.523; Ovid *Metam.* 2.430-31; Artemidorus *Oneir.* 2.2; 1 *Esd* 4:47; t. Hag. 2:1); see in more detail my “Kiss, Kissing,” 628–29 in *Dictionary of Background*. For head coverings, see comment in the earlier note.

<sup>48</sup> See e.g., my *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), Matthew, 89-94; idem, “Marriage,” 680-93 in *Dictionary of Background*, on betrothal, dowry, and other customs.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Jonathan J. Bonk, “Missions and the Liberation of Theology,” *IBMR* 34 (4, Oct. 2010): 13-94. An increasing number of theologians today do write in the context of the new global church, e.g., Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: how the global church is influencing the way we think about and discuss theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007); Amos Yong with Jonathan A. Anderson, *Renewing Christian Theology: Systematics for a Global Christianity* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014).

<sup>50</sup> On resurrection in the OT, see especially Mamy Raharimanantsoa, *Mort et Espérance selon la Bible Hébraïque* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2006); for debates about Persian influence on this belief, see e.g., Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Persia and the Bible* (foreword by Donald J. Wiseman; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 303, 452-61.

<sup>51</sup> The experience appears at greater length in Glenn Ury and Craig S. Keener, *Black Man's Religion: Can Christianity Be Afrocentric?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 126-28; cf. also [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/craig-s-keener/learning-the-reality-of-racism\\_b\\_1510468.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/craig-s-keener/learning-the-reality-of-racism_b_1510468.html).

<sup>52</sup> Minority churches have valuable cultural distinctives and in some areas integration is demographically impossible (whether in rural Iowa or for the nearly all-black church we attended in Philadelphia). Of greater concern is the stark political polarization—and lack of honest dialogue concerning it—between Christians of different racial groups who share nearly identical theologies (compare evangelicals and the mainstream Black church in e.g., Corwin E. Smidt, *American Evangelicals Today* [Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013], 104, 111, 116, 189, 194, 196, 199).

<sup>53</sup> Craig S. Keener and M. Daniel Carroll R., “Introduction,” 1-4 in *Global Voices: Reading the Bible in the Majority World* (ed. Craig Keener and M. Daniel Carroll R; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2013), 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* These statistics are from Jason Mandryk, *Operation World* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.; Colorado Springs: Biblica, 2010), 3, 5; Jehu J. Hanciles, Jehu J. *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2008), 121 (noting also that by 2050 “only about one-fifth of the world’s Christians will be white”); see further Todd M. Johnson and Kenneth R. Ross, eds., *Atlas of Global Christianity, 1910–2010* (Edinburgh: Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 2009); David B. Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); and the regular updates in *IBMR*.

<sup>55</sup> Patrick Johnstone, *The Future of the Global Church: History, Trends and Possibilities* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011), 113.

<sup>56</sup> Johnstone, *Future*, 125.

<sup>57</sup> Moonjang Lee, "Future of Global Christianity," 104-5 in *Atlas of Global Christianity*, 105.

<sup>58</sup> Robert Bruce Mullin, *A Short World History of Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 211; cf. similarly Mark A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2009), 32.

<sup>59</sup> Peter L. Berger, "Four Faces of Global Culture," pages 419–27 in *Globalization and the Challenges of a New Century: A Reader* (ed. Patrick O'Meara, Howard D. Mehlinger, and Matthew Krain; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 425. Cf. Stephen Tomkins, *A Short History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 220: "the fastest-growing form of Christianity ever." For massive church growth associated with miracles already by 1981, see Christiaan Rudolph De Wet, "Signs and Wonders in Church Growth" (MA thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1981); since then, e.g., Hwa Yung, "The Integrity of Mission in the Light of the Gospel: Bearing the Witness of the Spirit," *Mission Studies* 24 (2007): 169–88 (here 173-75); J. P. Moreland, *Kingdom Triangle: Recover the Christian Mind, Renovate the Soul, Restore the Spirit's Power* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 166–67.

<sup>60</sup> Todd M. Johnson, David B. Barrett, and Peter F. Crossing, "Christianity 2010: A View from the New Atlas of Global Christianity," *IBMR* 34 (1, Jan. 2010): 29–36 (here 36); see further Johnson and Ross, *Atlas*, 102; more cautiously, Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11.

<sup>61</sup> Mark Laing, "The Changing Face of Mission: Implications for the Southern Shift in Christianity," *Missiology* 34 (2, April 2006): 165–77 (here 165).

<sup>62</sup> Indeed, ethnocentric assumptions are embedded not only in some historical-critical interests but also in some of their approaches. Thus for example some suggest that the late dating of laws in the traditional Documentary Hypothesis reflects ethnocentric Hegelian assumptions rather than the actual development and dating of laws in ancient Near Eastern cultures; see e.g., discussions in Roland Kenneth Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 21; G. Herbert Livingston, *The Pentateuch in Its Cultural Environment* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 227, 229-30; cf. R. N. Whybray, "The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study (*JSOTS* 53; Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT Press, 1987), 46-47; Bernard M. Levinson, "Introduction," 1-14 in *Theory and Method in Biblical and Cuneiform Law: Revision, Interpolation and Development* (ed. Bernard M. Levinson; *JSOTS* 181; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 10-11.

<sup>63</sup> E.g., Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); idem, "Assumptions in Historical Jesus Research: Using Ancient Biographies and Disciples' Traditioning as a Control," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 9 (1, 2011): 26-58.

<sup>64</sup> For postcolonial criticism of the contexts in which traditional historical-critical methods originated, note observations by Fernando F. Segovia, *Decolonizing Biblical Studies: A View from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 119-32, as cited in Efraín Agosto, "Foreword," xiii-xvi in *Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial*

*Eyes* (ed. Christopher D. Stanley; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), xiv. Many Western scholars today also challenge the objectivity of the historical-critical paradigm; see e.g., the summary in David G. Horrell and Edward Adams, "Introduction: The Scholarly Quest for Paul's Church at Corinth: A Critical Survey," 1-43 in *Christianity at Corinth*, 42.

<sup>65</sup> Davina C. Lopez, "Visualizing Significant Otherness: Reimagining Paul(ine Studies) through Hybrid Lenses," 74-94 in *Colonized Apostle*, 76, citing R. S. Sugirtharajah, "Catching the Post or How I Became an Accidental Theorist," in *Shaping a Global Theological Mind*, ed. Darren C. Marks (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 176-85; see also the concern in Robert S. Heaney, "Conversion to Coloniality: Avoiding the Colonization of Method," *IntRevMiss* 97 (384-385, Jan. 2008): 65-77 (here 68-69, 77). Today many voices challenge dominant paradigms' pretensions to objectivity; see e.g., Kathryn J. Smith, "From Evangelical Tolerance to Imperial Prejudice? Teaching Postcolonial Biblical Studies in a Westernized, Confessional Setting," *Christian Scholar's Review* 37 (4, 2008): 447-64; Christopher D. Stanley, "Introduction," 3-7 in *Colonized Apostle*, 3; Jae Won Lee, "Paul, Nation, and Nationalism: A Korean Postcolonial Perspective," 223-35 in *Colonized Apostle*, 223; Teri R. Merrick, "Tracing the Metanarrative of Colonialism and Its Legacy," 108-20 in *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations*.

<sup>66</sup> Watchman Nee in Angus Kinnear, *Against the Tide: The Story of Watchman Nee* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1978), 152. Even some who do not share belief in spirits themselves argue that exorcism might constitute the most culturally sensitive therapy for those for whom possession is the most culturally intelligible explanation for their condition; see e.g., Alfonso Martínez-Taboas, "Psychogenic Seizures in an Espiritismo Context: The Role of Culturally Sensitive Psychotherapy," *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training* 42 (1, 2005): 6-13; Irving Hexham, "Theology, Exorcism, and the Amplification of Deviancy," *EnQ* 49 (1977): 111-16; Michael Singleton, "Spirits and 'Spiritual Direction': The Pastoral Counselling of the Possessed," 471-78 in *Christianity in Independent Africa* (ed. Edward Fasholé-Luke et al.; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 478; Ruth-Inge Heinze, "Introduction," 1-18 in *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on the Study of Shamanism and Alternate Modes of Healing*, Held at the St. Sabina Center, San Rafael, California, September 5-7, 1987 (ed. Ruth-Inge Heinze. N.p.; Independent Scholars of Asia; Madison, Wis.: A-R Editions, 1988), 14.

<sup>67</sup> See on the Jesuits, e.g., Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1984); Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1964), 162-65, 183-94; Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 59-66. On William Carey, see e.g., *Christian History* 36 (1992); on Hudson Taylor, see e.g., *Christian History* 52 (1996).

<sup>68</sup> For instances of missions' linkage with colonial conquest, see e.g., Enrique Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation (1492-1979)* (trans. Alan Neely; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 41-44, 59; Klaus Koschorke, Frieder Ludwig, and Mariano Delgado, eds., with Roland Spliesgart, *A History of Christianity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, 1450-1990: A Documentary Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 277-89; Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *Modern Christianity from 1454-1800* (vol. 2 of *History of the World Christian*

*Movement*; Markynoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2012), 11-21; Pablo A. Deiros, "Cross & Sword," *Christian History* 35 (1992): 30-31.

<sup>69</sup> See e.g., John S. Pobee, *Toward an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 60-61; Colin Renfrew and Paul Bahn, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods and Practice* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991), 371.

<sup>70</sup> Elizabeth Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa from Antiquity to the Present* (Lawrenceville, NJ: Africa World Press; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 75.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. e.g., Lamin Sanneh, *West African Christianity: The Religious Impact* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 36, 167; Yusufu Turaki, "The British Colonial Legacy in Northern Nigeria" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1982); Isichei, *History*, 233; Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 341.

<sup>72</sup> Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 140. For church teaching being used for both colonialism and anticolonialism in different periods, cf. e.g., John Stuart, *British Missionaries and the End of Empire: East, Central, and Southern Africa, 1939-64* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 193-94.

<sup>73</sup> See e.g., accounts in Heaney, "Conversion to Coloniality," 73; L. Daniel Hawk and Richard L. Twiss, "From Good: 'The only good Indian is a dead Indian' to Better: 'Kill the Indian and save the man' to Best: 'Old things pass away all things become white!': An American Hermeneutic of Colonization," 47-60 in *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations*, 47-54; Gregory Lee Cuéllar and Randy S. Woodley, "North American Mission and Motive: Following the Markers," pp. 61-74 in *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations*, 63-69.

<sup>74</sup> See e.g., my "Between Asia and Europe: Postcolonial Mission in Acts 16:8-10," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 11 (1-2, 2008): 3-14, which suggests that Acts 16 depicts the reversal of Greek and Roman colonialism as an Asian faith moves into Europe.

<sup>75</sup> See e.g., Aliou Cissé Niang, *Faith and Freedom in Galatia and Senegal: The Apostle Paul, Colonists and Sending Gods* (BIS 97; Leiden: Brill, 2009); David A. deSilva, *Global Readings: A Sri Lankan Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade, 2011).

<sup>76</sup> See Stephen D. Moore, and Fernando F. Segovia, *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections* (London: T&T Clark, 2005); Jeremy Punt, "Postcolonial biblical criticism in South Africa: Some mind and road mapping," *Neotestamentica* 37 (1, 2003): 59-85; F. England, "Mapping Postcolonial Biblical Criticism in South Africa," *Neotestamentica* 38 (1, 2004): 88-99; for examples, see Stanley, *Colonized Apostle*, the surveys in Werner Kahl, "Akademische Bibelinterpretation in Afrika, Lateinamerika und Asien angesichts der Globalisierung," *Verkündigung und Forschung* 54 (1, 2009): 45-58; Volker Küster, "Von der Kontextualisierung zur Lokalisierung: Interkulturelle Theologie und postkoloniale Kritik," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 134 (3, 2009): 261-278; for the Gospels and Acts, Judith A. Diehl, "Anti-Imperial Rhetoric in the New Testament," *Currents in Biblical Research* 10 (1, 2011): 9-52; for newer approaches in general, e.g., Anders Runesson, "Bringing Out of the Treasure What Is New and Old: Trajectories in New Testament Research Today," *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift* 87 (1, 2011): 2-13.

<sup>77</sup> See e.g., C. I. D. Joy, “Transitions and Trajectories in the Early Christian Community in the Context of Pluralism and Mission in Acts: A Postcolonial Reading,” *BiBb* 32 (4, 2006): 326–41; Stephen D. Moore, “The Empire of God and the Postcolonial Era,” *Reflections* 95 (1, 2008): 69–71; idem, “The ‘Turn to Empire’ in Biblical Studies,” *Scuola Cattolica* 35 (1, 2012): 19–27; Jeremy Punt, “Empire as Material Setting and Heuristic Grid for New Testament Interpretation: Comments on the Value of Postcolonial Criticism,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 66 (1, 2010): 330, 7; Raimundo Cesar Barreto, “How Who I Am Affects What I See: Reading Mark with Latin American Eyes,” *Review & Expositor* 107 (3, 2010): 395–410.

<sup>78</sup> See already William M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 231–32, 283, 366–67, 410.

<sup>79</sup> See arguments in Gosnell L. Yorke, “Hearing the Politics of Peace in Ephesians: A Proposal from an African Postcolonial Perspective,” *JSNT* 30 (1, 2007): 113–27; Keener, *Acts*, 2:1799–1800; and most clearly on 1 Thess 5, on which see e.g., Jeffrey D. Weima, “‘Peace and Security’ (1 Thess 5.3): Prophetic Warning or Political Propaganda?” *NTS* 58 (2012): 331–59.

<sup>80</sup> See e.g., Lazare S. Rukundwa, “Postcolonial Theory as a Hermeneutical Tool for Biblical Reading,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 64 (1, 2008): 339–51.

<sup>81</sup> See helpfully here Lopez, “Visualizing,” 93; idem, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul’s Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 10.

<sup>82</sup> Lopez, *Apostle*, 10, rightly warning that when the approach is applied with hostility toward Scripture, it ends up undermining Scripture’s potential for liberating and transforming people. Wheaton professor Gene Green, who supports an evangelical postcolonial approach, also warns that the approach must be constructive as well as critical. He further raises the need for genuinely evangelical interpreters to balance postcolonial criticism with evangelical “commitments to Scripture and Christ” (Gene Green, “A Response to the Postcolonial Roundtable: Promises, Problems and Prospects,” 19–28 in *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations*, 22).

<sup>83</sup> See Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, “Carneades and the Conceit of Rome: Transhistorical Approaches to Imperialism,” *Greece & Rome* 57 (1, 2010): 1–20.

<sup>84</sup> See Karl Galinsky, “The Cult of the Roman Emperor: Uniter or Divider?” 1–21 in *Rome and Religion: A cross-disciplinary dialogue on the imperial cult* (ed. Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan L. Reed; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011).

<sup>85</sup> Robert H. Gundry, “Richard A. Horsley’s Hearing the Whole Story: A Critical Review of its Postcolonial Slant,” *JSNT* 26 (2, 2003): 131–49, contends that Richard Horsley wrongly reads Mark’s Gospel as anticolonial, but Horsley (*JSNT* 26 [2, 2003]: 151–69) challenges Gundry’s reading of Horsley’s book.

<sup>86</sup> See discussion in Simon Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* (LNTS 340; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 14–34; cf. idem, “Mission amidst Affluence and Affliction,” *Doon Theological Journal* 5 (1, 2008): 21–42, here 27–28.

Cf. the warning in Stephen D. Moore, “Paul after Empire,” pages 9–23 in *Colonized Apostle*, 21–23.

<sup>87</sup> See A.-J. Levine, “The Disease of Postcolonial New Testament Studies and the Hermeneutics of Healing,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 20 (1, 2004): 91-99.

<sup>88</sup> Gilberto Lozano and Federico A. Roth, “The Problem and Promise of Praxis in Postcolonial Criticism,” 183-96 in *Evangelical Postcolonial Conversations*, 187-88, following Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 358; and Vinoth Ramachandra, *Subverting Global Myths: Theology and the Public Issues Shaping Our World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 240-42.

<sup>89</sup> For postcolonial theory’s ability to accommodate multiple and at times even competing perspectives, see e.g., Lawrence M. Wills, “A Response to the Roundtable Discussion ‘Anti-Judaism and Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation,’” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 20 (2, 2004): 189-192.

<sup>90</sup> For concerns that theological reconstructions from Western-trained elites often neglect the actual grassroots beliefs of Majority World Christians, see e.g., Simon Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking the Faith from the Ground Up* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 22-27; cf. Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (2nd ed.; Regnum Studies in Mission; Oxford: Regnum, 2014), xiv.

<sup>91</sup> For examples of various readings from different social locations, see e.g., Barreto, “Affects What I See”; Keener and Carroll, *Global Voices*; Daniel Patte, ed., *Global Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004).

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Matt 23:8: when we make disciples, it must be for Jesus, not for ourselves.

<sup>93</sup> Given Jesus’s teachings, a hybridized evangelical postcolonialism, like any other expression of Christian faith, must start with Christ as unrivaled Lord (cf. Usry and Keener, *Religion*, 140n4); an academic approach or an ethnic loyalty dare not become so hegemonic that it replaces Christ for Christians. The Jerusalem church effectively contextualized (Acts 21:20) but nationalism and ethnocentrism limited proper unity with other (in this case, Gentile) Christians (21:21; see discussion in Keener, *Acts*, 3:3118-32).

<sup>94</sup> While appreciating and employing the new approaches, Stephen D. Moore, “A Modest Manifesto for New Testament Literary Criticism: How to Interface with a Literary Studies Field That Is Post-Literary, Post-Theoretical, and Post-Methodological,” *Biblical Interpretation* 15 (1, 2007): 1-25, points out that they do not offer new methodologies in the sense traditionally understood during the literary turn in biblical studies.

<sup>95</sup> I articulate this concern more fully in my “Biblical Fidelity as an Evangelical Commitment,” pages 29-41 in *Following Jesus: Journeys in Radical Discipleship. Essays in Honor of Ronald J. Sider* (ed. Paul Alexander and Al Tizon; Regnum Studies in Global Christianity; Oxford: Regnum, 2013), 34-37.

<sup>96</sup> Interestingly, many early Christian abolitionists and feminists offered essentially liberationist readings that followed the tenor of Scripture itself, e.g., La Roy Sunderland, *The Testimony of God against Slavery; or, A Collection of Passages from the Bible Which Show the Sin of Holding Property in Man, with Notes* (Boston: Webster & Southard, 1835); Catherine Mumford Booth, *Let the Women Speak: Females Teaching in Church* (1861; now Liskeard: Diggory, 2007).

<sup>97</sup> See again the complaint of Chan, *Grassroots Asian Theology*, 22-27. This observation is not meant to diminish the value of the academic voices, but to consider a wider range of perspectives.

<sup>98</sup> Here I am selectively adapting various material from Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, Appendix B (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 788-856, passim, with permission from Baker Academic.

<sup>99</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," *Missiology* 10 (1, Jan. 1982): 35-47 (here 43). This omission of the preternatural that he notes is traced more fully in Lorraine Daston, "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Autumn 1991): 93-124 (100-113).

<sup>100</sup> Simon Kemp, "'Ravished of a Fiend': Demonology and Medieval Madness," 67-78 in *Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health*, 75.

<sup>101</sup> John J. Pilch, *Visions and Healing in the Acts of the Apostles: How the Early Believers Experienced God* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2004), 17.

<sup>102</sup> Erika Bourguignon, "Spirit Possession Belief and Social Structure," 17-26 in *The Realm of the Extra-human: Ideas and Actions* (ed. Agehananda Bharati; The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1976), 18; cf. also idem, "Introduction: A Framework for the Comparative Study of Altered States of Consciousness," 3-35 in *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change* (ed. Erika Bourguignon; Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973), 17-19; Raymond Firth, "Foreword," ix-xiv in *Spirit Mediumship and Society in Africa* (ed. John Beattie and John Middleton; New York: Africana, 1969), ix; I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1971), 100-26; C. R. Chandra shekar, "Possession Syndrome in India," 79-95 in *Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health: A Cross-cultural Perspective* (ed. Colleen A. Ward; Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1989), 80; Soheir A. Morsy, "Spirit Possession in Egyptian Ethnomedicine: Origins, Comparison, and Historical Specificity," 189-208 in *Women's Medicine: The zar-bori Cult in Africa and Beyond* (ed. I. M. Lewis, Ahmed Al-Safi, and Sayyid Hurreiz; Edinburgh: International African Institute, Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 189; Janice Boddy, "Spirit Possession Revisited: Beyond Instrumentality," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23 (1994): 407-34 (here 409).

<sup>103</sup> Bourguignon, "Spirit Possession Belief," 19-21; idem, "Appendix," 359-76 in *Religion, Altered States, and Change*.

<sup>104</sup> Colleen A. Ward, "Possession and Exorcism: Psychopathology and Psychotherapy in a Magico-Religious Context," 125-44 in *Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health*, 126; John J. Pilch, *The Cultural Dictionary of the Bible* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999), 81-82.

<sup>105</sup> See, e.g., Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion*, 44; cf. also Maquet, “Shaman,” 3; Larry Peters, *Ecstasy and Healing in Nepal: An Ethnopsychiatric Study of Tamang Shamanism* (Malibu, Calif.: Undena, 1981), 11–16, 46–47, 50.

<sup>106</sup> James McClenon and Jennifer Nooney, “Anomalous Experiences Reported by Field Anthropologists: Evaluating Theories Regarding Religion,” *Anthropology of Consciousness* 13 (2, 2002): 46–60 (here 47).

<sup>107</sup> Sean C. Kim, “Reenchanted: Divine Healing in Korean Protestantism,” 267–85 in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* (ed. Candy Gunther Brown; foreword by Harvey Cox; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 270–73.

<sup>108</sup> Stephen Neill, “Demons, Demonology,” 161–62 in *Concise Dictionary of the Christian World Mission* (ed. Stephen Neill, Gerald H. Anderson, and John Goodwin; Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 161.

<sup>109</sup> Samuel Escobar, *Changing Tides: Latin America and World Mission Today* (American Society of Missiology Monograph 31; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2002), 86.

<sup>110</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophies* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), 253–56.

<sup>111</sup> Felix Augustine Mensah, “The Spiritual Basis of Health and Illness in Africa,” 171–80 in *Health Knowledge and Belief Systems in Africa* (ed. Toyin Falola and Matthew M. Heaton; Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 2008), 176.

<sup>112</sup> Koschorke, Ludwig, and Delgado, History, 223–24; Jehu J. Hanciles, “Conversion and Social Change: A Review of the ‘Unfinished Task’ in West Africa,” 157–80 in *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century* (ed. Donald M. Lewis; Grand Rapids, Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004), 170.

<sup>113</sup> E.g., Johnson, Harmon A. “The Growing Church in Haiti” (Coral Gables, Fla.: West Indies Mission, 1970), 55–56; Abraham T. Pothén, “Indigenous Cross-cultural Missions in India and Their Contribution to Church Growth: With Special Emphasis on Pentecostal-Charismatic Missions” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1990), 305–8; Julie C. Ma, “A Close Encounter with the Transcendental: Proclamation and Manifestation in Pentecostal Worship in Asian Context,” 127–45 in *Asian Church and God’s Mission: Studies Presented in the International Symposium on Asian Mission in Manila, January 2002* (ed. Wonsuk Ma and Julie C. Ma; Manila: OMF Literature; West Caldwell, N.J.: MWM, 2003), 136; see more fully idem, *When the Spirit Meets the Spirits: Pentecostal Ministry among the Kankana-ey Tribe in the Philippines* (Studies in the Intercultural History of Christianity 118. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, Wien, 2000).

<sup>114</sup> E.g., De Wet, “Signs,” 84–85; Kurt Koch, *God Among the Zulus* (trans. Justin Michell and Waldemar Engelbrecht. Natal, R.S.A.: Mission Kwa Sizabanu, 1981), 136–37, 143–44, 144–45, 147–48, 150, 153; Pothén, “Missions,” 189; Myung Soo Park, “Korean Pentecostal Spirituality as Manifested in the Testimonies of Members of Yoido Full Gospel Church,” 43–67 in *David Yonggi Cho: A Close Look at His Theology and Ministry* (ed. Wonsuk Ma, William W. Menzies, and Hyeon-sung Bae; Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, Hansei University Press, 2004), 52–53; Chin Khua Khai, “The Assemblies of God and Pentecostalism in Myanmar,” 261–80 in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (ed. Allan Anderson

and Edmond Tang; *Regnum Studies in Mission*, Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies 3; Oxford: Regnum; Baguio City, Philippines: APTS, 2005), 269; Bård Løkken Knapstad, "Show Us the Power! A Study of the Influence of Miracles on the Conversion Process from Islam to Christianity in an Indonesian Context" (ThM thesis, Norwegian Lutheran School of Theology, 2005), 83–85. Some converts have, however, retained significant values from their previous practice (Johannes Merz, "I Am a Witch in the Holy Spirit: Rupture and Continuity of Witchcraft Beliefs in African Christianity," *Missiology* 36 [2, Apr. 2008]: 201–17 [here 203, 213]).

<sup>115</sup> For the prominence of spiritual power in African exegesis, see e.g., Grant LeMarquand, "African Readings of Paul," 488–503 in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul* (ed. Stephen Westerholm; Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 496–97.

<sup>116</sup> R. E. K. Mchami, "Demon Possession and Exorcism in Mark 1:21–28," *Africa Theological Journal* 24 (1, 2001): 17–38 (here 17; while conceding that East African interpretation could use more exegesis).

<sup>117</sup> Paul Stoller, "Eye, Mind, and Word in Anthropology," *L'Homme* 24 (3–4, 1984): 91–114 (110; as cited in Edith Turner, "Advances in the Study of Spirit Experience: Drawing Together Many Threads," *Anthropology of Consciousness* 17 [2, 2006]: 33–61 [here 41]).

<sup>118</sup> Turner, "Advances," 42.

<sup>119</sup> Graduate Research Professor in anthropology at the University of Florida, visiting professor at the University of Chicago and University of California at Berkeley; and past president of the American Ethnological Society and of the Society for Applied Anthropology.

<sup>120</sup> Solon T. Kimball, "Learning a New Culture," 182–92 in *Crossing Cultural Boundaries: The Anthropological Experience* (ed. Solon T. Kimball and James B. Watson; San Francisco: Chandler, 1972), 188–92.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 189–90.

<sup>122</sup> Turner, "Advances," 37. For other claims of apparitions, see James McClenon, *Wondrous Events: Foundations of Religious Belief* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), xiii, 70, 72.

<sup>123</sup> Edith Turner, *The Hands Feel It: Healing and Spirit Presence among a Northern Alaskan People* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), xxii; *idem*, *Experiencing Ritual: A New Interpretation of African Healing* (with William Blodgett, Singleton Kahoma, and Fideli Benwa; Series in Contemporary Ethnography; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 149, 159; *idem*, *Among the Healers: Stories of Spiritual and Ritual Healing around the World* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006), 1–23.

<sup>124</sup> *Idem*, "The Reality of Spirits," *Shamanism* 10 (1, Spring–Summer 1997) (from a pro-shamanist perspective).

<sup>125</sup> Turner, *Experiencing Ritual*, 4.

<sup>126</sup> Alan R. Tippett, "Spirit Possession as It Relates to Culture and Religion: A Survey of Anthropological Literature," 143–74 in *Demon Possession: A Medical, Historical, Anthropological, and Theological Symposium* (ed. John Warwick Montgomery; Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1976), 143–44. For a brief historical overview of anthropological approaches to spirit possession, see Raymond Prince, "Foreword," xi–xvi in *Case Studies in Spirit Possession* (ed. Vincent Crapanzaro and Vivian Garrison; New York: Wiley, 1977), xi; Vincent Crapanzaro, "Introduction," 1–40 in *Case Studies in Spirit Possession*, 5–7; more thoroughly for recent studies, Boddy, "Spirit Possession," 410–14.

<sup>127</sup> Erika Bourguignon, *Possession* (Chandler & Sharp Series in Cross-Cultural Themes; San Francisco: Chandler & Sharp, 1976), 14. Some scholars warn of the impropriety of applying some western diagnostic categories cross-culturally, since some behaviors considered disordered by therapists in one society may be norms in others (Louis Hoffman and Marika Kurzenberger, "The Miraculous and Mental Illness," 65–93 in *Parapsychological Perspectives* [vol. 3 of *Miracles: God, Science, and Psychology in the Paranormal*; ed. J. Harold Ellens. Westport, Conn.; London: Praeger, 2008], 84–85).

<sup>128</sup> Crapanzaro, "Introduction," 7 (emphasis his; cited also by others, e.g., Stevan L. Davies, *Jesus the Healer: Possession, Trance, and the Origins of Christianity* [New York: Continuum, 1995], 23); for those including any state indigenously interpreted as possession, cf. Bourguignon, *Possession*, 7; I. M. Lewis, "Correspondence: Spirits and the Sex War," *Man*, n.s., 2 (4, Dec. 1967): 626–28 (here 627).

<sup>129</sup> Thus Mary Keller, *The Hammer and the Flute: Women, Power, and Spirit Possession* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 39–40, notes that earlier anthropologists tended to explain possession in psychosocial terms, not commenting on possessing agents, but more recent research "does take seriously the agency of possessing ancestors, deities, and spirits."

<sup>130</sup> See Boddy, "Spirit Possession," 408, 410–14, 427.

<sup>131</sup> E.g., Tobias Wendl, "Slavery, Spirit Possession and Ritual Consciousness: The Tchamba Cult among the Mina of Togo," 111–23 in *Spirit Possession, Modernity and Power in Africa* (ed. Heike Behrend and Ute Luig; Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 120, criticizes psychoanalytic (Crapanzaro), sociological (Lewis) and feminist approaches for imposing grids instead of analyzing indigenous functions for possession experience.

<sup>132</sup> Colleen A. Ward, "Introduction," 8–10 in *Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health*, 9. Idem, "The Cross-Cultural Study of Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health," 15–35 in *Altered States of Consciousness and Mental Health*, 17, notes that psychologists' focus on "objective, quantifiable data" must be complemented by anthropologists' "incorporation of subjective experiential data." For a wide range of modern scientific (esp. psychiatric) classifications, see Chandrashekar, "Possession Syndrome," 82–83.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. discussion of the Gospel accounts in Graham H. Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993); idem, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

<sup>134</sup> For some tragic examples, see Keener, *Miracles*, 804-6.

<sup>135</sup> Aylward Shorter, *Jesus and the Witch Doctor: An Approach to Healing and Wholeness* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1985), 99; I. W. C. van Wyk, "African Witchcraft in Theological Perspective," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 60 (3, 2004): 1201-28 (here 1202); Mensah, "Basis," 171; further evidence in Keener, *Miracles*, 806-8. Witchcraft is flourishing in Africa (Jim Harries, "The Magical Worldview in the African Church: What Is Going On?" *Missiology* 28 [4, 2000]: 487-502 [here 492]; Harriet Hill, "Witchcraft and the Gospel: Insights from Africa," *Missiology* 24 [3, 1996]: 323-44 [here 323-25]; Erik Bähre, "Witchcraft and the Exchange of Sex, Blood, and Money among Africans in Cape Town, South Africa," *JRelAf* 32 [3, 2002]: 300-34 [here 300, 329]; Wyk, "Witchcraft," 1203-4). For the belief that negative shamanism is used to harm or kill, see reports in Patrick R. McNaughton, *The Mande Blacksmiths: Knowledge, Power, and Art in West Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 69; Laura Scherberger, "The Janus-Faced Shaman: The Role of Laughter in Sickness and Healing Among the Makushi," *Anthropology and Humanism* 30 (1, 2005): 55-69 (here 57-59); Godwin Ehi Azenabor, "The Idea of Witchcraft and the Challenge of Modern Science," 21-35 in *Studies in Witchcraft, Magic, War, and Peace in Africa* (ed. Beatrice Nicolini. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 2006), 30-31; for the sacrifice by witchcraft of relatives to achieve success, see Wim van Binsbergen, "Witchcraft in Modern Africa as Virtualized Boundary Conditions of the Kinship Order," 212-63 in *Witchcraft Dialogues: Anthropological and Philosophical Exchanges* (ed. George Clement Bond and Diane M. Ciekawy; Athens, Ohio: Center for International Studies, Ohio University, 2001), 243.

<sup>136</sup> Gananath Obeyesekere, "Sorcery, Premeditated Murder, and the Canalization of Aggression in Sri Lanka," *Ethnology* 14 (1975): 1-24 (here 3), noting homicidal intention but (21) doubting much effectiveness. For poisoning as well as occult means (sometimes reported by self-acknowledged sorcerers) with intent to kill, see Barrie Reynolds, *Magic, Divination and Witchcraft Among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 41-44; Joe M. Kapolyo, *The Human Condition: Christian Perspectives through African Eyes* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005), 77.

<sup>137</sup> See e.g., Tabona Shoko, *Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe: Health and Well-Being* (Vitality of Indigenous Religions; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2007), 46; Cédric Mayrargue, "The Expansion of Pentecostalism in Benin: Individual Rationales and Transnational Dynamics," 274-92 in *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America* (ed. André Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani; Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 286; Frank Hoare, "A Pastoral Approach to Spirit Possession and Witchcraft Manifestations among the Fijian People," *Mission Studies* 21 (1, 2004): 113-37 (here 127-28); Knapstad, "Power," 84, 89.

<sup>138</sup> P. E. H. Hair, "Heretics, Slaves, and Witches—as Seen by Guinea Jesuits c. 1610," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28 (2, 1998): 131-44 (here 140).

<sup>139</sup> See e.g., Nonyem E. Numbere, *A Man and a Vision: A Biography of Apostle Geoffrey D. Numbere* (Diobu, Nigeria: Greater Evangelism Publications, 2008), 136; Bruce T. Grindal, "Into the Heart of Sisala Experience: Witnessing Death Divination," *JAnthRes* 39 (1983): 60-80 (here 66); Edith Turner, "Psychology, Metaphor, or Actuality? A Probe into Iñupiat Eskimo Healing," *Anthropology of*

*Consciousness* 3 (1–2, 1992): 1–8 (here 5); Harry G. West, *Ethnographic Sorcery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 3–5, 9–10, 88.

<sup>140</sup> For suffering and death caused by curses, see, e.g., Raymond Prince, “Indigenous Yoruba Psychiatry,” 84–120 in *Magic, Faith, and Healing: Studies in Primitive Psychiatry Today* (ed. Ari Kiev; New York: Free Press, 1964), 91; John Dawson, “Urbanization and Mental Health in a West African Community,” 305–42 in *Magic, Faith, and Healing*, 328–29; Mbiti, *Religions*, 258; cf. Harold Remus, *Jesus as Healer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 110; F. B. Welbourn, “Healing as a Psychosomatic Event,” 351–68 in *Afro-Christian Religion and Healing in Southern Africa* (ed. G. C. Oosthuizen et al.; African Studies 8; Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1989), 364; voodoo and taboo deaths in Herbert Benson with Marg Stark, *Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief* (New York: Scribner, 1996), 40–41; especially Knapstad, “Power,” 84, 89. Widespread beliefs in curses’ efficacy appear in rural Africa (e.g., Godfrey Lienhardt, “The Situation of Death: An Aspect of Anuak Philosophy,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 35 [2, 1962]: 74–85; Mario J. Azevedo, Gwendolyn S. Prater, and Daniel N. Lantum, “Culture, Biomedicine, and Child Mortality in Cameroon,” *Social Science & Medicine* 32 [12, 1991]: 1341–49), in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Netherlands (see Hans de Waardt, “Dutch Witchcraft in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Sociologische Gids* 36 [3–4, May 1989]: 224–44) and in some parts of the west more recently (e.g., Hans Sebald, “Franconian Witchcraft: The Demise of a Folk Magic,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 53 [3, July 1980]: 173–87).

<sup>141</sup> See e.g., Walter B. Cannon, “‘Voodoo’ Death,” *American Anthropologist* 44 (1942): 169–81; Jerome D. Frank, *Persuasion and Healing: A Comparative Study of Psychotherapy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1961), 39–42.

<sup>142</sup> Leny Lagerwerf, *Witchcraft, Sorcery and Spirit Possession: Pastoral Responses in Africa* (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, 1987), 14–15. Conventional western medicine cannot treat witchcraft affliction because it isolates it from its traditional social framework (16–17).

<sup>143</sup> Lagerwerf, *Witchcraft*, 18.

<sup>144</sup> Some African Pentecostal churches have appeared culturally relevant by addressing witchcraft (David Maxwell, “Witches, Prophets, and Avenging Spirits: The Second Christian Movement in North-East Zimbabwe,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 25 [3, 1995]: 309–39 [here 334]); Stephen Hayes, “Christian Responses to Witchcraft and Sorcery,” *Missionalia* 23 (3, 1995): 339–54 (here 346–47, 352), views positively the approach of Zionists like Bishop Nyasha, who simply baptizes, exorcises, and reintegrates those who confess to witchcraft. Most African Catholics, Anglicans, and Presbyterian pastors condemn witchcraft, though their parishioners do not always hear them this way (Kenneth R. Ross, “Preaching in Mainstream Christian Churches in Malawi: A Survey and Analysis,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 25 [1, Feb. 1995]: 3–24 [here 12–13]).

<sup>145</sup> Recounted in *Miracles*, 854–56.

<sup>146</sup> Here I am selectively adapting various material from Keener, *Miracles*, 209–41 passim, with permission from Baker.

<sup>147</sup> See e.g., Bernard Robinson, “The Challenge of the Gospel Miracle Stories,” *New Blackfriars* 60 (1979): 321–34 (here 321); William C. Placher, *Mark* (Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 76.

<sup>148</sup> See e.g., critiques of Richard Swinburne, *The Concept of Miracle* (New Studies in the Philosophy of Religion; London: Macmillan, 1970); J. Houston, *Reported Miracles: A Critique of Hume* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); David Johnson, *Hume, Holism, and Miracles* (Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999); John Earman, *Hume’s Abject Failure: The Argument against Miracles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>149</sup> David Hume, *Of Miracles* (introduction by Antony Flew; La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1985), 37 (cf. 37–40).

<sup>150</sup> See C. L. Ten, “Hume’s Racism and Miracles,” *Journal of Value Inquiry* 36 (2002): 101–7; Charles Taliaferro and Anders Hendrickson, “Hume’s Racism and His Case against the Miraculous,” *Philosophia Christi* 4 (2, 2002): 427–41; Craig S. Keener, “A Reassessment of Hume’s Case against Miracles in Light of Testimony from the Majority World Today,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 38 (3, Fall 2011): 289–310.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Hume, *Miracles*, 55; more clearly, idem, *The Natural History of Religion* (ed. H. E. Root; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1956), 50–51; comment in Johnson, *Hume*, 80; James L. Kugel, *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 34.

<sup>152</sup> See John J. Pilch, “Sickness and Healing in Luke-Acts,” 181–209 in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation* (ed. Jerome H. Neyrey; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 183; idem, “Disease,” 135–40 in *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (5 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 135; cf. Linda L. Barnes, “Introduction,” 3–26 in *Teaching Religion and Healing* (ed. Linda L. Barnes and Inés Talamantez; American Academy of Religion Teaching Religious Studies Series; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 6–7; Suzanne J. Crawford, “Religion, Healing, and the Body,” 29–45 in *Teaching Religion and Healing*, 31–32.

<sup>153</sup> See Barnes, “Introduction,” 3, and note the bibliography in Barnes and Talamantez, *Teaching Religion and Healing*, 353–78 just on religious traditions and healing (also Barnes, “World Religions and Healing,” 341–52 in *Teaching Religion and Healing*, 346–52).

<sup>154</sup> John J. Pilch, *Healing in the New Testament: Insights from Medical and Mediterranean Anthropology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 35 (cf. also 14).

<sup>155</sup> McClenon, *Events*, 131 and sources cited there.

<sup>156</sup> See, e.g., F. B. Welbourn, “Exorcism,” *Theology* 75 (1972): 593–96 (here 595; African allowance of both medical and spiritual treatment); Mercy Amba Oduyoye, “The Value of African Religious Beliefs and Practices for Christian Theology,” 109–16 in *African Theology en Route: Papers from the Pan-African Conference of Third World Theologians, December 17–23, 1977, Accra, Ghana* (ed. Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979), 116; Bennetta Jules-Rosette,

“Faith Healers and Folk Healers: The Symbolism and Practice of Indigenous Therapy in Urban Africa,” *Religion* 11 (1981): 127–49 (here 128); Justo L. González, *Out of Every Tribe and Nation: Christian Theology at the Ethnic Roundtable* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), 94; André Droogers, “The Normalization of Religious Experience: Healing, Prophecy, Dreams, and Visions,” 33–49 in *Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture* (ed. Karla Poewe; Studies in Comparative Religion; Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994); D. S. Shishima, “The Wholistic Nature of African Traditional Medicine: The Tiv Experience,” 119–26 in *Religion, Medicine and Healing* (ed. Gbola Aderibigbe and Deji Ayegboyin; Lagos: Nigerian Association for the Study of Religions and Education, 1995); John S. Pobee, “Health, Healing, and Religion: An African View,” *IntRevMiss* 90 (356/357, Jan.–April 2001): 55–64 (here 59–60); E. Anthony Allen, “Whole Person Healing, Spiritual Realism, and Social Disintegration: A Caribbean Case Study in Faith, Health, and Healing,” *IntRevMiss* 90 (356/357, Jan.–April 2001): 118–33 (here 130–31, resisting western acculturation that suppresses traditional African interests); M. V. Bührmann, “Religion and Healing: The African Experience,” 25–34 in *Afro-Christian Religion and Healing*; D. Dube, “A Search for Abundant Life: Health, Healing, and Wholeness in Zionist Churches,” 109–36 in *Afro-Christian Religion and Healing*, 135; Cephas N. Omenyo, “New Wine in an Old Bottle?: Charismatic Healing in the Mainline Churches in Ghana,” 231–49 in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, 235–38; Gotthard Oblau, “Divine Healing and the Growth of Practical Christianity in China,” 307–27 in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*; Ma, “Encounter,” 130 (regarding Korea); Melba Padilla Maggay, “Early Protestant Missionary Efforts in the Philippines: Some Intercultural Issues,” 29–41 in *Asian Church and God’s Mission*, 34.

<sup>157</sup> “Spirit and Power: A 10–Country Survey of Pentecostals,” Pew Forum Survey (2006), at <http://pewforum.org/surveys/pentecostal> (accessed Jan. 4, 2009).

<sup>158</sup> Noll, *Shape*, 34 (claiming “almost all” but admitting “some hyperbole”).

<sup>159</sup> “Spirit and Power: A 10–Country Survey of Pentecostals,” Pew Forum Survey (2006), at <http://pewforum.org/surveys/pentecostal> (accessed Jan. 4, 2009).

<sup>160</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 107, who also complains that westerners too often contest the legitimacy of such perspectives (on 121 offering the specific example of John Spong’s ethnocentric complaints about African Anglican bishops’ “superstitious” and “Pentecostal” “extremism”).

<sup>161</sup> Noll, *Shape*, 34.

<sup>162</sup> See Jan G. Van der Watt, “A Hermeneutics of Relevance: Reading the Bible in Dialogue in African Contexts,” 237–55 in *Miracles and Imagery in Luke and John: Festschrift Ulrich Busse* (ed. J. Verheyden, G. van Belle, and J. G. van der Watt; BETL 218; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2008), especially here 237–42, though helpfully warning of the danger of ignoring original contexts (243).

<sup>163</sup> Ronald W. Roschke, “Healing in Luke, Madagascar, and Elsewhere,” *CurrTM* 33 (6, Dec. 2006): 459–71.

<sup>164</sup> Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 122–31; cf. also Mullin, *History*, 279 (cf. 281); Mchami, “Possession,” 17 (on spirits); Wes Richards, “An Examination of Common Factors in the Growth of Global Pentecostalism: Observed in South Korea, Nigeria, and Argentina,” *JAM* 7 (1, March 2005): 85–106 (here 95–96); C. Stephen Evans, “Critical Historical Judgment and Biblical Faith,” *Faith and Philosophy* 11 (2, April 1994): 184–206 (here 201–2); Paul Rhodes Eddy and Gregory A. Boyd, *The Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 67–73, 82–83 (also noting, on 71–73, the shift among, and citing, “many western ethnographers” and anthropologists who have grown increasingly respectful toward other cultures’ approaches to the supernatural).

<sup>165</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 26.

<sup>166</sup> Rex Gardner, “Miracles of Healing in Anglo-Celtic Northumbria as Recorded by the Venerable Bede and His Contemporaries: A Reappraisal in the Light of Twentieth-Century Experience,” *British Medical Journal* 287 (Dec. 24–31, 1983): 1927–33 (here 1929), quoting J. Finlay, *Columba* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1979).

<sup>167</sup> Noll, *Shape*, 24.

<sup>168</sup> C. Roderick Wilson, “Seeing They See Not,” 197–208 in *Being Changed: The Anthropology of Extraordinary Experience* (ed. David Young and Jean-Guy Goulet; Petersborough, Ont.: Broadview, 1994), 202–4 (citing Loewen’s account from 1974).

<sup>169</sup> Wilson, “Seeing,” 204.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, “New Testament and Mythology,” 1–43 in *New Testament Mythology and Other Basic Writings* (ed. Schubert Ogden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 4.

<sup>171</sup> Justo L. González, *Acts: The Gospel of the Spirit* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2001), 84–85. Cf. also estimates of 28 percent of all Latino Christians in the United States as Pentecostal or (especially among Catholics) charismatic (Gastón Espinosa, “‘The Holy Ghost Is Here on Earth?’: The Latino Contributions to the Azusa Street Revival,” *Enrichment* 11 [2, Spring 2006]: 118–25 [here 124]); their worldview is not “over-rationalized” (Miguel Alvarez, “The South and the Latin America Paradigm of the Pentecostal Movement,” *AJPS* 5 [1, 2002]: 135–53 [141–42, 144]).

<sup>172</sup> Ismael Laborde Figueras (interviews, Aug. 7, 8, 2010).

<sup>173</sup> Studies of undergraduates show that scientific training does “not reduce the frequency of anomalous reports,” in contrast to beliefs in circles of elite scientists (McClenon, *Events*, 35). Likewise, in cultures like Ghana there is no inverse proportionality between scientific knowledge and paranormal beliefs (*ibid.*, 22). The academy is an elite subculture, and cultural factors (at least sometimes related to academic politics) help shape its creeds.

<sup>174</sup> Regina Eya, “Healing and Exorcism: The Psychological Aspects,” 44–54 in *Healing and Exorcism: The Nigerian Experience* (ed. Chris U. Manus, Luke

N. Mbefo, and E. E. Uzukwu; Attakwu, Enugu: Spiritan International School of Theology, 1992), 51–52.

<sup>175</sup> Yung, *Quest for Asian Theology*, 6. This perspective fits most nonwestern cultures (Yung, “Integrity,” 173); it is Western antisupernatural Christianity that is now “the real aberration” (“A 21st Century Reformation: Recovering the Supernatural,” *The Lausanne Global Conversation*, <http://conversation.lausanne.org/en/conversations/detail/11041>, accessed Oct. 2, 2010).

<sup>176</sup> Yung, “Integrity,” 173.

Jeremy Chew

*I am Kneeling on the Outside, but I am Standing on the Inside:  
Another Look at the Story of Naaman through the Lenses of  
Kraft*

**Abstract**

The story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5 has been a popular mining ground for theological positions and missiological perspectives. How one views Elisha's response to Naaman in verse 19 is inevitably affected by one's view regarding the appropriateness of how Naaman intends to resolve the conflict between his new relationship with Yahweh and his former pagan practices. Based on the movement of the story, and the use of comparison and contrast of characters, Elisha's answer should be seen as a positive affirmation, rather than a negative or indifferent response. Using Kraft's model for conversion helps us see the positive benefits for doing so. Combining biblical studies and intercultural research methods, we discover that Elisha's answer to Naaman is the most propitious response to a new convert returning to his former pagan culture.

**Keywords:** Elisha, Naaman, characterization, Charles Kraft, conversion

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## Introduction

The story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5 is described as a narrative that “includes themes of international intrigue, confession, monotheism, greed, grace, universalism, generosity, and the failure of ‘conventional wisdom’ in its complex structure” (Smith 1994:205). It is no wonder that, among the Elisha narratives, the story of Naaman has been a popular mining ground for theological positions and missiological perspectives. In addition, Naaman’s story “contains all the elements of a good drama, with subtleties and blatant contrasts” (Effa 2007:306). Among the accounts of the prophet Elisha, it has “the most highly developed plot and contains the largest number of characters” (Hobbs 1992:968).

The use of characterization, word play, and twists of events makes the account of Naaman a great story to be studied. The first part of this paper will focus on the request of Naaman for forgiveness and Elisha’s response in 2 Kings 5:18-19a. I will argue for seeing Elisha’s response in a positive light in view of the movement in Naaman’s life surrounding his conversion, and the author’s use of characterization in his writing. The missiological overtones of Naaman’s story raise questions of practical theology, in particular to the appropriateness of Elisha’s response. Using the conversion model of Charles H. Kraft, the second part of this paper argues for the propitiousness of Elisha’s positive response to Naaman.

## I Am Kneeling on the Outside, but I am Standing on the Inside

2 Kings 5 is a single continuous story that comprises three units: verses 1-14, 15-19, and 20-27 (Cohn 1983:171-172). It is one of the few accounts recording the conversion of an individual pagan in the Old Testament. Naaman, a high-ranking Syrian officer and a valiant warrior, is held in esteem by his master because Yahweh has given him victory for his country through him (2 Kgs 5:1). The extensive description of Naaman’s positive attributes is contrasted by a single word at the end of the verse concerning his skin disease (Cohn 1983:173-174). After a series of advices and obstacles, Naaman is miraculously healed. This leads him to confess that “there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel” (2 Kgs 5:15). Moreover, Naaman makes a commitment that he will no longer offer burnt offering, nor will he sacrifice to other gods except Yahweh (2 Kgs 5:17). However, he immediately foresees that his newly found belief would bring him new challenges upon returning to his homeland, particularly in terms of cultic practices such as paying obeisance to his native god Rimmon. In this regard, Naaman seeks the forgiveness of Yahweh on the basis that his outward posture of bowing down is merely a ceremonial

requirement that does not reflect his allegiance to Yahweh. To his request, Elisha replies with “go in peace” (*lēk l’šālôm*), which intrigues scholars as to the meaning of the prophet’s answer. Is Elisha approving or disapproving Naaman’s request, or is he simply being indifferent?

Many scholars who comment on Elisha’s brief answer to Naaman in 2 Kings 5:19 concur with Terence E. Fretheim that “Elisha simply gives [Naaman] his blessings” (1999:153). D. J. Wiseman sees Elisha’s response as “a statement of confirmed agreement rather than a polite dismissal” (1982:324). In his 1983 article, Robert L. Cohn agrees with Ralbag that Elisha’s answer to Naaman was an affirmative (1983:179). However, in his more recent commentary, Cohn changes his position to say that “Elisha replies simply ‘Go in peace,’ not indicating specifically whether or not he grants the requests” (2000:39). W. Alan Smith is of the opinion that “Elisha...forgives Naaman of the compromises of his faith.” (1994:210). Lai Ling Elizabeth Ngan goes even further to offer the possible reason for Elisha’s approval of Naaman’s request. Ngan writes that “Perhaps Elisha recognizes the precarious life of faith Naaman would face upon his return. He does not burden the new convert with legal and ritual requirements, nor advises him to withdraw from Syrian society, but sends him home in peace” (1997:593).

Scholars who take Elisha’s response to Naaman as disapproval are rare (Lasine 2011:5). Many prefer to take the neutral ground and suggest that Elisha withheld giving his opinion in regard to Naaman’s request. Cogan and Tadmor posit that in contrast to Naaman’s lengthy petition, Elisha’s “laconic answer... refrains from commenting...on Naaman’s conversion” (1988:65). Volkmar Fritz also shares the same view that Naaman’s request “is neither granted nor precluded by Elisha’s response,” and that “Elisha’s formula...leaves the question ultimately undecided” (2003:260). Authors who are in this category of seeing Elisha’s response as indifferent include those who attempt to explain Elisha’s rationale for doing so from a missiological perspective. Walter A. Maier III claims that Elisha’s response was neither a “yes” nor a “no,” but understands the prophet to be simply “commending Naaman to the care and guidance of God” (1997:192). However, Maier does not think that Elisha could concede to Naaman’s request, but that the prophet was simply withholding verbal judgment on Naaman’s intentions because “Elisha does not want to quench what has just begun in Naaman with a strong negative response or with instruction which, too hastily given, only would confuse and upset. He handles Naaman tenderly, as a spiritual babe” (1997:193). Essentially, Maier does not approve of Naaman’s request, but thinks that a new believer should not be overburdened with so many religious demands all at once. Similarly, Allan L. Effa explains that “Elisha responds graciously, without offering

concrete advice” and “leaves the issue of casuistry for Naaman to work out himself and wishes him well by granting him the blessing of God’s peace” (2007:311). Effa justifies his statement by claiming that “God is patient with those who have just turned to him and gives them time to discover what it means to worship him in ways that do not require an immediate separation from their culture” (2007:311). Emmanuel O. Nwaoru opines that “Elisha did not explicitly pronounce YHWH’s forgiveness; he left Naaman in the hope that God would show his mercy. Indeed, the prophet expresses understanding for the compromises Naaman will have to make” (2008:37).

What do we make of such a diversity of opinions? In a recent article, Stuart Lasine raises an insightful question pertaining to this discussion: “to what extent are the readers’ understandings of Elisha’s reply influenced by their own notion of what constitutes appropriate behavior on the part of those who profess belief in the biblical God?” (2011:4). To be sure, how one views Elisha’s response to Naaman is inevitably affected by one’s view regarding the appropriateness of how Naaman intends to resolve the conflict between his new relationship with Yahweh and his former pagan practices. Missionaries have to wrestle with a situation similar to Elisha with converts from a pagan culture that is hostile to Christianity. In a way, the mastery of narrative writing as demonstrated by the author here draws the reader into the same dilemma as Elisha. As a more mature believer, what advice can we offer to a new convert from another culture? But are we left to our own discretion when interpreting Elisha’s response? For this reason, we need to take another look at Naaman’s story.

## **Another Look at the Story of Naaman**

### *1. Movement in the story of Naaman*

In later Judaism, missionary effort follows a linear geographical movement from the sending country to the recipient country (Nwaoru 2008:31). Nwaoru observes that the conversion of Naaman defies such traditional geographical movement, but is instead of a chiasmic nature where the protagonist starts off in Aram, finds his new faith in Israel, and returns again to his homeland where his new faith is to be practiced (2008:32). While Nwaoru is right about the path of Naaman’s physical movement, he fails to consider the direction of Naaman’s spiritual journey.

In the account of Naaman’s conversion, the author is intentional in depicting the movement of Naaman’s spiritual journey as a growing relationship with Yahweh through a series of aids and obstacles. The story begins by attributing

Naaman's military success to Yahweh. This is ironic because firstly Naaman most likely is unaware of Yahweh's providential help, and secondly because this victory comes at the expense of Israel. Naaman's skin disease sets him up for a need for healing which the audience knows comes only from Yahweh. The first aid towards Naaman's encounter with Yahweh comes from an Israelite slave girl who, through Naaman's wife, refers him to "the prophet who is in Samaria" who has the ability to heal. Next, the obstacle to Naaman's spiritual journey comes in the persons of the two kings—the king of Aram who sends Naaman to the wrong person for help, and the king of Israel who misinterprets the intention of the Syrian king for trying to pick a fight. The agonizing cry "Am I God?" from the mouth of Israel's king both betrays his awareness of Yahweh, and reveals his spiritual distance from Israel's God. Hearing of this somehow, Elijah asks for Naaman to be sent to him, giving the reader hope again for Naaman's journey to knowing Yahweh. Naaman arrives at Elisha's house but is not given an audience. Naaman is simply given the instruction, via Elisha's messenger, to wash seven times in the Jordan. The prophet's attitude appears to be at odds with traditional evangelization principles. Faced with this unconventional reception, Naaman's own anger and pride become the next obstacles to his conversion. At this point (2 Kgs 5:11), the narrator reveals that Naaman becomes aware of Yahweh for he thinks that Elisha would simply call on Yahweh's name to heal him. At the same time, Naaman refers to Yahweh as Elisha's God, showing that there is still a personal distance between him and God. This gap between Naaman and Yahweh is nudged forward again by some unnamed servants of Naaman, who actually manage to convince him to follow Elisha's instruction. Naaman washes himself in the Jordan, is healed and professes a personal knowledge (*yāda*) of Yahweh in his remarkable confession, "Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel" (2 Kgs 5:15). Moving another step forward, Naaman makes known his intention to no longer offer burnt offerings nor sacrifice to other gods besides Yahweh (2 Kgs 5:17). This depiction of Naaman's spiritual journey leads to the passage of our present discussion. The narrator has thus far employed many characters as aids and foils in this journey, but the movement of the story is one that is ultimately forward, despite the potential obstacles along the way. In light of this, it is highly possible to see both Naaman's final request for forgiveness, and Elisha's response to him positively. It is likely that Naaman's request at the end signals a forward step in his newly found faith rather than a slip into compromise. This understanding follows the flow of the narrator's story-telling most naturally.

## *2. Contrast and comparison of characters in the story of Naaman*

A prominent literary feature in the story of Naaman is the contrast of characters. In the first seven verses of 2 Kings 5, all the characters in the story are unnamed except for Naaman. In this first part of the story, even Elisha is only referred to ambiguously as “the prophet who is in Samaria.” We have here a pair of characters—two kings, one of Aram, and the other of Israel. The former is a non-believer of Yahweh; the latter, as expected of an Israelite king, a representative of Yahweh. Both are in the position of sovereign power over their respective kingdoms. However, both kings are powerless over the skin problem that Naaman is having. Another pair of characters is the captive slave girl and the prophet in Samaria, whom we later know refers to Elisha. Both of these characters are Israelite, but despite the fact that one lives in a foreign land while the other in the Promised Land, both of them exhibit faith in the healing of Naaman. Between the two pairs of characters, there is further contrast in that the kings act as foils in Naaman’s conversion, whereas both the slave girl and the prophet play the role of helping Naaman towards knowing Yahweh.

One other pair of characters is found in Naaman and Gehazi, Elisha’s aide. Both Naaman and Gehazi are servants of their respective masters—the king of Aram and the prophet Elisha. Both of them report to another person of higher authority. By contrast, Naaman is a non-Israelite and non-believer of Yahweh, while Gehazi is an Israelite and acknowledges the name of Yahweh (2 Kgs 5:20). The former is a generous giver of gifts, and the latter a greedy taker of gifts. However, the greatest contrast in the two is found in their relationship with Yahweh. In the story, Naaman is moving towards Yahweh, whereas Gehazi is moving away from Yahweh. By contrast, Naaman’s spiritual transformation is accompanied by physical healing while Gehazi’s apostasy is accompanied by physical ailment. This is most ironically depicted in the visible transfer of leprosy from Naaman to Gehazi. In light of the author’s use of character comparison and contrast, reading with the grain of Naaman’s story will lead the reader to see Naaman’s actions (and hence his requests to Elisha) in the positive light.

## *3. How do we understand Elisha’s response to Naaman?*

No matter how hard one looks, one cannot find in the text the rationale for Elisha’s approval of Naaman’s request to be pardoned for bowing down to Rimmon externally while remaining true to Yahweh internally. The bible is silent regarding what happens to Naaman after he returns to Syria. We are not told whether Naaman has been successful in holding on to his allegiance to Yahweh, or about his continual struggle to remain a secret Yahweh believer. The story ends

without giving us a clue as to how Naaman lives out his new found faith, and his commitment to worship Yahweh alone. While the story tells of a successful conversion account of a pagan growing positively in his newly found faith, it leaves the reader wondering about the wisdom behind Elisha's laconic parting words to a new believer about to return to his polytheistic environment.

In the rest of this paper, I would like to offer a way to see how Elisha's response is the most propitious thing that he has done for Naaman. To do this, I will draw our attention to the conversion model of Charles H. Kraft.

## The Story of Naaman through the Lenses of Kraft

### *1. Kraft's Model of Conversion*

In his book *Christianity in Culture*, Charles H. Kraft dedicates an entire chapter to Christian conversion (1979:328-344). He argues here that inadequate models of conversion believe in only one form of initiation into the Christian community, whereas in actual fact, God deals with human beings by adapting according to the cultural setting they are integrally a part of (1979:328). First, Kraft opines that biblical examples of conversion are not merely concerned with a single instance of some form of "conversion experience," but rather the process of relationship with God beyond that initial encounter (1979:330). Second, Kraft believes that "God's way is to work with, rather than against, psychologically and culturally appropriate mechanisms to bring about spiritual ends" (1979:332).

Admitting to the lack of "a single prescribed pattern for conversion" in the Bible, Kraft maintains that one may enter into a new relationship with God "via a number of culturally and psychologically appropriate ways." Nevertheless, Kraft posits that the basic concept of conversion is a "turning" (Heb. *šub*; Gr. *epistrephe*) away from the previous way of life and towards God instead (1979:333-334). This basic concept of conversion is manifested in some constant attitudes which Kraft proceeds to delineate. First, conversion involves "a conscious allegiance (faith commitment) to God" (Kraft 1979:334). With regard to a Gentile in particular, this new relationship with God necessitates an intentional and radical discontinuity with previous religious allegiances (Kraft 1979:335). A second constant, according to Kraft, is "a dynamic interaction between God and human beings that issues from a person's conscious allegiance to God" (1979:335). Kraft understands this as a series of encounters with God that involve decision-making, resulting in incorporating new habits or behaviors into the person's life (1979:335-336). This process comprises of distinct decisions leading up to the point of conversion, as well as the subsequent reinforcement of the new relationship (Kraft 1979:337).

The third constant follows the second, in that the conscious allegiance and dynamic interactions lead to a definite direction of “growth and maturation” (Kraft 1979:337). The fourth constant is “the need for the conversion-maturation process to take place in community” (Kraft 1979:338). Kraft emphasizes in this fourth aspect the role that other believers play in affirming the direction and nature of this growth (1979:338). Finally, the fifth constant for Kraft resembles more of a desirable outcome for this growth and maturation process to be “in keeping with the culture in which [the converts] are immersed” (197:338).

## *2. Naaman’s Conversion*

Using Kraft’s model of conversion, we now look at the story of Naaman again, this time to see if Naaman exhibits the constants as described by Kraft.

### *A conscious allegiance to God*

There are a few instances in the story where we can see Naaman exhibiting a conscious allegiance to God. Upon the miraculous curing of his skin disease, Naaman confesses that he knows of no other God in all the earth except for the God in Israel. Coming from a pluralistic and polytheistic culture, Naaman’s confession is startling (Barrick 2000:31). Walter Brueggemann points out that Naaman’s confession is striking because it essentially denies the relevancy of his Syrian gods back in his home country (2007:269). Another incident of Naaman’s allegiance to God is his stunning commitment to no longer burn offerings, nor sacrifice to other gods except Yahweh. Naaman’s willingness to abandon all previous known gods shows his sole allegiance to Yahweh. Finally, where Naaman initially refers to Yahweh as “Elisha’s God” (2 Kgs 5:11), at the end he refers three times to Yahweh by his personal name (2 Kgs 5:17-18).

### *A dynamic interaction between God and the convert*

The story of Naaman shows a number of decisions that Naaman has to make in his spiritual journey as he encounters God. Prior to his healing, Naaman has to decide whether to believe that Israel’s God could heal. However, Naaman initial approach to Yahweh is one of caution. He does not anticipate a personal encounter with Israel’s God, but thinks that he can receive healing by just having Elisha perform some rituals over him. Naaman’s attempt at distancing himself from Yahweh is seen in his reference to Yahweh as Elisha’s God. Elisha’s instruction to wash in the Jordan requires Naaman to make a decision to trust and be personally involved in a method that is seemingly ridiculous to him. After some persuasion from his servants, Naaman eventually decides to wash in the Jordan where he is

healed. Upon being healed, Naaman confesses his allegiance to Yahweh, and makes the decision to worship no other god except Yahweh. He also has to make decisions concerning the conflicting interests between his new allegiance and his old vocation. These involve specific considerations regarding the worship of Yahweh outside of Israel, and his conduct with regard to the pagan practices required of his job. All these accounts fit Kraft's definition of a dynamic interaction with God.

*Definite direction of growth and maturation*

Signs of growth and maturation in Naaman's life are evident in the account of his conversion. Naaman begins the story as a "great man" (*'š gādōl*), but at the end, his skin is described as that of a "young lad" (*na'ar qātōn*). Before he meets Elisha, Naaman is described as a "valiant warrior" (*gibbôr hayil*); at the end of the story, Naaman describes himself as Elisha's "servant" (*ebed*). We observe here that the once arrogant and enraged Syrian officer who feels ridiculed by Elisha's instruction to wash in the Jordan now stands in humility before the prophet. This goes to show that Naaman's transformation is not merely external, but that in the process, his character is also being transformed.

*The need for the conversion-maturation process to take place in community*

As far as we can tell from the recounting of the story, the environment of a community for growth and maturation is almost, if not, totally nonexistent for Naaman. The only other Yahweh believer in Syria mentioned in the story is the slave girl. Even if there were other Israelite captives in Syria, they would hardly be considered suitable as a community for Naaman. The story of Naaman does not provide us a solution. Nevertheless, this is a real issue faced even in present day mission efforts.

*Growth and maturation process in keeping with the culture in which the convert is immersed*

The situation of Naaman is unique in that after his conversion, he does not remain in the community of Yahweh believers, but returns to his former community of pagan culture and practices. Unlike the Moabite Ruth who relocates to live in Israel with her mother-in-law Naomi, Naaman returns back to his home country in Syria. His situation is also different from Daniel, who grows up in a community of Yahweh believers and is subsequently transported to a land of pagan religions. Naaman is a Gentile convert who is required to return to his pagan homeland. In his unique situation, Naaman has to wrestle with the practical issues

of continuing his allegiance to Yahweh in an environment that is not favorable to his new belief.

### *3. Contextualized Christianity*

As with much modern missionary work, new converts are required to respond to God via a culture that is distinctly different from their original cultures (Kraft 1979:340). Thus new converts need not only to understand God through the lenses of the witness' culture, but also to acquire their concept for a new pattern of behavior filtered through the culture of the witness. According to Kraft, "conversion in response to such an approach may result in a genuine relationship with God on the part of the convert(s). Or they may simply convert to the culture of the witness without developing a saving relationship with God" (1979:340). As mentioned earlier, the way one understands Elisha's response to Naaman may be influenced by what one thinks is the appropriate behavior of a believer of Yahweh. In the same way, for many well-meaning missionary groups and organizations, a convert's faith in God is not sufficient for them. This faith has to be "understood by and expressed in terms of their particular subculture" (Kraft 1979:341). One such example is seen in the influence of individualism in the western concept of conversion, often understood as taking place by means of "one by one against the social tide" (McGavran 1970:299). In this form of conversion, the convert's continual growth and maturation is influenced by the culture of the witness, and the direct dynamic interactions with God is interfered by the witness. As a result, the quality of the convert's relationship with God is greatly dependent on the convert's ability to assimilate the unfamiliar culture of the witness (Kraft 1979:342). Obviously, this model will pose as an obstacle to indigenous and contextualized faith practices in the life of the convert.

On the contrary, Kraft proposes that the new convert should be allowed to interact with and respond to God in terms of the convert's own culture. In this way, the growth of new converts, and the problems that they encounter in the process, will not be entangled with the additional need to learn the ways of a foreign culture (1979:342-343). As Kraft states, "God chooses the cultural milieu in which humans are immersed as the arena of his interaction with people" (1979:114). The witnesses only complicate things when they insist on the converts understanding God through the culture of the witnesses.

Going back to the story of Naaman, we now appreciate better what Elisha has done for him. After overcoming a series of external and internal obstacles, Naaman comes to genuine faith in Yahweh, as demonstrated by his monotheistic confession and commitment to worship Yahweh alone. His sincere allegiance to

Yahweh is also seen in his considerations for continual practice of his newly found faith, despite the lack of an open environment for publicly professing his belief. When Naaman asks for forgiveness for his eventual bowing down before Rimmon, Elisha could have imposed Israelite practices on him. What we do know from the story is that Elisha did not make demands of Naaman, but sent him away in peace. Neither did the prophet run through the Decalogue with Naaman, nor make him recite the Shema. We do *not* know Elisha's rationale for not doing so, and no amount of speculation will produce any definite answers. We can only understand in retrospect, with the help of Kraft's work, that Elisha's response was the most propitious thing to do in that situation. To be sure, Naaman needs to work out for himself the appropriate way to express his faith in his own culture through his personal interactions with Yahweh. This may take a long process, and as the story goes, time is not at Elisha's disposal. Imposing immediate demands of outward conformation at that moment may actually short circuit the growth process.

## Conclusion

One can draw many missiological applications from the story of Naaman, and many have already done so in the past. In this paper, I have combined biblical studies with intercultural research in the hope of better understanding one particular issue in Naaman's story—that of Elisha's response to Naaman's request for forgiveness on the account that he will be bowing down to Rimmon. I have argued that based on the movement of the story, and the use of comparison and contrast of characters, Elisha's answer should be seen as a positive affirmation, rather than a negative or indifferent response. Although we cannot enter Elisha's mind to understand his rationale for responding positively to Naaman, using Kraft's model for conversion helps us see the positive benefits for doing so.

In mission efforts, one often encounters the situation of seeing new converts that come from a previous religion or culture that is hostile towards the Christian faith. The question of whether such converts can continue to carry out their former religious duties while remaining true to the Christian God in secret is a difficult one, and this study is not able to provide a simple direct answer. However, the above discussion should hopefully bring to our awareness the need to exercise patience and grace in allowing these converts to work out the complex issues over time. The new converts should be given time for their personal responses to the text concerning such issues, and their community of believers are the best people to implement the outworking of their faith in response to their understanding of the text. The missionaries should exercise sensitivity in their help during this process.

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Moe Moe Nyunt

*Hesychasm Encounters Lectio Divina: An Intercultural Analysis of Eastern and Western<sup>1</sup> Christian Contemplative Practices*

**Abstract**

Two ancient Christian spiritual practices have emerged in their appropriate cultural contexts throughout the complex history of Christianity. Various cultural contexts in *hesychasm* and *lectio divina* enlighten us 1) to be balanced in religious culture and social culture between solitude and communal spiritual practices; 2) to notice the ways people achieve spiritual fulfillment in various cultures; 3) to propose a verbal practice in meditation to those who belong to oral culture and a silent and visual practice to those who belong to a more literate culture; or to practice both if the culture is mixed; and 4) to recognize the meaning of spirituality defined by people of Eastern and Western culture.

**Keywords:** hesychasm, *lectio divina*, Christian contemplation, spirituality, Orthodox Christianity, Western Christianity

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## Introduction

In our age, scholars of World Christianity, such as Andrew Walls,<sup>2</sup> Lamin Sanneh,<sup>3</sup> and Philip Jenkins,<sup>4</sup> are aware of the de-Christianizing of the West. On the other hand, a marked growth of memberships in Buddhist societies, as well as increasing numbers of Buddhist societies, monasteries and Buddhist Universities in the West inform us that Eastern Buddhist culture and spirituality is encroaching on traditional Western Christian spirituality.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, a 2008 US Religious Landscape Survey reported that in the United States 73% of Buddhists come from an affiliation with a previous religion.<sup>6</sup> It is also reported that “51% of Protestant teens left their childhood religion because their spiritual needs were not being met.”<sup>7</sup> These two reports give an inference that Buddhist converts were, most likely, brought up in the modern Western Christian culture.

There will be several reasons for the decline of Christianity in the West. One of the reasons is modern Christian spirituality does not answer the needs of Christians from the traditional faith. Paul G. Hiebert, Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou, in *Understanding Folk Religion*, enlighten Christian scholars and practitioners about the spiritual needs of “split-level Christianity”<sup>8</sup> in the non-Western world, when Western missionaries failed to replace local religious traditions to meet everyday spiritual needs. It is low level spirituality missionaries failed to deal with according to Hiebert. They argue that folk religions are based on the spiritual appetite of split-level Christians,<sup>9</sup> especially the beliefs and experiences of supernatural realities that modern Western Christianity does not explain.<sup>10</sup> In fact, in the West, there are other types of split-level Christians, where traditional Christianity does not satisfy current spiritual needs with the “spirituality”<sup>11</sup> of modern Western Christianity.

Paul F. Knitter, a leading theologian of Religious Pluralism, and Paul Tillich Professor of Theology, World Religions, and Culture at Union Theological Seminary, professes to be a Buddhist-Christian, and has said that some degree of double belonging is becoming more and more a part of the lives of serious religious people. Knitter understands that the dissatisfaction of Christians feeling of God as “God who is all out there”; “God who is totally other than I”; and “God who stands outside of me” motivates Christians to seek a double belonging. He goes on saying that these split-level Christians are “searching for ways of realizing *the mystery of the divine of God* in a way in which it is more a part of our very selves.”<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, in our days, many traditional Christians and split-level Christians in the West are challenging the Church to provide messages and techniques focused on *experiential spirituality* that can fill their spiritual void. In order to quench the spiritual thirst of split-level Christians and traditional Christians, some Western

spiritual leaders have learned spirituality and meditation practices from other Eastern religions. In turn, they have contributed new spiritual theories and practices to the Church. Some Christian spiritual leaders and scholars study *hesychasm*, ancient Eastern Christian contemplative practice, and lead Christians to follow it. Some examine *lectio divina*, ancient Western Christian contemplative practice, and motivate Christians to practice it. Since the culture of our world has become complex by the globalization that brings together Eastern and Western cultures, attempting to solve a problem in a simple way may not be much help. Thus, I am studying the two ancient Christian spiritual practices of contemplation—*hesychasm* and *lectio divina*—that could provide ways to meet the growing need of experiential spirituality in our complex contemporary world.

## Hesychasm and Lectio Divina

### 1. Description

In general, *hesychasm*, a practice of contemplation rooted in Greek culture, is widely practiced in Orthodox Christianity and identified as an Orthodox Christian spiritual practice; while *Lectio Divina* is a practice of contemplation rooted in Latin culture and represents a Western Christian spiritual practice. The English translation of the Greek word, *hesychia* is “stillness” or “silence.” *Hesychism* is a form of prayer and meditation.<sup>13</sup> The *hesychastic* tradition is based on ceaseless repetition of the “Jesus prayer:” “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me.” In fact, *hesychasm* covers other forms of inner prayer in the Orthodox Church in the East; however, most *hesychast* teaching is concerned with the Jesus Prayer.<sup>14</sup> Its emphasis is upon contemplation and the mystical life.<sup>15</sup> The word *hesychia* was introduced by St John Climacus, in the first half of the seventh century;<sup>16</sup> nevertheless, *hesychasm*<sup>17</sup> can be identified from the fifth century<sup>18</sup> because according to many sources, the same practice was initiated by the Desert Fathers in the early 5th century.

On the other hand, the direct meaning of the Latin words, *lectio divina* is “divine reading”. It is also defined as “holy or sacred reading.” It is “a slow, contemplative praying of the scriptures.”<sup>19</sup> St. Benedict, the sixth century Roman monk initiated the practice of *lectio divina* as the rule in the monastery<sup>20</sup> and *lectio divina* became one of the central activities for a monk’s daily life. Notwithstanding, the ancient spiritual practice of *lectio divina* of the West had been under the pressure of thirteenth century scholasticism and the European renaissance. From that time on, *lectio divina* fluctuated in importance under historical influences of particular cultural and political realities. In the Eastern Church, *hesychasm* is maintained by generations of Orthodox *hesychasts*. In any case, ancient Christian practices of

*hesychasm* and *lectio divina* have been revitalized by scholars and spiritual leaders in this contemporary post-World-War and post-modern culture.

In fact, both Eastern and Western ancient Christian “spiritual practices”<sup>21</sup> are layers of contemplative prayer that are normally associated with asceticism, mysticism or supernaturalism, even though, some present-day Protestant scholars differentiate the term “spirituality” from “mysticism.”<sup>22</sup> Alister E. McGrath, Professor of Science and Religion, understands that the word “mysticism” has been used extensively in the past to designate the general area of spirituality. The modern terms “spirituality” and “mysticism” are derived from the French terms *spiritualite* and *mysticism*. They were both, in the seventeenth century, “used to refer to direct interior knowledge of the divine or supernatural, and were apparently treated as more or less synonymous at the time.”<sup>23</sup>

## 2. Procedure

Organized procedure of *lectio divina* was initiated by Guigo II and there are four steps: the first step, *lectio* (reading) was to allow a phrase or word to arise out of the text and to focus on it. The second step, called *meditation* (meditation) was to ponder the words of the sacred text. The third step, *oratio* (prayer), and the fourth step, *contemplation* (contemplation) was the practice of resting in God’s silence.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, most spiritual leaders in the East did not offer a specific set of techniques for *hesychasts*; they usually give several instructions or several ways so that one could follow one direction according to his or her spiritual atmosphere. St. Climacus offers the thirty-step-ladder which has thirty steps of virtuous living rather than a procedure of contemplative practice.

According to the tradition of Father Matta El-Meskeen (1919-2006), an Orthodox monk and also the spiritual father of 120 monks in the Monastery of St. Macarius the Great in Egypt, *hesychasm* was formed in three stages: stage one is vocal prayer; the second stage is meditation or inward prayer;<sup>25</sup> and the third and last stage is contemplation.<sup>26</sup> The first stage of both *hesychasm* and *lectio divina* is oral practice: a *hesychast* of the East recites the Jesus Prayer whereas a practitioner of the West repeats scripture texts. The second stage of both Eastern and Western contemplative practices is meditation. The Eastern monks and nuns practice “mental” or “inward prayer.”<sup>27</sup> Eastern Christians believe that meditation is the heart-to-heart relationship between God and *hesychasts* through meditative prayer, reading the Bible, or meditating on nature. It is said that, at this stage, the mind goes into the heart of *hesychasts*. It is a practice of interior silence and a loving relationship between *hesychasts* and the God of the universe.

Contrary to the Eastern *hesychasts*, in the meditation stage, Western Christians repeated the scripture verses with an active mind. A modern scholar of *lectio divina*, Duncan Robertson, explores the medieval understanding of reading and realizes that “in the early monastic rules, as in classical usage, *meditatio* chiefly means repetition, memorization, and recitation.”<sup>28</sup> It is true, an ancient monk, Guido II, used the analogy of eating food in explaining *lectio divina*. For him, “reading as putting food into mouth; meditation chews it and breaks it down; and prayer finds its savor.” In fact, for Western practitioners, silent or verbal prayer was found at the third stage.

In the final stage, in the deep silence of contemplation, both practitioners from the East and the West conquer earthly desire by the revelation of a gracious God. Practitioners from both traditions experience joyful moments through an encounter with God even though the way of their feeling, experience, and the goal of their spiritual fulfillment are not the same. At this stage, ancient Western Christians touched “heavenly secrets.” Guigo II highlighted the essential nature of silence by saying: “Let all my world be silent in your heart. Your words are so softly spoken that no one can hear them except in a deep silence.”<sup>29</sup> He also noted: “He (God) allows us to taste how sweet He is.”<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, *hesychast* Kallistos Ware believes that this is “the contemplation of God himself” and “the direct vision of God.” At this stage, he or she no longer “experiences God solely through the intermediary of his conscience or of created things,” but he or she “meets the Creator face to face in an unmediated union of love.”<sup>31</sup> It is the loving union of the two persons—the Creator and his creature, the human being who shares the image of the Creator.

## Cultural Factors Influencing Spirituality

### 1. Collectivism vs. Individualism

There are “two antithetic universes of thought”<sup>32</sup> in human culture: the value of individualism and the value of collectivism. In the religious sense, I would rather use the words “solitary” and “communal” as alternatives. One of the core ideas and values of Western culture is individualism which the West embraced through the Enlightenment philosophy of humanism. Actually, the words “individualism” and “collectivism” are associated with the social outlook of a Western political philosophy and its focus is on the value of each human being. Individualism has been identified, as a whole, with Western culture and collectivism has been identified with Eastern culture and we must agree with this to some degree in terms of social culture.

In the religious sense, the above ideas are reversed. Overall cultural phenomena of modern-syncretic Western Christian spirituality highlights the communal worship, singing, dancing, preaching, teaching, listening, and reading of the devotional texts and scripture rather than solitary spiritual practices. Contrary to Western culture in religious practices, Eastern religious practices of meditation in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity appear secluded and solitary. Likewise, the distinctive characteristic of Eastern *Hesychasm* is asceticism and the meaning of the word *hesychia* itself shows the requirement of quietness as well as solitude or privacy. *Hesychists* usually go to a remote area to practice *hesychasm*. Appropriately, they are identified as “desert fathers and mothers,” “hermits,” or “ascetics.” In reality, not many extreme ascetic monks moved far away to the desert for contemplation in order to identify with Jesus’ experience in the wilderness. Most *hesychists* are not practicing asceticism or private devotion all the time; they have time for community as well. St Climacus, in his *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, said that community life is “a constant companion of the hermits (*hesychists*) (step 13-4).”<sup>33</sup>

In the Eastern tradition, *hesychists* always connected with other monks and they also had connection with the laity. In most deserts, there were two types of monasteries—*laura* and *coenobium*. *Laura* is a community of monks who live in separate cells or caves practicing contemplation most of the time. On Saturdays and Sundays, they participate in communal liturgical prayer and worship.<sup>34</sup> A *coenobium* is a monastery in which monks live a communal life, with a daily routine of communal prayer, work, and meals<sup>35</sup> as well as partaking of the Divine Mysteries.<sup>36</sup> They were proficient both in active life and spiritual insight (step 4-20).<sup>37</sup> The life of a *hesychast* is lived both in solitude as well as a community.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, *lectio divina*, is usually recognized as a communal spiritual practice by Western scholars today. As stated by Christine Valters Painter and Lucy Wynkoop, desert mothers and fathers practiced *lectio divina* communally and heard God’s voice personally as well as immediately. They consider that “most monasteries would not have been able to read the scriptures individually because books were very expensive at the time.”<sup>39</sup> In the same way, even though Studzinski sees the need of individual reading and meditating on the sacred scriptures,<sup>40</sup> he highlights the communal reading as “a social dimension.” He said that *Lectio* “took on the dimensions of a liturgical activity done in the presence of God and others.” He goes on to say “reading, not a mere individualistic activity, had clear societal dimensions. To read was to engage in a public act.”<sup>41</sup>

Chris Hann and Hermann Goltz rightly discern that “the dichotomy between individual and collective has a long history in the West, but Eastern Christians understandings are based on a notion of the person that negotiates the

*Charybdis* (Western) of individualism and the *Scylla* (Eastern) of collectivism.”<sup>42</sup> As a matter of fact, spiritual practices cannot be formed as solely communal or solely solitary; they help human beings balance out between social culture and religious culture. Contemporary Western scholars and spiritual leaders have been aware that both ancient contemplative practices from East and West can be applied in solitude or communally.<sup>43</sup> Both *hesychasm* and *lectio divina* can be balanced depending on one’s cultural background. A person from individual social culture may prefer communal spiritual practices if a church offers deep social relationship as well as spiritual nourishment within a community of worship; otherwise, he or she may join another loving community that can balance his or her life. On the other hand, one from a communal social culture may prefer solitary spirituality. In fact, both ancient spiritual practices, *hesychasm* and *lectio divina*, are applicable for all seasons and it is for all who aspire to have a peaceful and harmonious life in one’s own cultural community.

## 2. Enlightenment Rationality vs. Spirituality

Scholars have been aware of Enlightenment culture that divided the modern world into two halves—the natural and the supernatural. For modern people, science is public truth and religion is a private faith, since religion is defined as a supernatural heavenly reality that cannot be proved by science. As a consequence, this dualism influences many Christians in the West and many undermine the reality of the spirit world, miracles, and God’s special and supernatural revelation. For them, Christian belief is “the answer to the ultimate and eternal questions of life, and science based on reason as the answer to the problems of this world.”<sup>44</sup> In *Christian Spirituality*, Alister E. McGrath, professor of science and religion, discusses one American Protestant professor of theology who confessed that he had never experienced God. In modern-syncretistic Protestant Christianity, it is possible to be a theologian or spiritual leader without any experience of God.<sup>45</sup>

In fact, the world culture changes from time to time. Many Christian spiritual leaders and scholars from both the East and the West have become aware of the spiritual void in modern-syncretistic Christianity and have renewed their interest in these two ancient Christian contemplative practices. Still, it is not easy for many Western Protestants to accept the mystical or spiritual experience of contemplation, the way that ancient Christians encountered God, as essential for Christians in the contemporary world. For example, spiritual leaders and scholars in the West renew the study and practice of *lectio divina* and synthesize it with their evangelical beliefs. For them, *lectio divina* is “the intuition or awareness of the presence of God,” “mindful of the presence of God,”<sup>46</sup> “being with God,”<sup>47</sup> “to

rest in God's love," "achieve inner peace with God,"<sup>48</sup> God present in scripture,<sup>49</sup> and resting in the present with the God of the text.<sup>50</sup>

James C. Wilhoit and Evan B. Howard clearly express their understanding of contemplation in this way: "Inner silence means not necessarily the expectation of any particular encounters with God" but it is merely "a way of surrender and a practice that develops over time." They assume that all "perception of any particular experience will fall short of the infinite divinity we know as God."<sup>51</sup> It appears that many Christians in the West are still influenced by Western modern culture. Another evangelical scholar, John Jefferson Davis, believes that Christians are united to Christ by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit illuminates the biblical text. Consequently, the text becomes alive and they reach an experiential level of contemplation.<sup>52</sup> It can be assumed that the spiritual fulfillment for today's Evangelical Christians is an experience of the encounter with God in prayer and in the scripture through the union with Christ by the Holy Spirit. Today evangelical ways of contemplation may be popular with some modern-syncretistic Christians in the West, who need liberation from fear and anxiety, peace and happiness, and enable them "to live each moment in the loving presence of God."<sup>53</sup> However, one wonders whether a richer theology of direct, personal and intimate communion between two persons—the Creator and the created human being could be beneficial.

On the other hand, ancient Christians in the West believe that they can be in union with God by faith and encounter a vision of Him.<sup>54</sup> The prayer begins with God's co-operation and the Spirit of God moves along the way with them.<sup>55</sup> Their experience of silent prayer expresses a more personal and intimate relationship with God than the experience of today's Western Protestants. Western Protestants feel "enjoyment and satisfaction"<sup>56</sup> at the moment they are in the presence of God, whereas the ancient Christians in the West experienced God with deeper feelings and in deeper ways. Guigo II expressed his heartfelt feeling using the phrases such as "inmost heart,"<sup>57</sup> and "the heart is lifted up."<sup>58</sup> He also used the analogy of a bride as meditator and spouse as God.<sup>59</sup>

In point of fact, the holistic spirituality of contemplative silence can be traced in the *hesychast* prayer of the East. The goal of *hesychasm* is the attainment of likeness to or union with God which is called *deification* (Latin) and *theosis* (Greek). Some may define deification as "becoming God." Yet, Orthodox saints such as St. Cyril the Great (c. 376-444) and St. Gregory Palama believe that union with God or *theosis* means being partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4).<sup>60</sup> It is participating "in God in a very real way, without becoming identical with Him." For that reason, *hesychasts* "speak about the experience of the Holy Spirit in a very realistic manner, but at the same time they stress that God's nature remains totally "inaccessible."<sup>61</sup>

It can be inferred that the spiritual fulfillment of *hesychasm* in the East is to experience and receive the shared energy of God that brings shalom—a feeling of contentment, completeness, wholeness, well-being and harmony—to human beings as well as the whole creation. Being deified by contemplation, *hesychasts* receive the wisdom of God here on earth. St. Climacus said, “Let us hear and wonder at the wisdom of God found in earthen vessels.”<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, all the contemplative practices in the East and the West, in ancient and in current times, arrive at one conclusion of faith: that in contemplation “God completes the work” through “God’s grace.”<sup>63</sup>

### 3. Orality vs. Literacy

Every people group uses language as a media of communication among themselves, but the way people access their language differs from one society to another. It is largely believed that literacy has been a major contributor to Western society and the way of communicating and learning through written texts and visual aids has influenced Western culture and thought since the medieval renaissance. Interestingly enough, paper and the printing press were invented in China, Korea, and Japan long before the Western creation of the printing press influenced the West and the rest of the world; however, literate culture flourished in Western cultures to a greater extent than in Eastern cultures. All Eastern religious practices in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism are connected with recitation, memorizing scriptures by heart, and chanting. Their practices reveal that people from Eastern cultures are more capable of learning through verbalizing and listening in oral cultures rather than learning through writing and visual aids as in Western literate cultures. Interestingly enough, even though cultural backgrounds vary from each other, the very first stage of both, *hesychasm* from the East and *lectio divina* from the West, is oral practice.

The significance of *hesychasm* from the East is reciting the Jesus Prayer, whereas the meditators from the West read the scripture slowly and aloud. Here, we realize the importance of calling “the name” in *hesychastic* prayer. Calling upon the name of Jesus is central in *hesychasm*. In Eastern culture, together with African and Native American cultures, a naming ceremony is very important for the family and relatives of a newborn baby and its religious leaders. Each newborn baby is usually given a name which has a special meaning. In the same way, the significance of giving names can be traced in both the Old and New Testaments. The names of God as well as His Son, Jesus Christ, and persons in the Bible are meaningful.<sup>64</sup> Jesus means “Savior”; and the meaning of Christ is “Anointed One” or “Messiah.” *Hesychasts* repeat the name “Jesus” because it is the name above all names (Phil. 2:9-

10), it is the name that saves (Acts 4:12), and it is the name that Jesus, himself, invites his followers to use when making their requests to the Father (John 16:23-24). For Eastern Christians, according to Woltmann, “this name has in it God’s power and presence.”<sup>65</sup> *Hesychasts* repeat the Jesus Prayer day and night, since people in oral cultures utilize repetition. As suggested by St. Climacus (step 28-5),<sup>66</sup> *Hesychasts* recite a simple, short and powerful prayer without ceasing (1 Thes. 5:17).

On the other hand, Painter and Wynkoop connect *lectio divina* with the Jewish traditional practice of *baga* or meditation on the Hebrew scripture. They understand that, the roots of *lectio* can be traced in Jewish practice of *baga*. In order to fix the sacred words in their minds and hearts, Rabbis and their disciples murmured the scriptures aloud. The monks of the Western church expanded the concepts of reading and speaking the scriptures and formed *lectio divina* as prayer.<sup>67</sup> “In the era of Saint Benedict,” Duncan Robertson says, “a monk making his first approach to a text needed to vocalize in order to decipher the writing. Pronunciation remained necessary at all subsequent stages of the reading process, particularly in the work of memorization, which formed the basis of the monastic *meditatio*.”<sup>68</sup> In point of fact, verbalization is vital for primitive Christians, in both East and West, as a very first stage of contemplation.

On the other hand, today’s Western evangelical scholars and leaders, by and large, do not encourage their people to practice *lectio* aloud. Since their background is rooted in literate culture, they assume *lectio* reading as “slow, quiet, and deep,”<sup>69</sup> as well as “slowly pondering its words, images and associations.”<sup>70</sup> Added to that, Davis suggests that readers visualize the scripture verses in order to have concrete imagery and full attention.<sup>71</sup> Even though Jones accepts that reading can be done out loud as well as silent,<sup>72</sup> he stresses the need of emotional and silent reading in group as well as individual.<sup>73</sup> In the present day, because Eastern and Western cultures are increasingly mixed, both practices of contemplation—*hesychast* and *lectio divina*—can be done in silence, out loud, or both.

#### 4. Being vs. Doing

Interestingly enough, both influential leaders of *hesychasm* and *lectio divina*, St. Climacus of the East and Guigo II of the West, were inspired by the scripture verse, Genesis 28:12. Both of them contemplated Jacob’s vision of the ladder which reaches to heaven from earth and on which angels are ascending and descending. They realized that a person’s soul needed a ladder of spiritual practices in order to encounter God.<sup>74</sup> As a result, St. Climacus contributed *Ladder of Divine Ascent* to the Eastern Church and Guigo II contributed *ladder of Monks* to the Western Church. Both of them understood that the Ladder of spiritual practices helps connect God

in the spiritual world and human beings in this world. They believed that spiritual practices will bring human prayers to God and God's answers to earth. They also believe that through contemplation, the human soul is elevated to God. In fact, both practices have the same meaning of a soul ascending to his or her soul Maker who is in heaven or the spiritual world.

Notwithstanding, the interpretation of spiritual practices by Guigo II of the West differ from the interpretation of St. Climacus of the East. The Western monk interpreted the ladder, from his background culture, as a four-step systematic, textual, and spiritual function of reading for monks. Guigo II emphasized the four steps of activity—reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. He might understand that spirituality means active spiritual exercises. Added to that, some historians have investigated three important historical documents—Rule of the Master, Rule of St. Benedict and Life of Benedict of Nursia—of the Western Church and realized that “the exercises of prayer—the divine office, Eucharist, reading, silent prayers, blessings, rites, and ceremonies—gives witness to a concern that all the thought of the monk, all the activities of his day, be referred to the presence of God.”<sup>75</sup>

In the same way, today Western Christians believe that in order to be a pious person, one needs to do spiritual activities communally, such as prayer, reading the Bible and devotional literatures, preaching, teaching, attending to sermons, singing and listening to spiritual songs, involvement in worship programs, participating in social work, and performing other pious acts, rather than, inward silent practices of contemplation. In fact, this notion of spirituality as performing pious acts derived from the devotionalism of the West in the late medieval age under the pressure of emerging European renaissance culture. Nevertheless, modern spirituality of active devotion in God's presence and participation in God's work spread all over the world to some degree.

Contrary to the West, an understanding of spirituality in the East is “being” or virtuous living. Buddha and other Eastern spiritual leaders taught their disciples to practice ascetic and virtuous living along the way with silent meditation. Likewise, St. Climacus of the East believed that the practice of the virtues is essential for a *hesychast*. He pondered that the ladder might have thirty steps.<sup>76</sup> He grasped the concept of ladder as a spiritual treaty between God and human beings as well as thirty steps as thirty virtues.<sup>77</sup> He taught his disciples to practice ascetic life (self-denial of Matt. 16:24) and virtuous living (Col. 3; 1 Pet. 1:13-16) as a spiritual discipline in order to encounter God, the Holy of Holies. Only then they will attain Shalom—the holistic peace and harmony with the Holy Trinity as well as all creations.<sup>78</sup> History reveals that ancient Eastern Christianity flourished

and increased, for the most part, through its prayers, good example in practicing Christian virtues, and its theological and literary culture.

## Conclusion

The holistic worldview of spiritual experience can be learned from Sophrony (1896-1993), a *hesychast*, who lived in the desert of Athos as a hermit for seven years. He explicitly testifies to his spiritual experience, when he claims that: “I was living in two worlds. One I apprehend through sight, hearing and the rest of my physical faculties. In the other world I was spirit only—all listener, all expectation. I tried hard to see—but saw with other eyes.”<sup>79</sup> It would not be wrong to say that, when a person is *deified*, he or she will receive some kind of divine wisdom with which he or she is able to discern all phenomena (in the past, present and future) in the secular world as well as the spiritual world and the universe. In actual fact, the post-modern search for holistic spiritual experience is available in our ancient Christian contemplative practices of *hesychasm* and *lectio divina*. Both practices offer experiential spirituality of interior tranquility.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> There are various sets of boundaries between East and West. Here, my concern is not about geographical boundaries and political boundaries, rather it is about religious boundaries between East and West. In Christianity, Eastern means the Oriental Orthodox Churches rooted in Semitic cultures and the Eastern Orthodox Churches rooted in Greek culture. Oriental Orthodox Christians were separated from the rest of the Church in the fifth and sixth centuries. In 1054, there was another separation between the Eastern Orthodox, rooted in Greek culture and the Roman Catholic Church, rooted in Latin culture, under the Bishop of Rome. In the sixteenth century, there was the third separation which is between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism. To the Orthodox, Protestants and Latin-based Roman Catholics are two sides of the same coin of Western Christianity. See Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church, rev. ed.*, (London, England ; New York, N.Y: Penguin Books, 1993), 2-5.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith*, First Edition edition (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 3rd edition (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Buddhism in the West, *Buddhanet*. <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/to-west.htm> (accessed September 11, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> The Pew Forum On Religion & Public Life (February 2008), US Religious Landscape Survey, Religious Affiliation: Diverse And Dynamic, p 27. <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf> (accessed September 12, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians: Seven Ways You Can Live the Gospel and Restore the World*, First Trade Paperback Edition edition (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2012), 22-23.

<sup>8</sup> The term “split-level Christianity” comes from Filipino Father Jaime Bulatao. It means the existence and practice of two or more thought and behavior which are inconsistent with each other but fits each other in Christians’ lives. It can also be termed as “double-standard Christianity.”

<sup>9</sup> The spiritual appetite of this split-level Christianity principally fits with Pentecostal experiential spirituality.

<sup>10</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2000), 15-18.

<sup>11</sup> John Garvey said, “The predominance of a secular point of view made spirituality appear as a separate.” See his *Modern Spirituality: An Anthology* (Springfield, Illinois: Templegate Publishers, 1985), i.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas C. Fox, “Double Belonging: Buddhism and Christian Faith”, *National Catholic Reporter*, The Independent News Source. <http://ncronline.org/news/double-belonging-buddhism-and-christian-faith> (accessed September 11, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Norris J. Chumley, *Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer: Experiencing the Presence of God and a Pilgrimage to the Heart of an Ancient Spirituality* (New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2011), 20.

<sup>14</sup> Christopher D. L. Johnson, *The Globalization of Hesychasm and the Jesus Prayer: Contesting Contemplation* (NY: Continuum, 2010), 2, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Jan Woltmann, “A Beginner’s Journey into the Jesus’ Prayer” in *Ministry Compass*, vol. 40, no. 1 (Spring 2011):105.

<sup>16</sup> Archimandrite Lev Gillet, *The Jesus Prayer*, Kallitos Ware. rev. ed. (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press), 32.

<sup>17</sup> There is no connection between St. Hesychius, a priest at Jerusalem (c 450) and *Hesychasm*. See Archimandrite Lev Gillet, *The Jesus Prayer*, Kallitos Ware. rev. ed. (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press), 39.

<sup>18</sup> Lev Gillet, *The Jesus Prayer*, 36.

<sup>19</sup> Christine Valters Painter and Lucy Wynkoop, *Lectio Divina: Contemplative Awakening and Awareness* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>20</sup> Raymond Studzinski, “Bible Reading Revisited : The Librarian’s Guide to Lectio Divina and Formative Styles of Reading,” *Theological Librarianship*, vol. 7, no. 11(January 1, 2014): 56.

<sup>21</sup> Guigo II, *Ladder of Monks and Twelve Meditation*, trans., Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1979), 67.

<sup>22</sup> Diogenes Allen, *Spiritual Theology: The Theology of Yesterday for Spiritual Help Today* (Boston: Cowley Publications, 1997), 14. Bernard McGinn, “Introduction” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins To The Twelve Century*, eds., Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff (NY: Crossroad, 1985), xvi; Bruce Demarest, “Introduction” in *Four Views On Christian Spirituality*, eds. Stanley N. Gundry and Bruce Demarest (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2012), 17-18.

<sup>23</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition (Oxford, UK ; Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 1999), 5.

<sup>24</sup> Painter and Wynkoop, *Lectio Divina*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Matta El-Meskeen (Matthew the Poor), *Orthodox Prayer Life: The Interior Way* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 40.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>28</sup> Duncan Robertson, *Lectio Divina: The Medieval Experience of Reading* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1966), xiv.

<sup>29</sup> Joe Colletti, “Guigo II and the Development of *Lectio Divina*.” <http://www.urban-monk.org/images/PDFS/Guigo%20II%20and%20the%20Development%20of%20Lectio%20Divina%20for%20Web%20Site%20Article.pdf> (accessed September 20, 2014).

<sup>30</sup> Guigo II, *Ladder of Monks and The Twelve Meditation*, 77.

<sup>31</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, 106.

<sup>32</sup> Renee Hirschon, “Indigenous Persons and Imported Individuals: Changing Paradigms of Personal Identity in Contemporary Greece” in *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective*, eds. Chris Hann and Hermann Goltz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 297.

<sup>33</sup> St. John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, trans. Archimandrite Lazarus Moore (NY: Harper & Brothers, 1959), 52. <http://www.prudencetruce.com/images/TheLadderofDivineAscent.pdf> (September 1, 2014).

<sup>34</sup> Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 18.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, *The Jesus Prayer*, 32.

<sup>36</sup> St. Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 15.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>39</sup> Painter and Wynkoop, *Lectio Divina*, 2.

<sup>40</sup> Studzinski, *Reading to Live*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>42</sup> Chris Hann and Hermann Goltz, "Introduction: The Other Christianity?" in *Eastern Christians in Anthropological Perspective*, eds., Chris Hann and Hermann Goltz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 12.

<sup>43</sup> Tony Jones, *Divine Intervention: Encountering God Through The Ancient Practice of Lectio Divina* (Colorado Springs, CO: Think, 2006), 95-109.

<sup>44</sup> Hiebert, Shaw and Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion*, 17.

<sup>45</sup> McGrath, *Christian Spirituality*, 4-5.

<sup>46</sup> James C. Wilhoit and Evan B. Howard, *Discovering Lectio Divina: Bringing Scripture into Ordinary Life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 111.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>48</sup> Jones, *Divine Intervention*, 86.

<sup>49</sup> Wilhoit and Howard, *Discovering Lectio Divina*, 122.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>52</sup> John Jefferson Davis, *Meditation And Communion With God: Contemplating Scripture In An Age Of Distraction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 43, 145.

<sup>53</sup> Norris J. Chumley, *Mysteries of the Jesus Prayer: Experiencing the Presence of God and A Pilgrimage to the Heart of an Ancient Spirituality* (NY: HarperOne, 2011), 13.

<sup>54</sup> Guigo II: *Ladder of Monks and Twelve Meditations*, 124.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>56</sup> Davis, *Meditation And Communion With God*, 127.

<sup>57</sup> Guigo II: *Ladder of Monks and Twelve Meditations*, 80.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>60</sup> Matta El-Meskeen, *Orthodox Prayer Life*, 103.

<sup>61</sup> Joost van Rossum, *The experience of the Holy Spirit in Greek Patristic and Byzantine Theology*, 31.

<sup>62</sup> St. Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 16.

<sup>63</sup> Wilhoit and Howard, *Discovering Lectio Divina*, 111; E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer, trans., *Writings From Philokalia On Prayer Of The Heart* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 13; Guigo II, *Ladder of Monks and Twelve Meditations*, trans., Edmund Colledge and James Walsh (NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1979), 74.

<sup>64</sup> Lev Gillet, *The Jesus Prayer*, 23.

<sup>65</sup> Woltmann, *Ministry Compass*, 104.

<sup>66</sup> St. Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 120.

<sup>67</sup> Painter and Wynkoop, *Lectio Divina*, 2.

<sup>68</sup> Duncan Robertson, *Lectio Divina: The Medieval Experience of Reading* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1966), xiv.

<sup>69</sup> Jones, *Divine Intervention*, 59.

<sup>70</sup> Davis, *Meditation And Communion With God*, 126.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>72</sup> Jones, *Divine Intervention*, 65.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>74</sup> Guigo II, *Ladder of Monks and Twelve Meditations*, 68.

<sup>75</sup> Gribomont, *Christian Spirituality*, 117.

<sup>76</sup> St. Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, 129.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>79</sup> Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), *On Prayer*, trans. Rosemary Edmonds (Crestwood, New York: St Vladimir's seminary Press, 1996), 41.

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Adrian Reynolds

*Intercultural Hermeneutics: A Step Towards Its Effective Practice as a Clash of Perspectives on John's Revelation*

**Abstract**

This paper calls Christian biblical scholars to engage in rigorous intercultural hermeneutics for the edification of the worldwide Church by careful appropriation of adverse perspectives. It proposes a method whereby scholars implement their interpretive method of choice and then, within boundaries thus set, carefully read from the perspectives of other scholars toward the enrichment of their own work. By way of illustration, the paper offers an example of such an interpretive struggle by the author with postcolonial scholar Stephen Moore. Thus the author's approach of choice (Inductive Biblical Study) both informs, and is informed by, a postcolonial view.

**Keywords:** intercultural hermeneutics, postcolonial criticism, inductive Bible study, Revelation, biblical interpretation.

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## Introduction

My field of study is the NT, specifically the book of Revelation and its interpretation. My PhD studies are preparatory to what I hope will be a future in training pastors and Bible teachers the world over in the practice of responsible and rigorous Bible-engagement. This essay, then, is a personally welcome opportunity to think about the process and principles governing the kind of intercultural Christian hermeneutics in which I hope to participate.

An overarching contention of this paper is that all Christian approaches to the Bible should be aimed at the edification of the Body of Christ if they purport to promote the Bible's own agenda. Further, the process wherein this kind of edification can occur often includes discomfort of a particular kind.<sup>1</sup> So, because meaningful intercultural encounters are almost always places where the right kind of unease exists, if approached properly intercultural biblical hermeneutics is an important source of church-wide edification. With this in mind I have selected for conversation a biblical scholar with a widely different perspective from mine. The aim is to display edifying intercultural hermeneutics in the scholarly setting. For this reason, in this essay differences in culture manifest themselves primarily in differences of perspective.<sup>2</sup>

Stephen D. Moore is a postcolonial biblical critic and his outlook is thoroughly disparate from mine both in terms of background and methodological approach. My goal has been to write in as equitable a way as possible, and that has included a candid acknowledgment of things like disagreement. It is important to acknowledge here that whether or not something is respectful has a great deal to do with its particular cultural context, and so my work reflects what I consider appropriately deferent in my current setting. The details of other edifying encounters will vary depending on their situation while the basic principles displayed may not. So this paper is a meeting of perspectives, and in some ways, a clash. In all ways however it is meant to be an opportunity for mutual edification. The question is: "How can we do the delicate, personal, reverent work of Bible exploration in the company of others with whom we may have little in common but with whom we are forced to engage by the fantastic force of the Holy Scriptures?" What follows is an attempt at such an edifying encounter.

## My Perspective

My setting is that of a white African, born and raised in Zimbabwe, labeled most often a "European," and now an American citizen. Unlike many of my white friends as a youth I was a fairly fluent Shona speaker. Unlike many of my black friends I lived on a commercial farm as the son of the hard working, and well-

liked manager of the thriving property. As a result we were fairly well off compared to the vast majority of the population which was, and is, very poor.

I judge this situation to have positioned me to entertain certain empathy for both sides of the obvious cultural boundaries around which I grew up. I understood more of both than many but less of each than most. That is, while I was white, I never felt as if I fitted in fully to the white community in part because of my perspectives on race. I also did not fit into the black community because of obvious and wide cultural differences, but I was certainly not an outcast of either society. I have good, long lasting friends from both backgrounds.

One consequence of being white in Zimbabwe was that it was clear to all that my ancestors had colonized the country. This, I felt at the time, had little to do with me and I thought nearly nothing about it. I did not know much about the war of independence, which ended when I was three, apart from the fact that my dad sustained some long term, but not debilitating, ill effects as a result of his participation in it. We, I assumed, were on the losing side but in my young childhood it didn't feel to me as if we had lost or as if anyone had.

I was and am evidently privy to certain aspects of life but unaware of others precisely because of my background. I have a western mind, and I feel most like a westerner. This is true in spite of the fact that my parents were born in Africa (they are still there), as were most of my siblings and I. Finally, I identify most readily with the once vigorously colonizing country of England. These are realities that follow me into my scholarly endeavors and certainly contribute to my outlook for better and worse.

My hermeneutical approach is called Inductive Biblical Study (IBS) espoused and described most recently by Drs. David Bauer and Robert Traina in *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics*. For the IBS practitioner the work of interpretation is never done. There is always room for improvement, deeper understanding, and further fruitful engagement with the text, available evidence, and the God to whom it points. This aspect of IBS obviously presents a significant challenge to the interpreter. It requires him/her to be perpetually open to new evidence as it comes to light, to be on a quest for ever fuller understanding, and most challengingly to judiciously embrace adverse perspectives. This paper is an attempt to take that last point seriously.

### **A Different Perspective**

Stephen Moore is a postcolonial biblical critic. He was born and raised in Ireland, a country long affected by domination by protestant England.

Moore's family, although of white western origin, has therefore experienced the "manhandling" of their people by another nation. Moore has done significant work in Revelation and so is a fitting dialogue partner. In line with other postcolonial scholars Moore engages in no small measure the work of Homi Bhabha.<sup>3</sup> He does so to the extent that I cannot avoid offering a preliminary acquaintance with Bhabha here.

Homi Bhabha is the Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of English and American Literature and Language, the Director of the Humanities Center at Harvard, and one of the most influential figures in post-colonial studies today. He was born into a Parsi family in Mumbai in India in 1949 and saw some effects of the English colonization of that country. Bhabha has introduced three important concepts to the study of postcolonial contexts: ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity. Moore describes it thus:

For Bhabha, colonial discourse is characterized above all by ambivalence. It is riddled with contradictions and incoherences, traversed by anxieties and insecurities, and hollowed out by originary lack and internal heterogeneity. For Bhabha, moreover, the locus of colonial power, far from being unambiguously on the side of the colonizer, inheres instead in a shifting, unstable, potentially subversive, 'in-between' or 'third' space between colonizer and colonized, which is characterized by mimicry, on the one hand, in which the colonized heeds the colonizer's peremptory injunction to imitation, but in a manner that constantly threatens to teeter over into mockery; and by hybridity, on the other hand, another insidious product of the colonial encounter that further threatens to fracture the colonizer's identity and authority. (Moore 2006:90)

It is noteworthy that my reaction to Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* was in a way similar to Moore's: one of general agreement and instinctive assent.<sup>4</sup> By way of brief illustration, Bhabha asserts the following regarding comprehensively grasping what he calls "colonial dislocation": "...the jagged testimony of colonial dislocation, its displacement of time and person, its defilement of culture and territory, refuses the ambition of any total theory of colonial oppression. The Antillean évolué cut to the quick by the glancing look of a frightened, confused, white child..." (Bhabha 2004:59). He goes on to give other examples of loci and manifestations of the dislocation he describes. His point, I think, is that the moment at which the white child (colonizer) registers consternation at the sight of the black native (colonized) is poignantly where colonial dislocation happens/has happened and shows itself. This process and its effects are so complex and diverse that they defy ready definition or explanation.

I have experienced moments like this albeit from a different vantage point, and cautiously affirm the accuracy of Bhabha's description of awkward human intercultural interaction. This precise point will ultimately prove particularly important to the current project. In the end, Bhabha's question is, "How can the world live its difference; how can a human being live Other-wise?" (Bhabha 2004:91) In my view, his observations are often insightful and helpful. Moore clearly agrees and offers an angle on Revelation that attempts to deploy some of Bhabha's central thoughts. His contribution is a rather "big picture" one, so I will begin by matching a presentation of my thoughts to his in that particular.

### **My Interpretation of Revelation the Book**

One major contribution IBS makes to literary analysis is an emphasis on the labeling of structure within a text. Analysis of logical and rhetorical flow has become a foundational aspect of all interpreting I do. That is important because my view of the "big picture" meaning of Revelation is driven to a significant degree by a concern for structure defined as the relationships between one swath of text and another. Notably all communicative art forms exhibit (structural) relationships between one portion of the art and the other. In literary studies one way of labeling these relationships is by means of words like "substantiation" (effect to cause), "comparison" (emphasizing similarity), and "instrumentation" (means to end) among others.

Applying these and other principles to the book of Revelation one can argue that in a nutshell it most nearly says: "Seven churches, be holy and faithful to God and the Lamb (ch. 1-3), because (effect to cause) Babylon the spiritual whore didn't and was destroyed by the beast at God's bidding (ch. 4-19:10), just as (comparison) the beast also will be bound and destroyed along with Satan, so that (means to end) God and the Lamb can make their home amongst humanity forever (19:11-22:21). The book first of all commands the Christians to whom it was written to live faithful lives, warns them of the consequences of not doing so, and then invites them to revel in the hope of a future as part of the temple in the New Jerusalem in tremendously close communion with both God and the Lamb. If that is John's (Revelation's author) overarching message then further conclusions within the book will presumably fit into that line of reckoning if it is a coherent piece of work.<sup>5</sup>

An important question with which Revelation scholars have grappled, that Moore addresses, and that I am forced to face is: "What is the meaning of the Babylon entity in Rev 16:21-19:10?" In order to apprehend in any detail the message

of Revelation as a whole one must contend with this question. Based in part on the overarching message just described it is likely that on the most immediate level, Babylon = Jerusalem of John's time.<sup>6</sup> It can be argued that the capital of 1st century C.E. Palestine was committed to exhibiting loyalty to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but that this same Jerusalem and her civil and religious leadership joined themselves to Rome in a religiously promiscuous manner<sup>7</sup> during and prior to that time. It is further true that Rome turned on Jerusalem and thoroughly destroyed the temple in 70 C.E. It is entirely feasible, then, that John (probably writing after Jerusalem's destruction<sup>8</sup>) sought to persuade his congregations to holiness and faithfulness by appealing to unfaithful Jerusalem's destruction by Rome (the beast<sup>9</sup>) as inducement to heed his exhortations.

My view is not without difficulties. Some scholars have questions about this view of Babylon. One is that the label "Babylon" when taken in isolation was most likely to have been heard by John's audience as "Rome." An aspect of my answer is that this idea requires that Rome (usually the city) prostitute herself to Rome (usually the empire at large) until Rome the empire turns on Rome the city at God's bidding. Then Rome the empire is removed along with Satan so that God and the Lamb can dwell amongst humanity. This logic fails to explain the details of the flowing communication as a whole, and significantly scuttles some rhetorical moves I consider John aspired to. It is somewhat convoluted when carefully considered.

While I grant that logical convolution is to some degree "in the eye of the beholder," I propose that of the two options evidence suggests that the one involving Babylon = Jerusalem is preferable to the one involving Babylon = Rome. This is because it accounts for a greater number of literary (and other) features of the text. So "Babylon" means "an entity that exhibits shameful faithlessness to the God whom she once professed to serve." John saw Jerusalem of his time following in the footsteps of the Jerusalem of OT times and cloaked his description of that city to a significant, but not comprehensive, degree in Roman clothes for rhetorical reasons. Revelation as a whole then exhibits redemptive, cleansing and comforting aims, and certainly anti imperial Rome perspectives. It will be clear that my hitherto largely empire-consciousness free view of the book is a result of my own perspective, laden as it may be with particularities. It will similarly be obvious that Stephen Moore's view has been shaped by his background.

### **Moore's Interpretation of Revelation**

To begin with, Moore in *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament*, says that postcolonial biblical criticism oscillates between two poles. "On

the one hand the biblical text is read as unequivocal and exemplary anti-imperial and anti-colonial resistance literature. On the other hand, the biblical text is read as covertly imperialist and colonialist literature - or more precisely, as literature that, irrespective of the conscious intention of its author, insidiously reinscribes imperial and colonial ideologies even while appearing to resist them." (Moore 2006:14) Moore's work aspires to "navigate between this Scylla and Charybdis." (Moore 2006:14) On this point Bhabha's contention that ambiguity is poignantly present when colonizer and colonizee meet is especially attractive because it ostensibly offers a middle way. Moore's concern is: "Whether or to what extent Revelation merely inscribes, rather than effectively resists, Roman imperial ideology." (Moore 2006:99)

Central to Moore's argument is the concept of 'catachresis' and he employs it in the following way. Catachresis, says Moore, designates,

...a process whereby the victims of colonialism or imperialism strategically recycle and redeploy facets of colonial or imperial culture or propaganda. Catachresis, in this sense, is a practice of resistance through an art of creative appropriation, a retooling of the rhetorical or institutional instruments of imperial oppression that turns those instruments back against their official owners. Catachresis is thus also an act of counter-appropriation: it counters the appropriative incursions of imperialist discourse - its institutional accouterments, its representational modes, its ideological forms, its propagandistic ploys - by redirecting and thereby deflecting them. (Moore 2006:106)

His assertion is that John, an outspoken member of the colonized population, sought to engage in precisely this kind of resistant action. Unfortunately, says Moore, the enterprise fails because the ambivalence espoused by Bhabha is manifestly extant in the colonized John and his followers. The kind of ambivalence presumably wherein as Bhabha says, "The fantasy of the native is precisely to occupy the master's place while keeping his place in the slave's avenging anger." (Bhabha 2004:63-64)

Moore's conception of Revelation includes centrally that the book embodies a kind of mimicking chain. In his view Revelation mimics (in a way that parallels Moore's postcolonial definition of 'mimic through catachresis') the empire while asserting that faithful Christians should mimic the Christ who is to mimic the Father who is represented by Revelation as mimicking the emperor.<sup>10</sup> This conception places the emperor at the head of the mimicking "food" chain, and Revelation and its replacement empire in a sort of ironic subservience to Rome,

which is the ultimate and controlling model. This is Revelation's implicit stance of which it, its author, and its readers are likely unconscious, asserts Moore. John-the-colonized's desire to be in his oppressor's shoes cripples his attempts to be other than them.<sup>11</sup> To clarify the position further on two major points Moore posits that, "Parody of the Roman imperial order permeates Revelation, reaching a scurrilous climax in the depiction of the goddess Roma, austere and noble personification of the *urbs aeterna*, as a tawdry whore who has had a little too much to drink (17:1-6)... [and] The most fundamental instance of catachresis in Revelation... is its redeployment of the term 'empire' (*basileia*) itself" (Moore 2006:106). Here Moore asserts that "Babylon" is an intentionally degrading name for "Rome" and that John's insulting tirade climaxes in his disparagement of the "drunk" city. Further, John's use of *basileia* (often translated "kingdom" but rendered not unjustifiably by Moore "empire") betrays most poignantly his unconscionable (in Moore's view) favorable stance toward "empire."

Revelation then sets one empire up against another, and this is where the book's well-known dualism resides. Ultimately though Moore claims, "In Revelation's hyper dualistic cosmos... Christian culture and Roman culture must be absolutely separate and separable (cf. 18:4: 'Come out of her, my people...'). But are they? This is where Bhabha's strategies of colonial discourse analysis come into their own." (Bhabha 2006:63-64) Moore's construal rests upon the assumption that Revelation's critique of Rome is a rejection of Roman culture in the sense that every aspect of Roman culture must be jettisoned. It is only in this frame, wherein Roman culture as a whole = detestable imperial tendencies that should be discarded, that Moore's argument potentially holds together.

### **My Response to Moore**

In the first place, I am not convinced that Moore succeeds in finding a middle way between the two extreme opinions of postcolonial biblical critics (that on the one hand, Revelation is exemplary and uncompromising anti-imperial literature, and on the other it is "covertly imperialist and colonialist literature... that irrespective of the conscious intention of its author, insidiously reinscribes imperial and colonial ideologies even while appearing to resist them" (Moore 2006:14)). It seems that he has decisively advocated the latter stance.

Secondly, in answer to his driving question regarding "whether or to what extent Revelation merely inscribes, rather than effectively resists, Roman imperial ideology," (Moore 2006:99) I propose that the Revelation scholar Stephen Friesen has offered a more satisfactory answer. In *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*,

Freisen suggests that John pits his Christian eschatology against the Roman status quo retaining cosmology. This is one way of naming the location of the true crux of the clash between Revelation's ideology and Rome's. Their confrontation is in the overarching religious outlooks and the resultant propagandas they respectively espouse. It is not in their conceptions of whether or not empires should exist.

Thirdly, one of Moore's core proposals is that John's rhetorical strategy, which he has labeled "catachresis," includes setting up a parodic empire as a rival to Rome. He asserts that, "The success of the strategy is evident from the fact that this binary opposition has been endlessly (and unreflectively) replicated even in critical commentaries on Revelation." (Moore 2006:108) I agree that John's actual rhetorical moves have not generally been sufficiently scrutinized. While there are many forays into the realm of John's rhetorical maneuverings, there is still a great deal of work to be done on exactly how he used his source material and what his rhetorical motives might have been.

Moore's logic is flawed regarding this "mimicking chain" rhetorical strategy because it exhibits the fatal fallacy of equivocation.<sup>12</sup> What Moore has failed to account for is that whereas it is possible that the author of Revelation might set God's kingdom in direct opposition to the emperor's in part by means of parodic literary presentations, and whereas the faithful are taught to imitate the Christ as He follows the Father, it does not follow either that God therefore mimics (to mock) the emperor or that the faithful are ultimately called to do so as well. The word "mimic" is used by Moore to describe both his conception of John's aim and John's representation of the characters, but the contexts of the word are different in each case<sup>13</sup> and their meanings necessarily vary accordingly. Here is a condensation of his position on this point:

Revelation's attempted sleight of hand ensnares it in a debilitating contradiction. Christians are enjoined to mimic Jesus, who in turn mimics his Father... who, in effect, mimics the Roman Emperor, who himself... is a mimetic composite of assorted royal and divine stereotypes.... But if the Roman Imperial order is the ultimate object of *imitation* [emphasis mine: this is precisely where the fallacy inheres] in Revelation, then, in accordance with the book's own implicit logic, it remains the ultimate authority, despite the book's explicit attempts to unseat it. (Moore 2006:112)

If Moore is aware of the logical problem here he fails to clarify. The text "mimics to mock" (according to Moore) the empire, but surely none would say that the faithful are called to "mimic to mock" Jesus the Christ or that God merely "mimics

to mock” the emperor. To make this claim, one has to do violence to the “implicit logic” of the book to which Moore appeals by imposing a meaning of mimic in one setting (Moore’s description of what Revelation does to the empire) on that word (or a cognate) used differently elsewhere (Revelation’s implied description of what truly “faithful” people do to their God). Moore makes mimicry in his own sense the governor of Revelation’s rhetorical operation. In addition it is by no means certain that Revelation’s main aim is to “mimic to mock” the empire. So the equivocation, in my view, presents itself even within (and possibly because of) the framework of which Moore has conceived for Revelation’s rhetoric.

Fourthly, another fatal flaw in Moore’s argument surfaces regarding Revelation’s purported attempt to thoroughly reject Roman culture as a whole. John does not critique Rome’s culture per-se, but he critiques her character. He also does not critique that aspect of her culture that is heavily ‘imperial,’ rather he points his disapproving finger at her religious faithlessness. At the basic level (the level on which Moore purports to operate) her faithlessness, not her imperialism as such, is what must be excluded from the celestial kingdom.

Finally, it has yet to be settled that Rome itself is the most primary target of John’s “Babylon critique.” Rome is to be resisted but not because it is an empire. Rather because it is a religiously destructive institution. It is those who were supposed to be God’s own people but who glibly turned away from Him against whom John rails most vehemently. So his letters to the churches demand non-violent steadfast faithfulness not egalitarianism (as desirable as that might, or might not, be), and they promise ultimate salvation and life in close communion with a thoroughly benevolent God, not in subservience to a Roman emperor copycat.

It is possible that the lack of empire aversion per-se is what Moore senses with distaste. It is also possible that in his mind a critique of any empire should include a critique of its existence. Is it not, however, theoretically plausible that an empire exist and be run for the benefit of all and that it be a holy institution? Even if this is not possible in this world might it not be in another reality where things are fundamentally different in one key sense: faithfulness to God is universally operative?

### **My Interpretation as Improved by Contact with Moore’s**

In spite of the difficulty of welcoming Moore’s work as it stands into my approach to Revelation, I am obliged to wrestle with how it is valuable to an engagement with that book. It seems to me that reading with a reading strategy in the way Moore does, as his primary approach, runs counter to uncovering the

text's meaning from its perspective, and as such is not a comprehensively useful hermeneutic. However, I propose the following procedure. Having used some other method to account for fixed features of the text like its logical flow, the exegete could then read with a strategy such as Moore's through eyes sensitized by Moore's concerns searching for John's perspective on empire and colonization.

Proceeding in this way should introduce a level of confidence that the text itself drives the investigation rather than primarily the reader's goals.<sup>14</sup> The result should in the first place, be an alleviation of the most important difficulty with reading strategies that are permitted to do significant violence to the text without careful attention to limits imposed by its observable features. Secondly this approach appropriates the most important strength of such a strategy: its perspective. This melding of tactics exemplifies what I deem to be the core of properly intercultural hermeneutic practice.

Although I do not see Moore's conception of catachresis in Revelation as he does, it is feasible that John's state of having been colonized, and therefore the presence of ambiguity, is visible in a different way. If he does indeed fantasize about the emperor's throne being usurped for the benefit of oppressed Christians in the way Moore suggests, then he proposes a counter empire that is in actual opposition to the colonizing force. This is only recognizable though from a certain perspective. It would seem that far from John's being unconscious of his replacement fantasies, he gives them full sway. Not by means of a "mimicking to mock" stratagem but by espousing a "testifying to overcome" tactic, which claims colossal victory for itself, but which, would likely seem idiotic to the empire. Herein perhaps lies the middle road Moore purports to pursue.

Bhabha's thoughts on illusive awkwardness in the meeting of colonizer with colonizee may be useful in imagining that were John the oppressed to come before the emperor and vehemently proclaim, "Emperor, your empire will be destroyed as thoroughly as your predecessors crushed Jerusalem and for similar lack of acknowledgment of the Christian God. Know this will come about by means of the faithful non-violent witness of God's people and God's mighty hand!" It is quite possible that the emperor would scornfully dismiss John as just another coerced subject kicking vigorously, but uselessly, against the goad of Roman domination.<sup>15</sup>

From the standpoint of John's Christian hearers however, it is precisely this "otherness" (the "misunderstandability") of the message that characterizes Christ and his kingdom and offers them hope. So Revelation is a hard-hitting shot of promise to the oppressed, but a mere supremely frustrated rant by a powerless subject to the oppressor. Here the ambiguity of cultural dislocation is in view. In the

act of communication, Revelation itself turns out to be both an effective anti-empire piece of propaganda, and a pro-empire plug for Christian nonresistance with futile illusions of a future replacement empire attached. The status of the reader/hearer as either Christian colonizee or Roman colonizer makes all the difference. Where these readings clash with one another is Bhabha's zone of cultural dislocation, and understanding between the parties involved is all but nonexistent. So we can go behind Moore to Bhabha for insight on precisely what might be going on when John's worldview collides with the empire's worldview.

Reading Revelation with this and a heightened awareness of imperial matters in mind, the bird's eye picture with which we have been dealing might go something like this: "Seven churches, be faithful to God by non-violently resisting the efforts of your oppressors to seduce you into those aspects of their empire that smack of the worship of other gods. If you do not, and you allow yourself to become your oppressor like Jerusalem has done, God will see to your destruction quite possibly by means of your adulterous lover, Rome. Similarly, your beloved will eventually be destroyed so that God and the Lamb might bring about a righteous, self-sacrificial, and benevolent kingdom, wherein justice is done and wherein you will be free to remain completely true to your God through eternal communion with Him. That communion will free you from the death dealing oppressive empire who now seems to have the upper hand, and will bring you into eternal life and freedom." This view of the book could be more robustly set against other interpretations than could either Moore's or my prior propositions. My reading has been significantly deepened, although that is impossible to display comprehensively here. I am therefore indebted to Moore and Bhabha for the insight they have afforded. Conversely, I consider that Moore's view could gain reliability through appropriation of an approach that gives the text itself prioritizing sway over interpretation.

## **Conclusion**

This process has highlighted some important ideas regarding the practice of hermeneutics interculturally. Even though I found Moore's argument for the unconscious self-contradictory nature of the book of Revelation to be flawed at its core, I now affirm its perspective as a point of refinement for the intercultural exegete seeking edification for the kingdom. Here are some principles I deem to have surfaced.

1. I am particularly challenged by the existence of a perspective on what my ancestors did that causes me to question the legitimacy of my own outlook. Can I really claim to be a responsible exegete if I am blind to certain potentially nourishing views on the Word of God that I study? I answer this in the affirmative but more cautiously and with renewed awareness of the need for other exegetes.
2. This act of intercultural hermeneutics highlights a fundamental need that one part of the body of Christ has for another. Both Moore and I could benefit from one another's endeavors, but I cannot simply adopt willy-nilly a postcolonial perspective per se though I try with the best of intentions. I cannot do for an interpretation of Revelation what a postcolonial interpreter could because his/her perspective cannot be thoroughly shared. Some sort of a rigorous co-operation with a willing postcolonial scholar would seem to be the ideal objective.
3. In this paper, intercultural hermeneutics is the meeting of different perspectives whatever the actual cultures of participants might be. This does not fully account for different traditions and norms that should be understood and observed whenever a scholar deals across cultural boundaries. That would constitute the subject of another project. However, it does highlight the value this approach could have for discussion among scholars of even similar cultural backgrounds.
4. If biblical studies must be for the edification of the church at large and a particular kind of nourishing interpretive struggle is at the crux of the fruitful interpretive endeavor, then this sort of conversation between widely differing perspectives should be encouraged generally within Christian scholarship. Further, this should be done not so much with a view to "overcoming" one another, but with a view to "appropriating" one another thoughtfully.
5. One's interpretation is personal. Exposure of the results to the scrutiny of another, especially one of a widely different perspective, is properly uncomfortable. If this is true, and it is the right kind of discomfort, then surely the rigorous pursuit of the kind of communal hermeneutics this paper has tried

to exemplify could be an especially rich source of church edification.

6. The primary job of scholars in an intercultural setting may not be to persuade but rigorously and graciously to offer up perspectives for communal scrutiny and ultimate edification with a view to carefully appropriating especially the thoughts of differing viewpoints.

This paper then, calls for more consciously interculturally collaborative, but rigorously argued, scholarship. Perspectives will clash, but my position is that the scholarly community could and should appropriate that very phenomenon at the point of collision for its growth and ultimate edification. This could be a step toward “living Other-wise,” in Bhabha’s sense (Bhabha 2004:91).

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> It is not true that all discomfort results in edification, but it does seem that under the right conditions, an essential kind of edification takes place especially when adverse perspectives are present and are engaged carefully.

<sup>2</sup> This is important because scholarly cultural differences, in settings of intellectual contest, might be described helpfully as differences in especially perspective.

<sup>3</sup> In Moore’s own words: “I have no desire to downplay the extent to which [my work] is informed and enabled by a sensibility that owes much to Bhabha specifically - a predisposition to construe life under colonization as characterized less by unequivocal opposition to the colonizer than by unequal measures of loathing and admiration, resentment and envy, rejection and imitation, resistance and co-option, separation and surrender.” (Moore 2006: x).

<sup>4</sup> That is a preliminary judgment based on readings for this project.

<sup>5</sup> This paper assumes that he does, but whether or not that is actually the case is a matter for another time and place.

<sup>6</sup> By this I mean that John meant to reference Jerusalem most pointedly to his audience, but he also referred (by extension) to all apostate cities the world over including Rome.

<sup>7</sup> Conceived of in the way many OT prophets (ex. Ezekiel, and Hosea) conceived of Israel’s inappropriate consorting with other nations and their gods.

<sup>8</sup> This dating is the majority view of scholars, although the combination of a late date with the notion that Babylon = Jerusalem is not one I have come across. The question of dating though is one for another project.

<sup>9</sup> Most scholars agree that the Beast is indeed Rome.

<sup>10</sup> In the sense that many have asserted that Revelation uses Roman throne room imagery, for instance, to conceptualize God on His throne. There are other places where scholars argue for a similar phenomenon and this is what Moore calls “catachresis.”

<sup>11</sup> Moore’s argument then, apparently entails the assumption that John indeed innately desired to be like his oppressors. This is a tremendously difficult thing to be sure of, and is indeed a blatant imposition of Bhabha’s perspectives on John the author. This “psychologizing” does not in my view constitute a solid foundation upon which to base assertions about John’s literary output, and is in the end a significant weakness of Moore’s argument.

<sup>12</sup> The ambiguous use of a word with two senses, ex. “all banks are beside rivers, therefore the institution wherein I deposit my money is beside a river.” Moore says, “Revelation imitates the empire, therefore the action Christ elicits from his followers in Revelation is to imitate both Him and God.” Moore asserts that both uses of “imitate” mean, “mimic to mock.”

<sup>13</sup> I cannot tell that John uses the word at all, but he does call the faithful to testify faithfully as Jesus does.

<sup>14</sup> Regarding the possibility that IBS/other exegetical methods themselves have driving concerns and goals that manifest themselves in the process of analyzing text: this project affirms the reality and validity of boundary setting features of the text like word meaning, structure and other purportedly observable aspects of it. Whether or not these things do indeed set meaningful boundaries around an investigation is a matter for debate in a different forum. It is to be readily admitted though that the IBS practitioner is not “perspectiveless” and that his/her outlook will have an effect on assumptions regarding interpretation at every level, even of course at the level of initial observation/preliminary “boundary setting.” So I am not arguing for interpretive work that is utterly free of reader perspective. Instead I am advocating an approach to the text that consciously works to let the text guide its own interpretation.

<sup>15</sup> It is to be noted that this hypothetical proposition is merely an illustration and not a historical claim of any sort.

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Hunn Choi

*Multicultural Hermeneutics and Mission*

**Abstract**

In this article, presented at the 2014 Interdisciplinary Colloquium, held at Royal Auditorium on the Kentucky Campus of Asbury Theological Seminary, October 10, 2014, the author examines multicultural hermeneutics in relation to mission and presents multicultural hermeneutics as a *dialogical, hospitable, border crossing, marginal, liminal, and missional* reading of the Bible *in solidarity* with others. He uses the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan as an interesting example for multicultural hermeneutics.

**Keywords:** multicultural hermeneutics, hospitality, marginality, liminality, missional, the Good Samaritan

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How true that America is made of diverse people from various races, ethnic origins, cultural backgrounds, and religious traditions. These diverse people live in the same cities and neighborhoods, while their children go to the same schools, play in the same playgrounds and belong to the same sports teams. Alvin Padilla rightly observes,

Indeed, the whole world has come to our doorstep. Learning to live well in the diverse culture of North America is no longer an option, but a necessity. The U.S. Census estimates that in 2050 the proportion of whites in the population will be only 53%. Our children will live and serve in a society in which their classmates, neighbors and fellow disciples of Christ will be equally divided between whites and people of color. As new people move into our cities and local communities, the communities undoubtedly will change. The changes could be haphazard and filled with misunderstandings, hurt feelings and even violence, or the changes could permit all to reinvent and reinvigorate themselves for the better.<sup>1</sup>

Multiculturalism is both a reality and an ideal. As Kenneth Boa points out, “the notion of a monolithic culture in the West based on a single stream of tradition is no longer viable. We live in a *multicultural* world—one in which peoples of disparate cultural heritages and traditions live and work together. In this sense, multiculturalism is a reality—a present fact of life.”<sup>2</sup> But it is also a goal toward which we move in order 1) to recognize the rights of people of varying ethnic, racial, geographical, linguistic, and social roots to political freedom, economic opportunity, and social tolerance; 2) to rectify political and economic injustice by pursuing policies that ensure freedom and opportunity for all people; and 3) to foster a genuine respect for diverse cultural expressions, recognizing that certain constants of life—love, growth, need, aspiration, suffering, hope—find expression in all cultures.<sup>3</sup> We have, in this cry for multicultural ideal, a tremendous opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, relevant to a world in which so many cultures coexist in such close proximity, a world weary of conflict between peoples and nations of disparate cultures.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, most American congregations are segregated, not just by race, but also by ethnicity. Martin Luther King, Jr. recognized this in 1958: “... eleven o’clock on Sunday morning when we stand to sing ‘In Christ there is no East or West,’ is the most segregated hour in Christian America.”<sup>5</sup> The problem has become almost clichéd. For years, various academic studies and news articles have reported what many churchgoers already know: America has become more integrated in schools and businesses, workplaces, and restaurants, while churches

have not kept pace with other institutions. People like to become Christ-followers without crossing borders. They want to live in comfort with themselves and others with the similar cultural, racial, ethnic, economic, and educational background.

However, amazing things can happen, when we engage other cultures for Christ, and even more so when we begin to willingly give up some parts of our own culture for the sake of others. As the Apostle Paul had himself done—to the Jews he became a Jew, in order to win Jews... to those outside the law he became as one outside the law... to the weak he became weak (1 Cor. 9:13-23)—if we give up the safety and comfort of our own cultural/ethnic lifestyles, the result will be startling. Ian Scott calls this “voluntary cultural sacrifice,” which is “especially necessary for the group that holds the cultural upper hand in a given time and place. Within any city there is always one group whose culture is easily mistaken for the universal norm...”<sup>26</sup> In the context of cultural and ethnic diversity, ongoing racial tensions and division, religious and cultural pluralism, and linguistic and cultural complexities, in order to live out the challenge of Ephesians 2.14-16, the *magna carta* of the church, we must strive to create symbiotic relationships and interactions between diverse groups.

### Why Multicultural Hermeneutics?

In the 21st century, we find ourselves “in a challenging position as we confront the multicultural, postmodern and pluralistic world in which we have been called to bear witness to Christ.”<sup>27</sup> As Terence Turner articulates, multiculturalism is “primarily a movement for change... a conceptual framework for challenging the cultural hegemony of the dominant ethnic group (or the dominant class constituted almost exclusively by that ethnic group)... by calling for equal recognition of the cultural expressions of non-hegemonic groups within [a given structure].”<sup>28</sup> Culture refers “primarily to collective social identities engaged in struggles for social equality,” and is “not an end in itself... but a means to an end.”<sup>29</sup> A desirable end in multiculturalism is *culture change*—all cultures conforming to the Kingdom culture, which requires culture contact with each other. A multicultural person is neither totally a part of nor totally apart from his or her culture. Instead, he or she lives on the boundary. To live on the edge of one’s culture is to live with tension and movement to change, not standing still, but rather a crossing and return, repletion of return and crossing, back-and-forth. The aim is to experience the Kingdom more fully and completely, above and beyond one’s own culture.

Moreover, if multiculturalism is “a system of beliefs and behaviors that *recognizes* and *respects* the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or

society; acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences; and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context that empowers all within the organization or society,”<sup>10</sup> then multicultural hermeneutics is a way “to *celebrate* with the other[s] the power of the Gospel to transcend all barriers and bring about a oneness, creating a new humanity in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-22).”<sup>11</sup> Its intention is “to look up the other[s]... that the world has taught to regard with distrust and suspicion, not as a ‘potential predator, but as a profitable partner.”<sup>12</sup>

If we are to take seriously the vision of Rev. 7:9, then we must understand that multicultural hermeneutics is not for a condescension of the dominant culture, but rather, for the elevation of every one of us, including the dominant culture, into something far greater, far more marvelous and wonderful—the people of God.<sup>13</sup> In this paper, I will present multicultural hermeneutics as a dialogical, hospitable, border crossing, marginal, liminal, and missional reading of the Bible in solidarity with *others*, and examine the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan as an example for multicultural hermeneutics.

### **What are Multicultural Hermeneutics?**

Douglas Jacobsen suggests that we must enter into a multicultural conversation about what the Bible means for us today, rather than domesticating the Bible by reading it through the limiting lens of only our own viewpoints.<sup>14</sup> Jacobsen proposes hermeneutical diversity in which beyond comparing our interpretations to academic expositions of the biblical text, we test them against the other interpretations by reading the Bible from different social and cultural locations.<sup>15</sup> This hermeneutical diversity calls for “an inclusive cultural context,” or a *multicultural context*, not without borders, but with borders—borders not as barriers, but as clear markers.

Multicultural hermeneutics recognizes that interpretation is never itself independent of the interpreter, though in principle it concerns information independent of the interpreter, and yet it cannot be completely “objective or impartial.”<sup>16</sup> As Christopher J. H. Wright correctly points out, “Even when we affirm (as I certainly do) that the historical and salvation-historical context of biblical texts and their authors is of primary and objective importance in discerning their meaning and their significance, plurality of perspectives from which readers read them is also a vital fact in the hermeneutical richness of the global church.”<sup>17</sup>

Multicultural hermeneutics aims to “read the world *in front of the text*, by reading the text not only *within* and *across*” one’s own culture, but also *beyond* it in the

socio-cultural contexts of others.<sup>18</sup> Its goal is to look at the world *within the text* but also *in front of the text*, and *beyond*—with “a vision for a new world through a lens of solidarity with others.”<sup>19</sup> Multicultural reading practice expects the text to “surprise, contradict, or even reverse” the readers’ presumed “horizon of expectation,” that is, “a mind-set, or system of references,” which characterizes their finite viewpoint amidst their *Sitz im Leben*, by challenging them to move beyond “patterns of habituation” in their attitudes and experiences, and even in their reading practices.<sup>20</sup>

### *Dialogue*

First of all, multicultural hermeneutics is a dialogical reading of the text and listening to one another.<sup>21</sup> In Grant Osborne’s hermeneutical spiral, “an interpreter’s presuppositions are continually challenged and corrected in dialogue with scripture.”<sup>22</sup> However, in a globalizing society, “the hermeneutical spiral is expanded beyond an isolated interpreter to include a multicultural hermeneutic community. Here we have not so much an ‘epistemological privilege’ of the poor or a ‘theological hegemony’ of the West but an intercultural hermeneutical dialogue whereby each voice can contribute.”<sup>23</sup> Rather than seeking

the truth selectively from our own views, within the boundaries of our unique situations, through our distinctive ways of thinking, and in our limited languages, where, as a result, the interpretation we produce is conditioned by our particular contexts and situations, we ought to deliberately and continuously broaden our understanding of the truth, by having direct and indirect dialogue with people whose socio-cultural and personal situations are different from our own.<sup>24</sup>

At best, multicultural hermeneutics is a journey—an intimate talk and a humble walk, with God and with others—not a wandering without a goal, but a movement toward justice and loving-kindness.<sup>25</sup> It is a prophetic journey that *is* (not has) a critical voice, both positive and negative, both affirming and critiquing. It may not be vocal, but it is never silent, because it always seeks justice and mercy, love and righteousness. It is a travel with the God who is on a journey to *save* the world, in pursuit of a theology of the *road* rather than the *balcony* or the *office*.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, as David Bosch mentioned of the dialogical paradigm in his discussion about the interrelationship between dialogue and mission,<sup>27</sup> multicultural hermeneutics is a prophetic dialogue—to speak God’s word and what it meant then and what it means to us now, but also to engage with others in respectful conversation with the desire to learn and to share.<sup>28</sup> Especially in a multi-

faith context, it needs to occur in humble boldness and bold humility, with both conviction and openness.<sup>29</sup> It is not either-or, but both-and—bold and confident, and humble and open. In multicultural hermeneutics, dialogue is not so much a specific practice, but a basic attitude of hermeneutics that requires sensitivity to the social, cultural, religious and political aspects of engaging God, one another, and the world.

### *Hospitality*

Secondly, multicultural hermeneutics is about hospitality, a lens through which we read and interpret the biblical text, but also “one that takes seriously the dangers involved in opening oneself to the other[s] while also maintaining the intellectual and moral necessity of hospitality to strangers,”<sup>30</sup> as “Jesus was both guest and host, dependent on *others* for welcome and startlingly gracious in his welcome to *others*.”<sup>31</sup> It is within the hermeneutics of hospitality “where we seek to be hospitable in our interpretations.”<sup>32</sup> It is about “a readiness to welcome strange and unfamiliar meanings into our own awareness, perhaps to be shaken by them, but in no case to be left unchanged.”<sup>33</sup>

What we need in multicultural hermeneutics is a hermeneutics of *informed* trust, a desire to be informed by others and their readings and interpretations, which may then free us to encounter God in scripture—free us to expect that God will tell us something significant, even revelatory, about ourselves, God, and our lives together.<sup>34</sup> Rather than being motivated by the hermeneutics of suspicion, regarding the text or the understandings and experiences of others with doubt, we need the hermeneutical aspect of a willingness to listen and interact, before affixing our critical gaze, especially, regarding others’ interpretations as naïve or too subjective, or as sociopolitical constructions or hegemonic ideological expressions.<sup>35</sup> In hospitality to one another, multicultural hermeneutics is devoted to the correction of error as well as right rendering for the present situation. As Gene C. Fant, Jr. puts it, it is the “hermeneutics of optimism,” where we seek to find the possible interpretation, the one that seeks to find the most fulsome meaning possible,<sup>36</sup> by encouraging each one’s needs for self-respect and dignity, and openness to difference and otherness, and by engaging the universality of true and liberating justice.

### *Border Crossing*

Thirdly, multicultural hermeneutics assumes a willingness to cross borders. Borders are primarily markers that divide one entity from one another. However, they are not barriers but rather frontiers from which to venture out into

new horizons in order to expand one's knowledge and circle of relationships.<sup>37</sup> As Virgilio P. Elizondo points out,

Borders will not disappear, differences will not fade away, but they need not divide and keep peoples apart... They guard against a dull, homogenized society without any differences. Borders should not disappear but neither should they divide and keep people apart. The very nature of our faith can lead us to a creative transformation in the meaning and function of borders. Rather than seeing them as the ultimate dividing line between you and me, between us and them, we can see borders as the privileged meeting places where different persons and peoples will come together to form a new and most inclusive humanity.<sup>38</sup>

The act of border crossing is necessary in our walk with Christ. According to Lalsangkima Pachua, "Christian mission... is about the boundary-crossing activity of Christians... following God who crossed the boundary between God and the world (*missio Dei*) in and through Jesus Christ."<sup>39</sup> Bosch uses even a stronger term, "boundary-breaking," which is, of course, impossible without border-crossing: "the entire ministry of Jesus and his relationship with all these [the poor, and tax collectors, and women and Samaritans] and other marginalized people witness, in Luke's writings, to Jesus' practice of boundary-breaking compassion, which the church is called to emulate."<sup>40</sup> Peter C. Phan argues that Jesus was a border crosser, and his whole life was border crossing—from incarnation to resurrection.<sup>41</sup> Jesus, as border crosser, was the servant *par excellence*, and lived and died at the margin of marginality, despised and rejected by others but freed from the world's dominance that marginalized him.<sup>42</sup> Border crossing is "a theological imperative of Christian life *as imitatio Christi*."<sup>43</sup> Without border crossing, we cannot and will not follow the footsteps of Jesus. Multicultural hermeneutics sees borders as the privileged meeting place where people from both sides of the borders with different cultural backgrounds can come and listen to one another to create a fuller meaning of the text.<sup>44</sup>

#### *Marginality*

Fourthly, multicultural hermeneutics is not only a hermeneutics *from*, *across*, and *beyond* borders, but also a hermeneutics of marginality, since marginality describes and explores situations and conditions in which people suffer injustice, inequality, and exploitation due to factors such as race, religion, class, ethnicity, or gender.<sup>45</sup> Though often enforced by oppressive forces from outside, marginality is a place of radical openness and possibilities:

Tremendous power is exercised by the powerful in assigning marginality and this creates alienation, estrangement and marginalisation, serving the interests of the powerful who establish themselves at and as the centre. However, the powerless who now find themselves at the periphery, marginalised or even in a liminal state, can utilise their marginality as an opportunity for radical possibility – what is considered as given, as reality can be re-imagined, and a new reality can be envisaged, construed and lived.<sup>46</sup>

As Daniel S. Schipani points out, “Conventional and pragmatic wisdom favors the safe havens of familiar territory, the shrewd and sensible stance of ‘playing it safe.’”<sup>47</sup> However, “we can see reality better at places of marginality and vulnerability, and from the vantage point available to us at the borders...”<sup>48</sup> We can challenge each other to “move deliberately beyond our comfort zones, either by going out or by welcoming into our midst the stranger, the alien, or the different other,” “[s]erving and being served on the margins or borders across and against boundaries, again and again becomes the sacred experience of encountering Christ and loving him anew.”<sup>49</sup> We can encourage others “to relate and minister across and beyond those boundaries,” offering an opportunity to respond... in an ethic and politics of compassion and radical inclusiveness.” We can become boundary walkers and boundary breakers, by eventually choosing to relate and to minister ‘out of place.’”<sup>50</sup> Margin is “the locus—a focal point, a new and creative core—where two (or multiple) worlds emerge.”<sup>51</sup> As a border-crosser and a dweller at the margins, we desire for “a new and different center, the center constituted by the meeting of the borders of the many and diverse worlds, often in conflict with one another, each with its own center which relegates the ‘other’ to the margins. It is at this margin-center that [we] marginal people meet one another.”<sup>52</sup>

### *Liminality*

Fifthly, multicultural hermeneutics is like entering into a liminal space and a liminal time, becoming a “transitional being” or a “liminal persona” who is “being initiated into very different states of life.”<sup>53</sup> A liminal space is “an in-between space... created by a person’s leaving his or her social structure and not yet having returned to that structure; or to a new one.”<sup>54</sup> In liminality, freed from the social structure and fixed cultural ideas, we become open to what is new, open to a genuine interpersonal communion in which they relate to each other truly in their full humanity.<sup>55</sup> Jesus is the perfect example of a person who entered into a liminal space:

Jesus left home and lived in the wilderness of liminality, at the [borders] of his society... he... lived in a social limbo, in a liminal space, as a despised Galilean... Working out of his liminal space, Jesus... embraced especially the despised and sick people in their mutual liminality... Utilizing in liminal freedom, Jesus expressed his infinite compassion to those people whom society had rejected, crossing again and again the boundaries that the political and religious centers in Jerusalem had imposed on the people... There on the cross, Jesus hung in the deepest abyss of liminality, in a God-forsaken in-betweenness... But in this liminality, the costly suffering and thus life-giving nature of God's infinite compassion becomes historically explicit.<sup>56</sup>

In our liminal spaces, we hold not only our own method of hermeneutics and interpretations, but also others', in creative tension, by embracing their creative possibilities, instead of avoiding them. By understanding the liminal spaces not just as "in-between" places (between cultures, methods, and interpretations) but also as places of new possibility, a possibility of "both-and" and even "in-beyond,"<sup>57</sup> we identify with a greater community of all, by moving beyond our own cultural norms towards a common mission together. It creates a new space for hermeneutical and missional creativity—reading and doing mission from the margins for the marginalized.

### *Solidarity*

Next, multicultural hermeneutics promotes "a hermeneutics of community," even of "a multilingual conversation, a sort of international hermeneutical community"<sup>58</sup> that embraces a hermeneutics of solidarity, which was the hermeneutics of Jesus—"a hermeneutical commitment to be in solidarity" with *others*. The hermeneutics of solidarity helps us see that "each person has become a particular reflection of the totality of others."<sup>59</sup> It is

committed to "being-with" the other in solidarity and dialogue even in the midst of difference, tension or conflict. It is to hold that the truth in its fullness is not found in any single tradition, but rather, ... it is born between people collectively searching for the truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction. It operates by opening itself to the polysemic meaning and significance of the other and willing to be informed and transformed by the very different cultural expressions of the stories of God's presence in Jesus Christ.<sup>60</sup>

In solidarity, we do not simply affirm the otherness as otherness but seek to be enriched by it.<sup>61</sup> With solidarity, we struggle with others and seek their

fulfillment as part of our own fulfillment.<sup>62</sup> Solidarity seeks “mutual transformation toward a new reality of the global family, wherein we embrace one another as members of the same household, with an expectation of living together forever.”<sup>63</sup> Most importantly, solidarity is not a mere concept, but a mission principle, a way of life. Multicultural hermeneutics is about a willingness to be with others in solidarity and be engaged even in the difficult dialogue between different readings of the Bible.

### *Mission*

Finally, multicultural hermeneutics is a missional hermeneutics, where hermeneutics and mission go hand in hand, since both are a journey with God and others *from* everywhere *to* everywhere, especially from the centers of power to the fringes of the world to experience God in new ways and in new forms, as well as to empower people in the margins to claim their key role as agents of *mission from the margins*. Multicultural hermeneutics views margins of society as a special space of God’s mission, where God is discernible and present. As for Wright, “the mission of God provides a hermeneutical framework within which to read the Whole Bible.”<sup>64</sup> A missional reading is “not a matter of, first, finding the ‘real’ meaning by objective exegesis, and only then, secondly, cranking up some ‘missiological implications’... Rather, it is to see how a text often has its origin in some issue, need, controversy, or threat which the people of God needed to address in the context of their mission. The text itself is a product of mission in action.”<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, missional hermeneutics is based on the hermeneutics of coherence in which we read the texts “from a perspective that is both messianic and missional.”<sup>66</sup> Wright suggests, “Jesus *himself* provided hermeneutical coherence with which all disciples must read these text, that is, in the light of the story that leads *up to* Christ (messianic reading) and the story that leads *on from* Christ (missional reading). That is the story that flows from the mind and purpose of God in all the scriptures for all the nations.”<sup>67</sup> Multicultural hermeneutics is also both Christocentric and missional. In addition, Wright recognizes that missional hermeneutics is also multicultural: “... appropriately we now live with multicultural hermeneutics... So a missional hermeneutics must include at least this recognition—the multiplicity of perspectives and contexts from which and within which people read the biblical texts.”<sup>68</sup> He wants to move beyond a “biblical foundations for mission,” beyond use of the Bible to support the world mission of the church, beyond important themes in scripture for mission, beyond multicultural hermeneutics, to a missional hermeneutic.<sup>69</sup> Just that, for me, multicultural hermeneutics is not subsumed in missional hermeneutics, but rather it is the other way around.

### A Multicultural Reading of Luke 10:30-37

We often search through biblical stories that can provide models for mission. However, no single model fits all mission contexts and addresses all mission challenges. One of the key New Testament stories that have inspired innumerable people to engage in mission is the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).<sup>70</sup> Though we call the Samaritan in the story *good*, as Steve Moore points out, “Jesus never used the descriptive words ‘Good Samaritan’... ‘Good Samaritan’ is an extra-biblical label, a title that has been assigned to this parable, aptly reducing the essences of the story to two words.”<sup>71</sup> This Samaritan is called *good*, because he went out of his way to provide practical assistance for the wounded traveler. This parable provides an excellent locus of discussion for multicultural hermeneutics. The question I want to pose is this: How *good* of a neighbor is the Good Samaritan?

#### *Historical and Literary Contexts of the Parable*

In order to understand this parable, we must first focus on its historical context. During Jesus’ time, “Samaritanism” was a religio-ethnic identity marker, used as a principle for alienation, exclusion, and inferiority, producing marginality in relation to the Jews. Samaria and Judea had animosity towards each other. Samaritans were treated as either foreigners or a mixed race.<sup>72</sup> The Samaritan, in the historical context of the story, is to be marginal or peripheral to the racial, ethnic, and religious identity of Israel and the mainstream Judaism of that time. The words of David J. Bosch may be most appropriate for understanding the impact of the label “Samaritan:”

Jesus’ audience, including his disciples, must have found this parable unpalatable, indeed obnoxious. The Samaritan in the narrative... represents profanity; even more, he stands for non-humanity. In terms of Jewish religion the Samaritans were enemies not only of Jews, but also of God. In the context of the narrative the Samaritan thus has a negative religious value... [Even] Jews were forbidden to receive works of love from non-Jews and were not allowed to purchase or use oil and wine obtained from Samaritans.<sup>73</sup>

Another helpful context to consider is the literary context of the parable. First, it is important to note here that Jesus’ ministry in Luke is primarily to the poor and oppressed, those who are marginalized by society in a variety of ways. Luke is often hailed as the gospel of the poor and marginalized and preferred by liberation theologians. Secondly, the parable of the Good Samaritan is found in what is called Luke’s Travel Narrative (9:51-19:27), where, according to C. J. Mattill, “Luke as a

literary artist skillfully using his artistic license [sketches] a journey beginning in Galilee and leading via the road through Samaria to Jerusalem.”<sup>74</sup> The purpose of this Travel Narrative is to present “a symbolic story which prefigures the conversion of Samaritans and Gentiles in Acts. [Luke] pictures Jesus as *going beyond Israel* as a model for the church’s mission, which is grounded in Jesus’ salvific contacts with non-Jews.”<sup>75</sup> Whether or not this is an accurate analysis of Luke’s intent of the Travel Narrative, what is clear is that, in Luke’s view, as Phan puts it, Jesus was “the paradigmatic border-crosser,” subverting every kind of boundary—racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, gender, and even socio-economic. Through the parable, Jesus subverts the racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural derogation existing in his day and expands the category of neighbor. Thirdly, Luke has a great interest in Samaria and the Samaritans. There are two other important passages where Luke highlights the Samaritans:

1. 9:51-55 shows two things about Jesus’ attitude toward Samaritans: 1) Jesus planned to stay in a Samaritan village, by sending ahead of him messengers to prepare for him. Jesus did not separate himself from the Samaritans; 2) Jesus showed compassion towards the Samaritans when his disciples asked Jesus if they could command fire to descend from heaven to consume the Samaritans, who did not receive them. Jesus rebuked his disciples.<sup>76</sup>
2. 17:11-19 takes place on the borders of Samaria. In this story, Jesus is astonished that the Samaritan, referred to as “this foreigner,” was the only cleansed leper to return to thank God. In contrast to the unthankful attitude of the nine lepers (presumably Jews), the Samaritan was commended for his gratitude, which is consistent with the positive portrayal of our Samaritan who displayed excessive compassion when a priest and a Levite exhibited none.<sup>77</sup>

#### *Missional Reading from the Margins*

The missional reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan is a marginal hermeneutics of mission, approaching the parable from the social location of marginality through the lens of mission, paying attention to the marginal voice, even if it is silent. This type of reading can “free faith from being reduced to a matter of knowledge, truth and understanding and root these in concrete [mission] praxis.”<sup>78</sup>

In the parable, first of all, what we are seeing is border crossing. When the institutional leaders, Levi and priest, being *afraid*, refused to cross the border, the Samaritan did not hesitate but dared to cross. As Joel Green rightly points out, “Neighbor love knows no boundaries”<sup>79</sup> is the ultimate seminal feature of being a neighbor. The priest and the Levite knew the boundaries but decided not to cross and become neighbors. The Samaritan, in contrast, became a neighborly savior *beyond* borders.

Secondly, what the Samaritan did was a mission from the margins, rather than a mission from the center. Often, mission is in a way a movement from the center to the periphery, from the privileged to the marginalized, from a position of privilege, power, and possession to a marginalized position. But in the parable, it was from the position of *one* marginality to the position of *another* marginality. The Samaritan, a dweller at the margins—a temporary alien in the Judean part of Israel—and a border-crosser, moves into a new center, a center where conflicting, opposing borders of race, ethnicity, culture, and religion meet.

#### *Dialogue with “Neighborology”*

It is extremely helpful to be attentive to the other interpretive voices especially from the Global South, such as Kosuke Koyama on the topic of *neighborology*, which may be at first like a very uneasy, uncomfortable proposition. Koyama argues, what people need is good neighbors more than good theology, and the message of Christ must be put in neighborological language, rather than in Christological language.<sup>80</sup> Neighborology supersedes Christology, because, according to Koyama, that “Neighbor-talk (neighborology) is the heartbeat of Christ-talk (Christology).”<sup>81</sup>

Koyama further argues, “Our sense of the presence of God will be distorted if we fail to see God’s reality in terms of our neighbor’s reality. And our sense of our neighbor’s reality will be disfigured unless seen in terms of God’s reality.”<sup>82</sup> Because God gives himself to us in Jesus Christ, the only way to communicate such a reality of God to our neighbor is to “accept the real claim which our neighbor makes on us,” as “Jesus Christ, faced by the reality of his neighbor, accepted the claim made on him.”<sup>83</sup> Neighbors are the product of cultural, historical, and religious influences, and if we want to make Christ known, we need to go over to the other side and interact with them, and live and incarnate Christ-talk in their cultural contexts. Koyama is right when he states, “Now how to communicate such a reality of God to our neighbors? Neighbors who are not ‘neighborology’ but real living neighbors who are in the midst of human and historical complexities.”<sup>84</sup>

In addition, for Koyama, “the word ‘neighbor’ is about ‘becoming neighbor...’ The priest and the Levite chose not to become [a] neighbor to the man who was in great need. The Samaritan ‘was moved with pity’ and became [a] neighbor to him.”<sup>85</sup> Becoming a neighbor “implies a movement.” Even though the wounded traveler may have been a cultural enemy, the Samaritan extended hospitality, which is a movement to a total stranger in neighborly love. In light of Koyama’s concept of neighborology, the Samaritan is a really *good* neighbor. However, the question still remains. How *good* is the Good Samaritan?

### *A Personal Reading*

At first reading, this parable seems easy to understand. In a cultural context, the Good Samaritan is the person who responds to the needs of others, binding up their wounds. He does good deeds, is compassionate, and behaves as a pretty *good* neighbor. If I were the Samaritan, I would pat my shoulder and congratulate myself. This has been our conventional reading. But is this Good Samaritan really *good* enough? For example, a Hispanic man I know among many who live in Lexington, we will call him Raul, is daily subject to three kinds of injustice, which represents his life’s vicious cycle of poverty:

1. Payday Lending. He has been paying interest rates as high as 400% to payday lenders for short-term loans. As a result, he has been trapped in ongoing debt.
2. Ex-Offenders Reentry. With a past conviction, it is virtually impossible for him to take the necessary steps toward rebuilding his life by getting state-issued photo IDs, opening a bank account, renting an apartment, or getting a job. Without employment, he cannot provide for himself or for his family. He might return to crime.
3. Affordable Housing. Even if he has a job making a minimum wage, his rent will be more than 30% of his income, and he will not be able to afford other necessities such as medicine, food and childcare.

For Raul who is consistently downtrodden, inhumanely subjugated, and ethnically marginalized the answer is “No,” because the “Good” Samaritan has failed to follow through in his neighborly duties. Raul is suffering from the wound inflicted from poverty, discrimination, and dehumanization, as one who falls prey to robbers, one among many who are at the mercy of capitalistic bandits. What Raul needs is more than emergency relief or shelter for a week. He needs a neighbor

who is willing to be in solidarity with him, like Jesus, who, beyond words and deeds, embodied salvation in his solidarity with the marginalized.<sup>86</sup>

Often, what we see in mission praxis is two outward movements towards the *other*—the marginalized. The first movement is to physically enter into a broken reality—the reality of suffering, the violence of poverty, and the socio-cultural context that is normative for the vast majority of people in our world.<sup>87</sup> Notice Jesus' choice to open the parable with this phrase, "a man." This "constitutes a powerful rhetorical move on Jesus' part... Stripped of his clothes and left half-dead, the man's anonymity throughout the story is insured; he is simply a human being, a neighbor, in need."<sup>88</sup> The story does not say whether he was rich or poor, or Jew or Samaritan. Simply, he was stripped, beaten, and left half-dead alongside the road. The identity of the wounded man did not matter. Regardless of the wounded man's identity, the Samaritan simply "went" and entered into the reality of suffering.

The second movement is to respond to the suffering of others with compassion and mercy. This is a very natural human impulse, but one that we who live in the abundance of life tend to avoid for various reasons.<sup>89</sup> In the parable, the actions of the priest and the Levite "establish a cadence: they came → saw → passed by on the other side."<sup>90</sup> However, the Samaritan's actions are, though initially matched, radically departed from the actions of the predecessors: "He came → saw → was moved with compassion → went to the wounded man + cared for him."<sup>91</sup> Green rightly observes, "what distinguishes this traveler from the other two is not fundamentally that they are Jews and he is a Samaritan, nor is it that they had high status as religious functionaries and he does not. What individualizes him is his compassion, leading to action, in the face of their inaction."<sup>92</sup> The Samaritan took risks much more than could ever be required or expected—by stopping on the Jericho road to assist someone he did not know and giving of his own goods and money rather than leaving him on the roadside. In order to provide further care for the stranger, he entered into "an open-ended monetary relationship with the innkeeper, a relationship in which the chance of extortion is high."<sup>93</sup>

However, what Raul needs is much more than the first two movements of solidarity. As Isasi-Diaz correctly notes,

Unfortunately the term solidarity has been co-opted, and it means not much beyond empathy with the poor and the oppressed, being aware of them and their struggle, being sensitive to them, supporting them, walking with them. There is nothing wrong with sympathy, compassion, mercy. However, solidarity is about all of this and much more... Liberation theologies clearly advocate for the poor and the oppressed... Advocacy is good, laudable, right and just. However, advocacy,

unless done on behalf of oneself, is always tinged with a patronizing and lack of respect for the self-definition of those being advocated for.<sup>94</sup>

This is the third movement that enriches our multicultural reading of the parable. The Samaritan was not a direct cause of the marginalization of the wounded man, but he may have been responsible for causing or exacerbating his suffering. What if the robber was a Samaritan? What if this was a direct result of the on-going conflict between the Jews and the Samaritans? As Maureen H. O'Connell notes, "compassion [also] entails a confrontational element when encountering the idolatry, oppression, and exploitation that cause others' suffering, without which compassion 'fades quickly into fruitless sentimental commiseration.'"<sup>95</sup> The new relationship between the Samaritan and the wounded man should lead to "a genuine confrontation with the sin that cuts across and unifies those who are otherwise separated by the gap between the abundance of life and the dehumanizing conditions of immanent death; the sin of one's suffering is directly related to the sin of another's active complicity or indifference. Both are living in sinful conditions—one... is somehow responsible, and the other... suffers the consequences."<sup>96</sup> What we may have here is the historical injury of racial, ethnic and religious form of violence.<sup>97</sup> The Samaritan fails to follow through. He exhibits no internal reflection to assess the situation of the wounded man.

Furthermore, there is no dialogue between the Samaritan and the wounded man, which is essential to genuine mission. The Samaritan fails to include the voice of the wounded traveler. Throughout the story, the wounded man, unidentified, is still voiceless, just like many of our robbed, stripped, beaten neighbors. Often, they remain nameless. In knowing their names, we also come to know their race, ethnicity, nationality, religion and other categories. True liberation involves knowing the unknown, naming the nameless, and giving the voiceless a voice rather than merely becoming the voice of the voiceless. The parable ends with the Samaritan speaking to the innkeeper but the wounded man still without a voice. The Samaritan speaks for the voiceless but fails to give the voiceless a voice. Pachuau writes, "It is the peripheral voice from 'outside the gate' that communicates the eternal good news of God."<sup>98</sup> Solidarity with the wounded man could have provided "courage for both to continue to live their lives in reference to the truth that their salvation depends upon one another—dignity, justice, and a commitment to the Reign of God depend upon their ongoing relationship and mutual transformation."<sup>99</sup> As Jon Sobrino argues, "At the bottom, the spirit of solidarity is the attitude and conviction that the Christian does not go to God alone. We are saved as members of people... each of us lives our faith in reference to others, bestowing it on them and receiving

it from them again.”<sup>100</sup> This spirit of solidarity, an inherently *social* spirit, injects “an active hope” into the sin and death that mark this world, and by so doing reveals the fundamental totality of our reality: that we live in “a world of both sin and grace.”<sup>101</sup>

As Joel Green asks, “What would happen if biblical studies took the Christian mission seriously?” and “What would happen if the Christian mission took the (full) biblical witness seriously?”<sup>102</sup> These are appropriate questions we must keep in mind, when we engage in hermeneutics and mission. We must hear more faithfully what God is saying through the Bible, and our mission must be much more faithful to what God intends for his people. We should never limit our reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan to doing charity-oriented philanthropic activities.

The Jesus we encounter in the Bible is the one who came to the marginalized and lived in solidarity with them. As for Koyama, mission in Christ’s way is going to the periphery.<sup>103</sup> Our reading of the biblical texts should result in mission in Christ’s way. Christ affirmed his centrality by going to the periphery. Christ affirmed his lordship by being crucified.<sup>104</sup> The ultimate love for God and for neighbor was demonstrated on the cross. The cross is the most extreme periphery, and it is where God’s superb, neighborly love was demonstrated.<sup>105</sup> The only way of mission is the way of the cross—the way of self-denial and self-giving, and the ultimate theology of mission is the theology of the cross.

The Samaritan in the parable is a marginalized man like Jesus in many ways. He is a border crosser, a servant, and a new marginal man with a new center where his marginality does not diminish but exists on the center of the page of God’s liberative story—no longer on the fringe, but at the center of a new story, a parable narrated by Jesus. Through the parable, Jesus wants us to see “a challenging model in the marginalized Samaritan (‘Go and do as he did’): a model of compassion and life-giving actions; a model of identifying with the oppressed; a model of transcending the traditional barriers of culture and [race, religion, and ethnicity]... while identifying with the needy...”<sup>106</sup> However, the marginalized Samaritan did not go far enough in his neighborly love. His actions led to no further action beyond his charitable mercy. The Samaritan’s mission was a mission from the margin over racism, nationalism, ethnocentrism, colonialism, and other “isms.”<sup>107</sup> He became a savior without borders, but stopped short of allowing “the emergence of new mission from those who are marginalized, who have no way of contributing, of making their voices heard, their point of view valued and considered.”<sup>108</sup> We need to listen to the words of Jesus, “go and do likewise,” with much caution. We are commanded to go and do “likewise,” not exactly “the same.”

## Conclusion

As a concluding remark, I want to introduce what Desmond Tutu said about what happened to Africa:

There is a story, which is fairly well known, about when the missionaries came to Africa. They had the Bible and we, the natives, had the land. They said 'Let us pray,' and we dutifully shut our eyes. When we opened them, why, they now had the land and we had the Bible. It would, on the surface, appear as if we had struck a bad bargain, but the fact of the matter is that we came out of that transaction a great deal better off than when we started. The point is that we were given a priceless gift in the word of God: the gospel of salvation, the good news of God's love for us that is given so utterly unconditionally. But even more wonderful is the fact that we were given the most subversive, most revolutionary thing around. Those who may have wanted to exploit us and to subject us to injustice and oppression should really not have given us the Bible, because that placed dynamite under their nefarious schemes.<sup>109</sup>

This is a quite serious assertion about the Bible and what it can be and do. For Tutu, "The Bible is the most revolutionary, the most radical book there is."<sup>110</sup> How we read and appropriate the Bible requires a great awareness of and sensitivity to the changing world that is becoming more multicultural. A personal reading of the parable through the eyes of Raul inspires us to ask the question: What kind of a neighbor am I really? Multicultural hermeneutics promotes more attentiveness, wisdom, and faithfulness concerning the multicultural life we are now living in witness to Christ among diverse neighbors.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Alvin Padilla, "A New Kind of Theological School: Contextualized Theological Education Models," *Africanus Journal* 2:2 (November 2010): 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Boa, "Christ and Cultures: Multiculturalism and the Gospel of Christ," in [bible.org/seriespage/christ-and-cultures-multiculturalism-and-gospel-christ](http://bible.org/seriespage/christ-and-cultures-multiculturalism-and-gospel-christ). Italics are mine.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther King (Jr.), Peter Holloran, Ralph Luker, Penny A. Russell, *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume IV: Symbols of the Movement, January 1957-December 1958* (London: University of California Press, 2000), 356.

<sup>6</sup> Ian Scott, "Paul and God's Multicultural Mission," in [www.tyndale.ca/~missioidei/2009/04/the-apostle-paul-and-gods-multi-cultural-mission/](http://www.tyndale.ca/~missioidei/2009/04/the-apostle-paul-and-gods-multi-cultural-mission/).

<sup>7</sup> Padilla, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Terence Turner, "Anthropology and Multiculturalism: What is Anthropology That Multiculturalists Should Be Mindful of It?" *Cultural Anthropology* 8:4 (1993): 412.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Caleb Rosado, "Multicultural Ministry," *Spectrum* 23:5 (April 1994): 28.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Padilla, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas Jacobsen, "Multicultural Evangelical Hermeneutics and Ecumenical Dialogue," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 37:2 (2000): 129.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>16</sup> Robert A. Triana, *Methodical Bible Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 7.

<sup>17</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 39.

<sup>18</sup> Enjoo Mary Kim, *Preaching in an Age of Globalization* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 66. Often used is "trans-contextual" or "trans-cultural."

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 34.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 68-70.

<sup>22</sup> Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland, eds, *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 318.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Kim, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Gioacchino Campese, "Walk Humbly with Your God! Notes on a Spirituality for Missionaries with Migrants," *Missiology: An International Review* 25:2 (1997): 131.

<sup>26</sup> Cathy Ross, "Making a Difference: A Conversation with Chris Wright's The Mission of God," *ANVIL* 24:4 (2007): 253. Italics are mine.

<sup>27</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 483-9.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011).

<sup>29</sup> Bosch, 489.

<sup>30</sup> Scott Huelin, "Peregrination, Hermeneutics, Hospitality: On the Way to a Theologically Informed General Hermeneutics," *Literature & Theology* 22 (2008): 1.

<sup>31</sup> Christine D. Pohl, "Hospitality: A Practice and A Way of Life," in [www.mennovision.org/Vol%203%20No%201/Pohl\\_Hospitality.pdf](http://www.mennovision.org/Vol%203%20No%201/Pohl_Hospitality.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Gene C. Fant, Jr., *The Liberal Arts: A Student's Guide* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 76. He writes, "Alan Jacobs calls this 'hermeneutics of love,' where the audience invokes the Golden Rule, that we love others as we would have them love us. We should interpret meaning as we wish that others would interpret our own meaning" (ibid.).

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Ogletree, "The Activity of Interpreting in Moral Judgment," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 8 (1980): 19. See also, Gerrie Snyman, "Empire and a Hermeneutics of Vulnerability," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 37 (2011): 1-20.

<sup>34</sup> Jacqueline E. Lapsley, *Whispering the Word: Hearing Women's Stories in the Old Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 19.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas R. Thompson, "Interpretatio in bonem partem: Jurgen Moltmann on the Immanent Trinity," in *Theology as Conversation: The Significance of Dialogue in Historical and Contemporary Theology*, eds. Bruce L. McCormack and Kimlyn J. Bender (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 159.

<sup>36</sup> Gene C. Fant, Jr., *The Liberal Arts: A Student Guide* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 75. Also, see Fant, *God as Author: A Biblical Approach to Narrative* (Nashville: B & H Academic Publishing Group, 2010), 26-34.

<sup>37</sup> Peter C. Phan, "Crossing the Borders: A Spirituality for Mission in our Times From an Asian Perspective." *JEDOS Bulletin* 35 (2003): 8-19.

<sup>38</sup> Timothy Matovina, ed. *Beyond Borders: Writings of Virgilio Elizondo and Friends* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000), 183.

<sup>39</sup> Lalsangkima Pachuau, "Missiology in a Pluralistic World: The Place of Mission Study in Theological Education," *International Review of Mission* 89 (2000): 540.

<sup>40</sup> Bosch, 86.

<sup>41</sup> Peter C. Phan, "Crossing the Borders," 16-7. Also, see Phan, "Evangelization in a Culture of Pluralism: Challenges and Opportunities," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 9 (2007): 1-15.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>43</sup> Phan, "Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue: A Challenge to Christian Mission," in [www.ofm.org/capgen06/Relatio/04PhanEN.doc](http://www.ofm.org/capgen06/Relatio/04PhanEN.doc).

<sup>44</sup> Phan, "Crossing the Borders."

<sup>45</sup> Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna, *Experience, Research, and Social Change: Methods from the Margins* (Toronto: Garaband Press, 1989), 33. Quoted from Jane Kopas, "Outsiders in the Gospels: Marginality as a Source of Knowledge," *The Way* 33:2 (1993): 117.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Daniel S. Schipani, "Transformation in the Borderlands: A Study of Matthew 15:21-28," *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* 2:2 (Fall 2001): 21.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>52</sup> Phan, "Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue."

<sup>53</sup> Kim, 69.

<sup>54</sup> Sang Hyun Lee, "Claiming Our Liminal Spaces," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 27:3 (2006): 193.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>57</sup> Jung Young Lee, *Marginality: The Key to Multicultural Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1995).

<sup>58</sup> Gordon Zerbe, "The Wisdom of the Cross and the Knowledge of Our Age," in [www.mennoniteeducation.org/MEAPortal/Portals/57ad7180-c5e7-49f5-b282-c6475cdb7ee7/Menno%20Univ%20Fac%20Conf%202006%20docs/ZERBE%20060823%20The%20Wisdom%20of%20the%20Cross%20Rev%20%282%29.pdf](http://www.mennoniteeducation.org/MEAPortal/Portals/57ad7180-c5e7-49f5-b282-c6475cdb7ee7/Menno%20Univ%20Fac%20Conf%202006%20docs/ZERBE%20060823%20The%20Wisdom%20of%20the%20Cross%20Rev%20%282%29.pdf).

<sup>59</sup> Miroslav Volf, "Exclusion and Embrace: Theological Reflections in the Wake of 'Ethnic Cleansing,'" *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 29:2 (Spring 1992): 272.

<sup>60</sup> Christopher Duraisingh, "Contextual and Catholic: Conditions for Cross-Cultural Hermeneutics," *Anglican Theological Review* 82 (2000): 687.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Kim, 50.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 26.

<sup>65</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, "The Truth with a Mission: Reading All Scripture Missiologically," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 15.2 (2011): 5.

<sup>66</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, "Mission as a Matrix for Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology," in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, eds. Craig Bartholomew, Mary Healy, Karl Möller, Robin Parry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2004), 107.

<sup>67</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 41. Italics are his.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 38-9.

<sup>69</sup> Michael W. Goheen, "Critical Examination of David Bosch's Missional Reading of Luke," in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation*, eds. Craig G. Bartholomew, Joel B. Green, Anthony C. Thiselton (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2005), 249.

<sup>70</sup> It is hard to imagine any other passages more influential than the parable of Good Samaritan on western cultural history. It has become part of our culture and vocabulary. Just observe myriads of hospitals and institutions of mercy bearing that name.

<sup>71</sup> Steve Moore, *Who is My Neighbor: Being a Good Samaritan in a Connected World* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010), 37.

<sup>72</sup> See Tite Tienou, "The Samaritans: A Biblical-Theological Mirror for Understanding Racial, Ethnic, and Religious Identity?" in *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith*, eds. Robert J. Priest and Alvaro L. Nieves (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 211-22.

<sup>73</sup> Bosch, 90.

<sup>74</sup> A. J. Mattill, Jr., "The Good Samaritan and the Purpose of Luke-Acts: Halevy Reconsidered," *Encounter* 33:4 (1972): 372. All of the references to Samaritans in Luke's Gospel are in the Travel Narrative: the inhospitable Samaritans (9:52), the Good Samaritan (10:3), and the grateful Samaritan (17:11, 16), which shows Jesus' or Luke's great interest in Samaria.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 373. Italics are mine.

<sup>76</sup> Rebuking is a strong word often used in exorcisms or rebuking demons.

<sup>77</sup> Tienou, 214.

<sup>78</sup> Monica Jyotsna Melanchthon, "Marginal Readings: Implications for a Lutheran Hermeneutic and Communion," in [www.lutheranworld.org/What\\_We\\_Do/DTS/DTS-Documents/EN/TLC\\_Augsburg/Papers/Melanchthon.pdf](http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/DTS/DTS-Documents/EN/TLC_Augsburg/Papers/Melanchthon.pdf).

<sup>79</sup> Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 426.

<sup>80</sup> Kosuke Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), 67.

<sup>81</sup> Kosuke Koyama, "Neighbor: The Heartbeat of Christ-talk," *Living Pulpit* 11:3 (2002): 24.

<sup>82</sup> Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*, 65.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>85</sup> Koyama, "Neighbor: The Heartbeat of Christ-talk," 24.

<sup>86</sup> Goheen, 245.

<sup>87</sup> Mark W. Potter, "Solidarity as Spiritual Exercise: Accompanying Migrants at the US/Mexico Border," *Political Theology* 12:6 (2011): 835.

<sup>88</sup> Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 429.

<sup>89</sup> Potter, 835.

<sup>90</sup> Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 430.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 431.

<sup>92</sup> Potter, 835.

<sup>93</sup> Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 432.

<sup>94</sup> Isasi-Diaz, "Liberation Theologies for the Twenty-first Century."

<sup>95</sup> Maureen H. O'Connell, *Compassion: Loving Our Neighbor in an Age of Globalization* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2009), 20.

<sup>96</sup> Potter, 836.

<sup>97</sup> Hee An Choi, "Theology and the Bible," in *Chalice Introduction to Disciples Theology*, Peter Heltzel, ed., (Atlanta: Chalice Press, 2008), 39.

<sup>98</sup> Lalsangkima Pachuau, "Editorial Note: Space in the Margins," *Mission Studies* 24 (2007): 2.

<sup>99</sup> Potter, 836-7.

<sup>100</sup> Jon Sobrino, *Spirituality of Liberation: Toward Political Holiness* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1988), 100.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Joel B. Green, 'Proclaiming Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins to All Nations:' A Biblical Perspective on the Church's Mission, in *The World is My Parish: The Mission of the Church in Methodist Perspective*, ed. A. G. Padgett (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1992), 14.

<sup>103</sup> Kosuke Koyama, "Jesus Christ Who Has Gone to the Utter Periphery," *Ecumenical Review* 43:1 (1991): 100-6.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>106</sup> M. Gnanavaram, "Dalit Theology and the Parable of the Good Samaritan," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 50 (1993): 80-1.

<sup>107</sup> Choi, 40.

<sup>108</sup> Isasi-Diaz.

<sup>109</sup> Desmond Tutu, "Preface," in *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective: Religious Perspectives*, Volume 1, eds. John Witte, Johan D. Van der Vyver (Cambridge, MA: Kluwer Law International, 1996), ix.

<sup>110</sup> Desmond Tutu, *Hope and Suffering: Sermons and Speech* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 178.

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Benjamin D. Espinoza

*“Pia Desideria” Reimagined for Contemporary Theological Education*

**Abstract**

Phillip Spener’s pivotal work, *Pia Desideria* (1675), though written hundreds of years ago, still speaks to today’s Christian contexts, and creative engagement with the text can yield fruit when seeking to form sound ministry and educational practice. The purpose of this article is to creatively engage and re-imagine *Pia Desideria* in such a way that allows Spener’s six proposals for church reform to speak to theological educators today in Christian colleges and seminaries, specifically in the area of pedagogy.

**Keywords:** Theological education, Philip Spener, *Pia Desideria*, spiritual formation, pedagogy

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## Introduction

In 1675, Philip Jakob Spener, a German Lutheran pastor and theologian, authored *Pia Desideria* ("The Piety We Desire"), a pivotal work that initiated the theological and ecclesial movement known as Pietism. When Spener wrote *Pia*, he did so to counter numerous theological and ecclesial issues facing German Lutheranism, including the bifurcation of roles between clergy and laity, a lack of biblical knowledge among church members, the priority of intellectual content in sermons, and a general apathy toward piety. Specifically, Spener offers six proposals for church reform that initiated Pietism and its daughter movements, such as the Moravians, Mennonites, and Methodists (Noll 2001:230-234). *Pia Desideria* still speaks to today's contexts (Heinemann 2004; Estep 2011), and creative engagement with the text can yield fruit when seeking to form sound ministry and educational practice. The purpose of this article is to creatively engage and reimagine *Pia Desideria* in such a way that allows Spener's six proposals for church reform to speak to theological educators today in Christian colleges and seminaries.

## The Role of the Bible in Education and Spiritual Formation

Spener's first proposal to correct conditions in the German Lutheran church is that "Thought should be given to a more extensive use of the Word of God among us" (1964:87). He writes that "To this end, the Word of God is the powerful means, since faith must be enkindled through the gospel, and the law provides the rules for good works and many wonderful impulses to attain them. The more at home the Word of God is among us, the more we shall bring about faith and its fruits" (1964:87). Spener points out that the scriptures preached and recited on Sundays are minimal in the scheme of scripture, and that to truly grow as Christians, we must understand the entire Word of God (1964:88-89). Spener notes, "the people have little opportunity to grasp the meaning of the scriptures except on the basis of those passages which may have been expounded to them, and even less do they have opportunity to become as practiced in them as edification requires" (Spener 1964:88). He then advocates personal scripture readings, one book after the other, and that scripture be read aloud for a greater part of the service so that those who are illiterate or do not have a copy of the scriptures may be able to hear the Word of God (1964:89). Beyond these solutions, however, Spener advocates mutual edification through discussion of the scriptures, known as the *collegia pietatis* (1964:89). Of the *collegia pietatis*, Maschke (1992: 193) writes, "Their formation was intended to serve as an intermediary structure (between public preaching and private reading) for spiritual nurture." A large concern for Spener was the emphasis on a more technical reading of scripture as opposed to a devotional reading. Gangel

and Benson, describing Spener's concern, write, "Too much time . . . was given to the learning of Latin and not enough to Hebrew and Greek so that exegesis of the scriptures could be carried out. In short, there was too much dogma and too little devotion" (1983:173). Spener's clarion call to a more personal, devotional reading of scripture serves as a hallmark of Pietist thought, as Weborg argues that it was Pietism that gave the Bible to the people, not the Reformation (1986:205-206).

Cochran (2012) contends that in theological education today, there exists a tension between "scholarship," the critical study of the biblical text, and "discipleship," the use of biblical texts to form and shape one's spiritual formation. Particularly, Cochran's categories derive from David Kelsey's (1993) examination of the two schools of thought regarding the Bible in theological education: the "Athens" school and the "Berlin" school. The "Athens" school seeks to inculcate within students heart-deep transformation and knowledge of the Good, while the "Berlin" school is concerned with "cultivating the capacity to conduct scientific research" (Cochran 2011:127). Seeking to blend these differing schools of thought, Cochran notes that "At their best, discipleship is enhanced by the fruits of scholarship while providing moorings for scholarship in the praxis of the church in the world" (2011:129).

Based on this desire to integrate scholarship and discipleship in theological education, Cochran helpfully provides some pedagogical axioms which may aid in recovering the spirit of Spener's thoughts regarding the devotional role of the Bible in education. Alongside a critical reading of the Bible, Cochran first proposes that "*students need to taste contemplative approaches to reading Scripture*" (2011:133, italics original). He writes, "Blending scripture reading, contemplation, and dialogue with others in some mix has proven consistently to nurture the souls and shape the identities of participants" (Cochran 2011:133). Second, Cochran proposes that "*students need to appropriate the truths of scripture on their lived experience in light of scripture*" (2011:134, italics original). In order to accomplish this task in theological education, Cochran briefly argues that Groome's (1991) Shared Praxis Approach to Christian teaching would be an effective pedagogical measure. Cochran rightly summarizes Groome's thought by noting that "Shared Christian Praxis begins with inviting students to name and evaluate their present praxis, then leads them to place their own story on conversation with God's Story," the Bible (2011:135). By integrating these approaches to engaging the Bible in theological education, theological educators can allow ministerial students to study scripture on a devotional level as well as an academic one, much in the spirit of Spener.

### Embracing Transformational Pedagogy

Spener's second proposal for ecclesial reform is "the establishment and diligent exercise of the spiritual priesthood" (1964: 92). Spener grounds this proposal in the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 5:10). Spener's primary concern is the bifurcation between clergy and laity, perpetuated by the Roman Catholic Church and unraveled by Martin Luther, Spener's theological inspiration (Spener 1964:92, 93). Spener writes that "Every Christian is bound not only to himself and what he has, his prayer, thanksgiving, good works, alms, etc.," and placing a primary emphasis on both individual and communal readings of scripture (1964:94). Practically, the work of ministry can be performed not solely by the vocational minister, but all Christians. In Spener's time, the promise of a visible spiritual priesthood was the true sign of reform (Spener 1964: 95). As McCallum notes, "Spener's ecclesiology had to do with the emancipation of the laity to do real ministry in the church" (1987:11).

While evangelicals typically excel in lay-driven church leadership, in some circles there exists a chasm between the theological educator and the theological student. At times, theological educators can fall prey to the traditional mode of education known as "banking," where "the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat," and the only "scope of action allowed to students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" (Freire 2000:58). In "banking" education, "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (Freire 2000:60). Practically speaking, educators who primarily lecture with little attention to the questions or concerns of students are participating in the practice of "banking." Results of "banking" education include the equation of objective fact memorization with genuine internalization, the lack of engagement of ideas on the part of the learner, and the continued bifurcation between teacher and learner. None of these are desirable for the theological educator, as they diminish the importance of dialogue in the educational process and can lead to an incomplete education for ministerial students.

Jarvis (2005: 14) writes that "Education is fundamentally about individuals who learn, grow, and develop and not about merely transmitting knowledge. Learning is life-long, life-wise, and it plumbs the depth of human existence-in-the-world. We are always both being-in-the-world and becoming, developing, growing, and maturing." Theological educators would do well to revise their pedagogical approaches so they more reflect a spirit of equality and mutual learning, such as the approaches of andragogy and transformative learning theories (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson 2011; Mezirow 1991, 2001). Jack Mezirow, whose name is

most synonymous with transformative learning theory, writes that the role of an educator is to foster within students the capacity to acquire “skills, sensitivities, and understandings essential to become critically reflective of assumptions and to participate more fully and freely in critical-dialectical dialogue” (2003::62). Analyzing transformative learning theory in Christian perspective, Rhonda McEwan (2013:347) writes that “transformative learning provides more than just an effective educational methodology. It is an intentional effort at reframing our minds, hearts, and actions so that they are in closer alignment with the ethical principles and practices of God’s kingdom.” A transformational approach to theological education allows for creative engagement of students’ thoughts and emotions which enables them to more substantially integrate theological knowledge for the purpose of future use in ministerial practice. It minimizes the philosophical and theological chasm between teachers and students, pastors and laypeople, as Spener sought to solve.

### **The Use of Christian Practices in the Classroom**

Spener notes in his third proposal that “the people must have impressed upon them and must accustom themselves to believe that *it is by no means enough to have knowledge of the Christian faith, for Christianity consists rather of practice*” (emphasis original, 1964:95). The specific practice Spener has in mind here is the practice of love. “If we can therefore awaken a fervent love among our Christians, first toward one another and then toward all men...and put this into practice, practically all that we desire will be accomplished. For all the commandments are summed up in love (Rom. 13:9)” (Spener 1964:96). For Spener, the heart must be examined in order to correct one’s motivation for participating in certain practices. Christians “must become accustomed not to lose sight of any opportunity in which they can render their neighbor a service of love, and yet while performing it they must diligently search their hearts to discover whether they are acting in true love or out of other motives” (Spener 1964: 97). Spener recommends that Christians invite a “confessor or some other judicious and enlightened Christian” into their lives in order to provide accountability in the Christian walk (Spener 1964: 97). For Spener, those theological educators who view their profession as simply the transmission of religious facts or pastoral skills practice a disservice to their ministerial students. Educating students in theological knowledge is a worthy and needed effort, however, excluding a healthy emphasis on practice and spiritual direction or mentoring diminishes the impact of a theological education.

In answering Spener’s critique, the use of Christian practices in the theological classroom can provide potentially transformative learning experiences for students, and can orient them toward regular engagement in ministry during

their studies. Christian practices are "*the things Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs, in response to and in the light of God's active presence for the life of the world*" (Bass and Dykstra 2002:18, italics original). Dykstra writes "The church, as community in the power of the Spirit, has over the course of its history learned to depend on the efficacy of certain central practices and disciplines in nurturing faith and growth in the life of faith" (2005: 41). Practices create meaning, orient our hearts toward the things of God, and are attentive to the needs of the world. Examples of Christian practices include hospitality, keeping Sabbath, healing, doing justice, singing, and peacemaking, among others (Bass 2010; Bass & Briehl 2010; Foster 2002; Norris 2012; Volf and Bass 2001).

While the use of Christian practices has traditionally been confined to the walls of the church and the duties of ministry, theological educators are starting to recognize their potential in providing formative and distinctly Christian pedagogical experiences. In *Teaching and Christian Practices: Reshaping Faith and Learning* (Smith and Smith 2011), several professors infuse Christian practices into their coursework, demonstrating the power of Christian practices in not only educating students in theological knowledge, but forming them in the practices that shape their hearts. Smith and Smith's main concern is that scholarship related to the integration of faith and learning in Christian higher education (Marsden 1997; Noll 1994) has essentially neglected to critically engage the idea of a distinctively Christian pedagogy (Smith and Smith 2011:2-3). Thus, what is needed in Christian higher education is an integration of faith and pedagogy, an integration that Smith and Smith propose can be achieved through the use of Christian practices. Carolyne Call sought to implement practices of hospitality, fellowship, and testimony into her course on adolescent psychology (Smith and Smith 2011:61-79). Though it was a challenge to integrate these practices into her course, Call writes that this integration achieved pedagogical success in the areas of shared fellowship, individual testimony, and personal hospitality for both her and her students (Smith & Smith 2011:72-29). James K.A. Smith integrated practices of the church calendar and midday prayer into his course on social sciences' philosophical foundations. Allowing the liturgical calendar to dictate his coursework and beginning each class with a pre-written prayer gave him and his students a great appreciation for living by the rhythms of the church universal and engaging in a more formal life of prayer (Smith and Smith 2011:151). Using Christian Practices in the theological classroom can yield the benefit of producing students who are not only engaged in intellectual pursuits, but are also concerned with living *into* and living *out* the ideas put forth in class. Smith (2009) goes as far as to suggest that "we are what we love," and the use of Christian practices can enable people to grow in the life of faith in a way that goes

deeper than intellectual ascent through the orientation of our affections and drive toward the *telos* of godliness.

### Conviction, Love, and Theological Debate

For his fourth proposal, Spener exhorts Christian leaders to engage in theological debate with charity while affirming core theological convictions. “*We must be aware how we conduct ourselves in religious controversies* with unbelievers and heretics. We must first take pains to strengthen and confirm ourselves, our friends, and other fellow believers in the known truth and protect them with great care from every kind of seduction. Then we must remind ourselves of our duty toward the erring” (Spener 1964:97, italics original). Heinemann aptly summarizes Spener’s corollary subproposals underneath this overarching proposal:

- (a) We should pray that God would enlighten the erring;
- (b) we should take pains not to offend our opponents;
- (c) we should modestly but firmly present the truth based on the Word of God
- (d) we should practice heartfelt love toward those with whom we dispute, even toward heretics and unbelievers, and
- (e) we should realize that only the holy love of God can take us beyond disputation to Christian unity. (2004:107)

Spener thus carefully crafts an approach to theological debate with aim toward demonstrating the charity of God to those who engage in such disputations. Note that Spener’s proposed approach to theological debate is devoid of an emphasis on the objective nature of the Christian faith. Instead, Spener encourages prayer, sensitivity, a modest yet firm grasp on Christian truth, heartfelt love toward those with whom we disagree, and the recognition that only God’s love can drive us toward unity. Deeter comments on Spener’s deeper thinking on this proposal, noting

“Spener seems to be confident that, once there was a genuine renewal of true Christian life and faith within each communion, there would then be discovered deeper grounds for confessional unity whereby the truths of the teachings of the whole Christian Church would encompass the truths of each particular communion without sacrificing any essentials. For as Spener wrote on one occasion, it means far more to be a Christian than to be a Lutheran or Calvinist” (1963:62).

With cultural lucidity, Heinemann writes, “In today’s culture wars and internecine Christian controversies, Spener’s counsel is sorely needed. The mishandling of conflict by Christians continues to damage their public witness” (2004:107). It is indeed a concern that theological educators can engage in rather

fruitless intellectual debates that do little other than to reinforce stereotypes and further entrench people in their particular modes of thinking. Dockery laments that "Often our opportunities to influence [the academy at large] are hampered less by our lack of rigorous thinking or coherent worldview proposals than by the bickering, distrust, and dissensions in the broader Christian community" (2008:104). Instead, Dockery adds, we need to "call for Christian academic communities to be agents of reconciliation both in a broken world and for a hurting church evidencing a unity of mind, spirit, and purpose" (2008:104). Dockery contends that Christians can engage in hearty debate over secondary theological issues (the age of the earth, soteriological issues, eschatology, gender roles, etc.) as long as they do not impinge on historic orthodoxy founded on the basis of the revelation of Jesus Christ and the Bible (2008:104-106). Theological debates between Christian scholars can be fruitful ventures, as they could potentially contribute to both broader academic knowledge and ecclesial reform.

However, while scholars such as Dockery appeal to shared core convictions about the nature of special revelation to support interdenominational dialogue, what about the issue of *interreligious* dialogue, where no shared conviction on revelation exists? In order to achieve fruitful dialogue between Christians and other religious adherents, Terry Muck posits a helpful missional theology of dialogue that resonates with Spener's concerns and can guide theological educators as they engage with other people of faith. First, a missional dialogue "is based on an orthodox recognition of God's revelation to all" (Muck 2011:191). Muck roots this proposal in the notion of *common grace*, specifically noting its effects. "All non-Christians we talk to have already seen or been impacted by God's presence, even though they may not recognize it as such" (2011:191). For Muck, common grace enables us to experience "mutual learning that takes place when those whom God has created, whether Christian or not, share with each other about the *logos spermatikos*, the *sensus divinitatis*, the many evidences of God's glory and how they are affecting our lives" (2011:191). Second, a missional theology of dialogue "must fully embrace Christian humility" (Muck, 2011:191). "Dialogue is based on a recognition that we do not know everything, and have much to learn" (Muck 2011:191). Muck grounds Christian humility in critical realism, holding in tension the fact that while absolute truth does exist, we as humans are incapable of knowing it perfectly (2011:192). Third, a missional theology of dialogue "must be grounded in a love of neighbor" (Muck 2011:192). "Dialogue cannot take place in a climate of hostility but only in a climate of love. Participants in interreligious dialogue may want to know and understand the other for various reasons, but those reasons must be seasoned with love," Muck acknowledges (2011:192). For Muck, it is

“unchristian” to engage in scholarly debates and inquiries without love (2011:192). Fourth and finally, a missional theology of dialogue “makes known to all involved our commitment to Christian witness” (Muck 2011:192). While noting that the Christian faith is exclusive, Muck writes that “Meaningful dialogue takes place among people who are crystal clear about their strongly held convictions, whatever they are, not among people who claim some sort of preternatural openness to everything” (2011:192). Theological educators will do well to engage in theological debate that carries with it a fine balance between conviction regarding the exclusive claims of the Christian faith and a genuine love for all humanity. This not only encourages a healthy witness toward postmodern society, but also demonstrates humility and holiness to ministerial students.

### **The Model of The Theological Educator**

Spener’s fifth proposal is especially pertinent to our discussion in this essay. In his fifth proposal, Spener argues for a theological education that continuously spurs ministerial students on to holiness of heart and godly character. He writes that theological institutions should be “recognized from the outward life of the students to be nurseries of the church for all estates and as workshops of the Holy Spirit rather than places of worldliness and indeed of the devils of ambition, tipping, carousing, and brawling” (Spener, 1964:103). He especially exhorts theological professors to “conduct themselves as men who have died unto the world,” and in everything, “seek not their own glory, gain, or pleasure but rather the glory of their God and the salvation of those entrusted to them, and would accommodate all their studies, writings of books, lessons, lectures, disputations, and other activities to this end” (Spener 1964:104). Thus, for Spener, the character formation of future clergy greatly depended upon the model set forth by their professors, and that the *telos* of a theological education should be development of pious intellectual leaders as opposed to spiritually apathetic intellectuals. Spener further argues that students of theology “should unceasingly have it impressed upon them that holy life is not of less consequence than diligence and study, indeed that study without piety is worthless” (1964:104).

Setran et al. share a similar sentiment to Spener, lamenting that

Faculty members frequently view themselves as objective disseminators of factual information, communicating data dispassionately so as to retain an appropriate scholarly distance. Value-laden Christian practices and soul formation are thought to take place in other settings, such as chapel,

discipleship small groups, dormitory discussions, and specialized programs implemented by student development professionals. As Christians, faculty members often desire to play a role in student spiritual growth. Yet they often believe that such influence should be placed in co-curricular settings or in one-on-one mentoring conversations. (2010:404)

Spener's exhortations ring as equally true in twenty-first century theological education as they did in the seventeenth. In theory, we may prize the attainment of a life of godliness as the *telos* of a richly formative theological education, but in practice, it is tough to remove ourselves from rational indicators of success such as grades, extracurricular accomplishments, and intellectual potential. While the realities of assessment, accreditation, and curriculum controls mandate the use of these external markers of success, theological educators are nonetheless tasked with modeling the pursuit of learning and holiness to their students, impressing upon them the need for thoughtful, pious living. Thus, the role that the character of theological educators plays in the intellectual and spiritual formation of students cannot be understated. As Carroll et al. write,

Faculty members are powerful agents in the educational process, not functionaries. Their roles are complex and multifaceted: their ingrained patterns of speech and movement, long-established attitudes toward others and feelings about themselves, and deeply rooted convictions and commitments have at least as much to do with what students take away from the school as any syllabuses and lecture notes. (1997: 273-274)

David Dockery exhorts theological educators to model for their students not only a healthy intellectual curiosity, but a propensity toward ethical works as well. Noting the classic adage, "What hath Athens to do with Jerusalem?" Dockery writes,

Rather, we should recognize the Augustinian tension and seek to live in both Jerusalem and Athens as a Christian academic community representing Christ *to* and *in* the world. Living in this tension means that we need to recognize that we not only need serious Christian thinking, but we need to encourage modeling of service in the world. If we want to be a grace-filled community, we must model grace. If we want to produce love, we model love. If we want to emphasize justice, we must model justice. (2008:111)

Thus the theological educator is tasked with being the embodiment of Christian virtue to the impressionable theological student. Simply put, one of the strongest, most effective forms of transformational pedagogy is simply to be a holy exemplar to one's students. In doing so, theological educators earn the right to claim as the apostle Paul claimed, "And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1, ESV).

### **Educating Practical Theologians**

Spener writes,

In addition to these exercises [the first five proposals], which are intended to develop the Christian life of the students, it would also be useful if the teachers made provision for practice in those things with which the students will have to deal when they are in the ministry. For example, there should be practice at times in instructing the ignorant, in comforting the sick, and especially in preaching, where it should be pointed out to students that everything in their sermons should have edification as the goal. I therefore add this as a sixth proposal whereby the Christian church may be helped to a better condition: that *sermons* be so prepared by all that their purpose (faith and its fruits) may be achieved in the hearers to the greatest possible degree. (Spener 1964:115)

Against the cold intellectual Lutheranism of his day, Spener makes a passionate plea that the ministry of preaching become a more *practical* exercise. While he does note that there is no lack of sermons preached in his day (Spener 1964:115), the church people found many sermons to be wanting. Pastors in that era were more concerned with providing an intellectual exercise that was theologically coherent and methodically flawless, but were less concerned that the content of their sermons were "developed in such a way that the hearers may profit from the sermon in life and death" (Spener 1964:115). He continues by noting, "The pulpit is not the place for an ostentatious display of one's skill. It is rather the place to preach the Word of the Lord plainly but powerfully. Preaching should be the divine means to save the people, and so it is proper that everything be directed to this end" (1964: 116).

While the ministry of preaching should be a careful exercise in thorough exegesis and theological reflection, the crafting of sermons needs to speak into the lives of everyday people. While Spener narrowly engages the topic of homiletics, the implications for all sorts of ministry practices are apparent. Is it our primary goal to train students in the diligent reading of theological texts and methodological

carefulness, or do we acknowledge the need for these practices while gearing students toward listening to the deep needs of those in their congregations?

Practical theologian Bonnie Miller-McLemore, writing of the business of a practical theologian in the collegiate classroom, notes,

She must first introduce students to the curriculum as a whole and to the wider goal of maturation in the practice of ministry and then, because they leave, test their capacity for academic, ministerial, and vocational integrity, ensuring they have learned something transportable for their ministry. She cannot ignore what students will do after graduation with the texts they study, the papers they write, and the class lectures they hear. Inescapably she must keep an eye on the wise horizon of Christian practice. (2008: 174)

It is not enough to teach the skills of exegesis and theological interpretation; rather, the imparting of these skills to future ministers must be paired with an eye toward the practical.

This is where the discipline of practical theology can assist theological educators in inculcating within their students the skills of listening to the lives of those within their congregations. Ray Anderson, the late professor of practical theology at Fuller Seminary, writes that "Practical theology, as critical and constructive reflection on ecclesial praxis, is the process of ongoing critical reflection on the acts of the church in the light of the gospel and in critical dialogue with secular sources of knowledge with a view to the faithful transformation of the praxis of the church in the world" (2001:59). In a manner similar to Anderson, Duncan Forrester writes,

The practical theologian is concerned with the practice of God, with discerning what God is doing in the world; with human behaviour considered theologically; with the being and activity of the church; with the practice of Christians; and finally with what for too long virtually monopolized the interest of practical theologians, ministerial practice, the activities of the ordained ministry and other ecclesiastical functionaries. (1999:22)

In essence, what these two definitions boil down to is that practical theology is a discipline concerned with how theology interprets and shapes ministry contexts. While some may view practical theology as a discipline devoid of theological reflection, the core of practical theology is theological reflection on current ministry contexts with an aim toward the transformation of those contexts.

Princeton Seminary scholar Richard Osmer (2001:xv-xvi; 2008:4) has put forth a model of practical theological interpretation which helps congregational leaders bridge the gap between theory and practice and aids in the skills of everyday ministry. In his model, there are four distinct tasks, which overlap and complement the others:

1. The Descriptive-Empirical Task
2. The Interpretative Task
3. The Normative Task
4. The Pragmatic Task

In the descriptive empirical task, the congregational leader asks “what is going on” in the congregation? (Osmer 2008:4). This entails understanding the current ministry context and taking into account all the factors therein. In the interpretative task, the leader asks “why is this going on?” (Osmer, 2008:4). In this task, the leader analyzes the underpinnings of the situation, seeking to gain a stronger perspective of the foundational issues that have caused the congregation’s present action. In the normative task, the congregational leader asks, “what ought to be going on?” (Osmer 2008:4). This task inquires scripture, theology, and church history in order to establish a correct way of being and thinking for the congregation. The pragmatic task asked the question, “How might we respond?” (Osmer 2008:4). This is where theological reflection infiltrates the ministry context through transforming leadership, best practices, and congregational commitments.

Briefly teaching this model of practical theology to ministerial students would have several benefits. First, ministry students would have a viable model for implementing many of the biblical and theological resources they have learned in seminary, such as biblical exegesis and theology. Whereas many students are left with learning the art of ministry “on the job,” this model provides them with a proper methodology for practicing ministry that is theologically faithful and contextually relevant. Second, ministry students would understand the need for becoming enmeshed with their current congregational and cultural context. How can a student, fresh out of an M.Div. or M.A. program, minister effectively in a new congregation when s/he is unaware of the congregation’s context? Third, teaching practical theology is a means of bridging the gap between the church and the academy, a focal aim of many professors in Christian higher education. When students leave seminary, their professors will most likely never hear from them again. However, to bridge the gap between church and academy, ministers must keep one eye on the latest theological trends coming out of the academy, and one on the direction and needs of the congregation. Theological educators thus will do

well in teaching Osmer’s model of practical theology to ministerial students who seek the transformation of the contexts in which they will minister.

## Conclusion

To conclude in the spirit of Spener, I offer six proposals for pedagogical reform in theological education:

1. The Bible must maintain a central place in the theological classroom, not simply as an academic text to be studied, but as sacred Scripture to be engaged and internalized—regardless of the discipline being taught.
2. Professors refrain from the use of “banking” education—those forms of education that assume the teacher is the dispenser of knowledge and the student an empty receptacle for knowledge to be stored. Instead, theological professors must utilize pedagogical methods that equalize teacher and student, and creatively engage all dimensions of students’ lives.
3. Christian practices become a major component in the theological classroom, seeking to form students in Christian character and virtue, and orienting them toward the *telos* of godliness.
4. Theological educators engage in interdenominational and interreligious dialogue with conviction cradled with love and openness to new perspectives with scholarly humility.
5. Theological educators are models of holiness and virtue to their students, thereby broadening their role as more than simply a teacher, but as an exemplar of the godly life.
6. Theological educators bear the responsibility of educating their students to become practical theologians—ministers who allow theological realities to shape cultural contexts.

Spener’s six proposals as outlined in *Pia Desideria* are timeless. The renewal of biblical reading, attention to the devotional life of ministerial students, and the preaching of relevant sermons are all exhortations which each new generation of Christian leaders desperately need to hear. While this essay is tailored toward those teaching in higher education settings, the church universal could benefit from greater attention to the proposals found in *Pia Desideria*. As theological educators, we have much work to do in reforming the current state of theological education, but by allowing historical works such as this to shape our life and practice, we are well on our way

to becoming teachers who prize rich engagement with the biblical text, Christian practices, character formation, and the training of practical theologians.

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J. Derrick Lemons

*Communitas at the Tables: Jesus, the Marginalized, and the Modern Church*

**Abstract**

The field of the anthropology of religion would be incomplete without the theory of *communitas*, developed by Victor Turner (1920-1983). This paper outlines the liberating *communitas* experience of table fellowship utilized by Jesus to include sinners, outcasts, and the marginalized in the Kingdom of God. In particular, Jesus' invitation of *communitas* at Jewish cultic meals is explained in order to recapture the original understanding of the Abrahamic covenant to be a blessing to the margins of society. The paper concludes by calling Christians to invite the marginalized to the gathered table at church and the dispersed table at home.

**Keywords:** *communitas*, table fellowship, kingdom of God, liberation, Victor Turner

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## Introduction

The Church gathers every Sunday, the day of resurrection and of Pentecost, to renew its participation in Christ's priesthood. But the exercise of this priesthood is not within the walls of the Church but in the daily business of the world.

—Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*<sup>1</sup>

While researching Ndembu rituals, Victor Turner utilized the theory of *Rites de Passage* developed by Arnold van Gennep. *Rites de Passage* describes the three phases of all rites of passage, including separation, *limen*, and reaggregation.<sup>2</sup> A social puberty rite of some African males illustrates the three phases of *Rites de Passage*. A group of boys around the age of 13 is kidnapped and circumcised, beginning their separation from their status as children. These boys are placed in the bush to care for themselves for up to six months during the *limen* phase in which they are given minimal guidance and expected to prove they deserve to be reaggregated back into the tribe as men.<sup>3</sup> Turner was particularly interested in the liminal stage, which represents people who are “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony.”<sup>4</sup> In an effort to capture the essence of intense communal solidarity celebrated as a group of “threshold people” within the liminal phase, Turner coined the term *communitas*.<sup>5</sup> Within *communitas* individual status and goals give way to a shared common interest. This anti-structure of *communitas* has been utilized to understand the religious experience of the marginalized and poor across space and time. *Communitas* generates a leveling of status where participants lose who they were and wonder who they will become.<sup>6</sup> This paper connects V. Turner's understanding of *communitas* with Jesus' definition and examples of who should be included in the kingdom of God. Specifically, the liberating experience of table fellowship utilized by Jesus is used to remind the church that the marginalized and poor are to be included at the tables—both gathered and dispersed—of Christian *communitas*.

## Communitas: A Community of Sojourners

V. Turner astutely observed that Christian identity is linked with liminality. He writes, “The Christian is a stranger to the world, a pilgrim, a traveler, with no place to rest his head.”<sup>7</sup> *Communitas* results as Christians share their pilgrimage with others. For example, Benedictine monks experience *communitas* as they share with each other the experience of devoting themselves to God and each other through sacrifice, prayer, and work.<sup>8</sup> Liminality and the resulting *communitas* is the normative

situation of Christians across time and space, and reaggregation ultimately will happen when God's kingdom is fully realized with the second coming of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

Gordon D. Fee, a renowned New Testament scholar, was once asked by one of his students, "If you were to return to the pastoral ministry, what would you do [meaning, How would you go about it? What would you emphasize]?"<sup>10</sup> Fee explained that he would emphasize the true liminal status of the church as living between the now of Christ's resurrection and the not yet of his return.<sup>11</sup> This liminal eschatological framework depicts a church on the move not a church that has arrived, a church of the redeemable not just the redeemed, a church measured by its impact on the community not just the number of people in the pews, and a church that celebrates the priesthood of all believers not just the priesthood of the ordained. Ultimately, a church that understands its liminal status consists of Christian sojourners who gather to celebrate *communitas* and disperse to invite others to join their Christian liminality.

### **A Reconsideration of Being Blessed**

Jesus assumed his Jewish hearers understood the expectation to share God's blessing outside of the Jewish community, so it is necessary to turn to the Torah to uncover Jesus' central assumption about who was entitled to the blessings of God.<sup>12</sup> Genesis 12:2 says, "And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; *And so you shall be a blessing* [italics mine]."<sup>13</sup> This passage reveals an expectation that Jews, and by implication early Christians who were Jewish, should engage and bless others.<sup>14</sup> While many Jews understood God's covenant as a funnel leading only to their blessing, Jesus recaptured the original meaning of the Abrahamic covenant—the Israelites were blessed so they can bless others. Two of the foundational characteristics of *communitas* are an intentional redistribution of power and a reconsideration of who are the powerful.<sup>15</sup> Jesus revealed his understanding of power and status within the kingdom of God by proclaiming, "Thus the last shall be first, and the first last."<sup>16</sup> We can think of Jesus' kingdom-of-God message as a *communitas* message because he reached out to and empowered marginalized people within the Jewish community.<sup>17</sup>

Jesus consistently challenged the "attitudes, practices and structures that tended arbitrarily to restrict or exclude" the marginalized in the community.<sup>18</sup> The law was the Pharisees' marker of righteousness and holiness, and a person's failure to adhere to the law was reason to exclude him or her from community. For this reason, it is helpful to use the history of the law and Jesus' interaction with the law as a lens through which to examine the way Jesus worked to define Christianity as a place for the marginalized of his day—sinners and outcasts—and thus as *communitas*.

In the Old Testament, the law was never meant to produce legalism; it was merely intended to be the means by which people came into right relationship with God. Its essence was a covenant between the people and God. Therefore, the law was not meant as a wall between God and his people. The law was meant to provide a more holistic relationship between God and the society in general.

The law originated when God chose to make Israel a special people. The law created a way for Israel to be bound to God. George Eldon Ladd quotes Kleinknecht to point out, "The object of the law is to settle the relationship of the covenant-nation and of the individual to the God of the covenant and to the members of the nation who belong to the same covenant."<sup>19</sup> Obedience to the law meant that the covenant was kept between Yahweh and Israel. Individuals were to maintain a true love for God and for neighbor, which leaves no place for legalism and separatism.<sup>20</sup>

A fundamental change regarding the attitude toward the law occurred in the inter-testamental period. For the Pharisees, external obedience to the law became the condition of membership in the kingdom of God. If one was obedient to the law, they would be resurrected. Covenant became less important, and the law became the way in which Jews perceived that God judged an individual. Obeying the letter of the law became the way to find justification, salvation, righteousness, and life.<sup>21</sup> In addition, during this time, the belief arose that obedience to the law would transform the world and bring about God's kingdom. Ladd states, "The Torah becomes the one and only mediator between God and humanity; all other relationships between God and humanity, Israel, or the world are subordinated to the Torah."<sup>22</sup> Observance of the external law overcame the idea that a person's heart and relationships with others must be included in the equation.

Jesus began his ministry at a time when the latter attitude of the law prevailed. The synoptic Gospels draw a picture of Jesus' attitude toward Pharisaic Judaism. Generally, Jesus conformed to the religious practice of Judaism. For example, Jesus was seen in the temple, and he contributed to a temple tax, a deed that would have been important to the majority of the Jews. Furthermore, Jesus participated in religious festivals such as Passover. Another Jewish custom Jesus followed was wearing a garment hem fitted with tassels in conformity to the Mosaic precept.<sup>23</sup> These examples illustrate that Jesus not only was Jewish but also participated in many Jewish religious rituals and customs.

However, Jesus concerned himself more with ministering to sinners and outcasts than with keeping Jewish rituals and customs.<sup>24</sup> Even though Jesus regularly visited synagogues, each of his recorded visits included healing and teaching, which indicates that Jesus went because of the opportunities for ministry, not just to be

a faithful attender. Both Jesus and the Pharisees were concerned about the Jewish people; however, they had very different ideas about how the Jews were to be renewed and redeemed.<sup>25</sup> Ben Witherington writes, “The Pharisees seem to have wanted all of Israel to become like Levitical priests, keeping all the purity laws, both ritual and moral.”<sup>26</sup> Jesus, on the other hand, taught that the Jews would be redeemed through him.

Jesus preached about forgiveness that did not require legalistic reformation. For this reason, he was considered a friend of sinners. As E. P. Sanders summarizes, “Jesus said, God forgives you, and now you should repent and mend your ways; everyone else said, God forgives you if you will repent and mend your ways.”<sup>27</sup> This understanding of forgiveness collided with Pharisaic Judaism, which, like many modern churches, offered forgiveness only to those who earned it. Jesus invited people into the kingdom of God in the midst of their sins without requiring them to repent. He objected only when they remained in their sins. The offensiveness of Jesus’ message to the Pharisees was that the wicked were included in the kingdom even if they did not repent, seek restitution, sacrifice, and turn to obedience to the law. Their repentance was not necessary for Jesus to associate with them and offer them companionship. Jesus’ statements that included tax collectors and prostitutes in the kingdom ahead of the righteous only made matters worse. Jesus’ sinfulness in the eyes of the Pharisees came when he made statements that implied he knew who God would and would not include in the kingdom, which would have made the normal path of righteousness look foolish.<sup>28</sup>

Although modern Christian religious rules may not resemble pharisaical rules, the church struggles with reducing salvation to a list of rules—much as the Pharisees did.<sup>29</sup> The harm of the rules is similar in that they focus attention away from God and create significant barriers to the marginalized in society. V. Turner emphasizes that within *communitas* rules are suspended.<sup>30</sup> Christianity is *communitas* in that Jesus included sinners and outcasts by suspending the rules of Pharisaic Judaism. Jesus taught that those who are blessed are compelled to be active in including the marginalized in the blessing, that the law is no longer used to determine who is allowed in the kingdom, and that the common experience of submission to Christ binds all Christians together.

### **Table Fellowship with Jesus**

Edith Turner, a renowned anthropologist and widow of V. Turner, suggests that *communitas* contains within it a hope for the “way things should be.”<sup>31</sup> Jesus’ example of table fellowship points the church toward a corrective pattern of including the marginalized and poor in God’s blessing. In order to gain more

understanding about how Jesus experienced *communitas*, Jesus' interaction with the marginalized in society should be examined, especially his openness to table fellowship with them.

Jesus purposefully engaged with the marginalized in Jewish society within the context of a meal and brought the saving good news to them. Jesus' message of salvation to sinners was distinctive to his kingdom teachings.<sup>32</sup> Mark 2:15-17 reads,

And it came about that He was reclining *at the table* in his house, and many tax-gatherers and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. And when the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax-gatherers, they *began* [original emphasis] saying to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and sinners?" And hearing this, Jesus said to them, "*it is* not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.

In contrast, the Pharisees were averse to engaging with sinners and outcasts, appealing to passages such as 2 Esdras 8:38-39, which says,

For indeed I will not concern myself about the fashioning of those who have sinned, or about their death, their judgment, or their destruction; but I will rejoice over the creation of the righteous, over their pilgrimage also, and their salvation, and their receiving their reward.<sup>33</sup>

The Pharisees clearly defined and ritually enforced barriers between themselves and others. Jesus disbanded these barriers and invited everyone to partake in the *communitas* of God's mercy and love.<sup>34</sup>

Among the synoptic gospels, the gospel of Luke provides the most extensive discussion of table fellowship. Whether Jesus was being anointed by a sinful woman at a meal, allowing a woman to sit in a place of honor during a meal while she ignored her traditional role, attending a banquet held in his honor by a despised tax collector, receiving sinners, or appearing to his disciples at a meal after his ascension, he used the *communitas* experience around a meal to redefine who was included within the kingdom of God.<sup>35</sup>

While at a meal, Jesus told a parable that emphasized the leveling of status. He concluded the parable by saying, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."<sup>36</sup> Furthermore at the same meal, he went on to explain the way things should be by explicitly stating: "But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you

will be blessed...<sup>37</sup> Jesus used the context of a meal purposefully to encourage the invited guests to consider the uninvited guests and redistribute God's blessing to the fringes of society within *communitas*.

The preceding examples from Mark and Luke reveal Jesus' willingness to experience table fellowship with sinners and outcasts, and the significance of table fellowship to Jews should not be underestimated. Robert Banks explains that table fellowship in the Old Testament bound men to each other socially and also bound them to God.<sup>38</sup> For example, cultic meals such as the *chaburah* were a means of partaking of the actual power of God and sharing communion with him. Men participating in a cultic meal became brothers with each other and with Yahweh. The table-fellowship meals of Jesus were distinctive in that they were open to the women and the morally and ritually impure.<sup>39</sup> This deed was particularly offensive to the Pharisees who would have seen table fellowship with sinners as a danger to the survival of Judaism.<sup>40</sup>

The Pharisees viewed table fellowship as an intimate experience.<sup>41</sup> They took these meals so seriously that they would not eat either with Gentiles or even many other Jews. Furthermore, the Pharisees believed that Jesus' eating with impure Jews indicated that sinners are included in the kingdom.<sup>42</sup> Jesus, by sharing table fellowship with sinners, demonstrated the Father's acceptance and graciousness toward the marginalized.<sup>43</sup> Several parables compare the kingdom with a banquet to which even sinners are called.<sup>44</sup> For Jews, the feasting Jesus experienced with sinners served as a metaphor of eschatological salvation.<sup>45</sup>

Through table fellowship, Jesus fulfilled his mission of gathering the marginalized to himself.<sup>46</sup> Through Jesus' actions, "God is seeking out sinners; he is inviting them to enter into the messianic blessing; he is demanding of them a favorable response to his gracious offer."<sup>47</sup> Although Jesus' company was unbelievable to the Jews, his outreach to the sinners of the world was an example of participating in and dispensing God's blessing. Jesus was primarily concerned not with maintaining pharisaical boundaries but with offering healing to all who needed it. In choosing to reach out to marginal people in Jewish society, Jesus informed his disciples to be people who bless by inclusion. Moreover, Jesus' legacy of *communitas* with sinners and outcasts means that Christianity is to liberate the marginalized across the world.

### **The Gathered and Dispersed Tables of Fellowship**

In modern times, Jesus' example of providing *communitas* around a meal serves as an important reminder to churches and their members: They are to offer table fellowship to the marginalized. The gathered and the dispersed tables

hold significance for Christians, and our fellowship at these tables provides an opportunity to invite others to *communitas*. The gathered table is the one experienced at the Lord's Table during a service of worship. Christians have long debated who belongs at the Lord's Table. In the Invitation of The United Methodist Church's Service of Word and Table, the ritual proclaims, "Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him, who earnestly repent of their sin and seek to live in peace with one another."<sup>48</sup> Within the Wesleyan theological tradition, John Wesley's phrase "converting ordinance" provides fuel for arguments over how open the Lord's Table should be.<sup>49</sup> On the most basic level, Christians use baptism as the invitation to the Lord's Table.

While arguments over the necessity of baptism to receive communion abound, the racial-ethnic and socioeconomic divisions around the Lord's Table need more serious consideration. Sociological research confirms that churches in America lack diversity. Social network analysis reveals that racial-ethnic lines and social class largely determine who gathers together at the Lord's Table.<sup>50</sup> Of course, Jesus' example of table fellowship suggests these ethnic and economic divides are problematic. Mathias Zahniser suggests that the first Christian communities used Christ as an example and focal point in the communion ritual to create a leveling of society where all participants found equality with each other.<sup>51</sup> At the heart of Christian *communitas* is a leveling of status in which the participants are so caught up in the common cause participating in the kingdom of God that ethnic and economic divides are overlooked. Lesslie Newbigin reminds Christians that worship necessarily involves inclusion of the marginalized and poor: "In Christian worship we acknowledge that if we had received justice instead of charity we would be on our way to perdition. A Christian congregation is thus a body of people with gratitude to spare, a gratitude that can spill over into care for the neighbor."<sup>52</sup>

Zahniser argues that a communion ritual which includes the marginalized helps "believers bring life into harmony with faith."<sup>53</sup> A grateful heart celebrates the leveling of status in *communitas* at the table because at the table of Jesus only he is in a place of honor. Furthermore, if Christ is honored at the Lord's Table, all who come after Jesus are welcome, regardless of status.

The dispersed table is no less important than the gathered table and is the genesis of *communitas* at both tables. The dispersed table simply refers to Christians inviting the marginalized of society to enjoy a meal. Kevin Dougherty's research about diversity in American churches discovered that,

The proximity of varied racial-ethnic groups stands as one of the most important conditions for advancing diversity in religious communities. Inter-group contact and communication

cannot occur where multiple groups are socially segregated or simply not present. In order for appraisals of out-group members to change, opportunities for interpersonal contact are vital.<sup>54</sup>

An important opportunity for change in diversity within American churches is outside of the church at the dispersed table. If Christians invite the marginalized to share *communitas* at a meal in their homes, false divides over power and status are removed in order to reflect better Jesus' example of challenging "social and religious exclusivism."<sup>55</sup> In the end, all who gather at the dispersed table are given an opportunity to enjoy fellowship with Christ and each other.

While *communitas* is achieved at the gathered and the dispersed tables, the two tables are connected. The gathered table informs Christians of the way things should be through the example and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. The dispersed table is where the deep relationships with the marginalized are developed. Many have decried the ethnic and socioeconomic divide at the gathered table but the divide begins at the table of the dispersed. Inviting the marginalized and poor to a meal at home will lead to a beautifully diverse table in church. Once believers experience a meal around the gathered and dispersed tables with the marginalized and poor, the kingdom of God is in part realized in the present age, and believers are given a taste of the life to come.<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

Jesus is a voice calling for change. In the past, he called his fellow Jews to experience *communitas*. Today, he is calling the church to embrace its purpose of providing hope to a world that despairs. In fact, the proper understanding of the church is not of an institution that has arrived at its final destination but a movement caught between the now and the not yet. By approaching the two tables with a *communitas* mind-set, Christians will engage with the marginalized and poor as learners, develop empathy, and seek to engage in culturally sensitive ways. When the dispersed table draws people to the gathered table, God's kingdom is literally experienced on earth.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lesslie Newbiggin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 230.

<sup>2</sup> Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 94, 166.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Hirsch and Darryn Altclass, *The Forgotten Ways Handbook: A Practical Guide of Developing Missional Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 170.

<sup>4</sup> V. Turner, *Ritual Process*, 95.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-96.

<sup>6</sup> Edith Turner, *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy* (New York, NY: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> V. Turner, *Ritual Process*, 107.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Hirsch and Altclass, *Forgotten Ways Handbook*, 171.

<sup>10</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 1996), 49.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-51.

<sup>12</sup> R. S. Barbour et al., *The Kingdom of God and Human Society* (Edinburgh, UK: T & T Clark, 1993), 87.

<sup>13</sup> New American Standard Bible.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Dongell, interview by author, Wilmore, KY, February 21, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> V. Turner, *Ritual Process*, 102.

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 20:16.

<sup>17</sup> George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, eds., *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 367.

<sup>18</sup> David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 27.

<sup>19</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 540.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 541.

- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 15-17.
- <sup>24</sup> Robert Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (London, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 91.
- <sup>25</sup> Ben Witherington, *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994), 24.
- <sup>26</sup> Ibid., 25.
- <sup>27</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 204.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., 201-08.
- <sup>29</sup> David Bauer, interview by the author, Wilmore, KY, February 23, 2006.
- <sup>30</sup> V. Turner, *Ritual Process*, 95.
- <sup>31</sup> E. Turner, *Communitas*, vx.
- <sup>32</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 174.
- <sup>33</sup> New Revised Standard Bible with Apocrypha.
- <sup>34</sup> John Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1982), 168-69.
- <sup>35</sup> See Luke 7:36-50 (Sinful Woman); Luke 10:38-42 (Mary and Martha); Luke 15:1-2 (Lost Sheep); Luke 19:1-10 (Zacchaeus); Luke 24:36-49 (Disciples).
- <sup>36</sup> Luke 14:11 (NASB).
- <sup>37</sup> Luke 14:13-14.
- <sup>38</sup> Banks, *Jesus and the Law*, 108.
- <sup>39</sup> Jesus invited women to the table too. See Luke 7:36-50 and 10:38-42; Mark 14:3-9.
- <sup>40</sup> Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation*, 105.
- <sup>41</sup> Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 82.
- <sup>42</sup> Banks, *Jesus and the Law*, 108; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 208.
- <sup>43</sup> Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation*, 109.
- <sup>44</sup> Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 208.

<sup>45</sup> Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 73.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>48</sup> *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Pub. House, 1992), 35.

<sup>49</sup> Tucker, Karen B., "Table Etiquette: Means and Manners," The General Board of Discipleship for the United Methodist Church, 2002, <http://www.gbod.org/live-the-um-way/means-of-grace/resource/table-etiquette-means-and-manners> (accessed June 15, 2014).

<sup>50</sup> Kevin D. Dougherty, "How Monochromatic is Church Membership? Racial-Ethnic Diversity in Religious Community," *Sociology of Religion* 64, no. 1 (2003): 71.

<sup>51</sup> Mathias Zahniser, *Symbol and Ceremony: Making Disciples Across Cultures* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1997) 67.

<sup>52</sup> Newbigin, *Gospel*, 227.

<sup>53</sup> Zahniser, *Symbol*, 98.

<sup>54</sup> Dougherty, "How Monochromatic is Church Membership?" 80.

<sup>55</sup> John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 20.

<sup>56</sup> Fee, Paul, 52.

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"Many of us have waited a long time for this book. . . . In plain language, without taking theological shortcuts, Schlimm shows why Christianity needs the Old Testament."—**Ellen Davis**, Duke Divinity School

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### *From the Archives: Ernest F. Ward: The First Free Methodist Foreign Missionary*

Among some of the lesser-known collections of the archives of the B.L. Fisher Library is the story of the first foreign missionary of the Free Methodist Church and his family told through primary documents.<sup>1</sup> Ernest Fremont Ward was born on April 25, 1853 in Illinois. After his conversion on November 14, 1871 he joined the Methodist Episcopal Church, but also took a strong interest in the ideas of sanctification and holiness as relayed in the *Advocate of Christian Holiness* magazine. In an article he wrote in one of his scrapbooks, he relates how he received the blessing of sanctification at a Free Methodist Camp meeting in June of 1878. In 1879, he left the Methodist Episcopal Church and joined the Free Methodist Church, because of what he perceived as a deeper sympathy for holiness teaching.



**E.F. Ward, His Wife Phoebe and Their Three Daughters<sup>2</sup>**

In a rather whirlwind approach to ministry and life, Ernest Ward married Phebe Cox (1850-1910) on October 4, 1880 at her father's home in Cary, Illinois and on November 15th, they left for England for some missionary training before going on to Central India, funded by Phebe's savings as a teacher.<sup>3</sup> But within those few weeks, Ward also attended the Illinois Conference of the Free Methodist Church in Freeport and was ordained as both a deacon and an elder at the same conference. On January 16, 1881, the newlyweds arrived in Bombay, India. The Wards operated as a faith mission, raising all of their own support. The Wards raised three daughters in India. Daughter Ethel went on to serve as a missionary in India for forty-nine years and a second daughter, Louise died shortly before she was to leave on missionary service to India as well.

**MISSIONARY MEETING**

**There will be a Missionary Meeting**

.....

**7:30 P. M.**

**At** ..... **Church,**

**In** .....

**To which all are Cordially Invited.**

~~~~~

**ERNEST F. WARD** & **MRS. PHEBE E. WARD,**

**Who Spent 16 Years Among the Hindoos of  
Central India, will give an account of  
the People of that Country,**

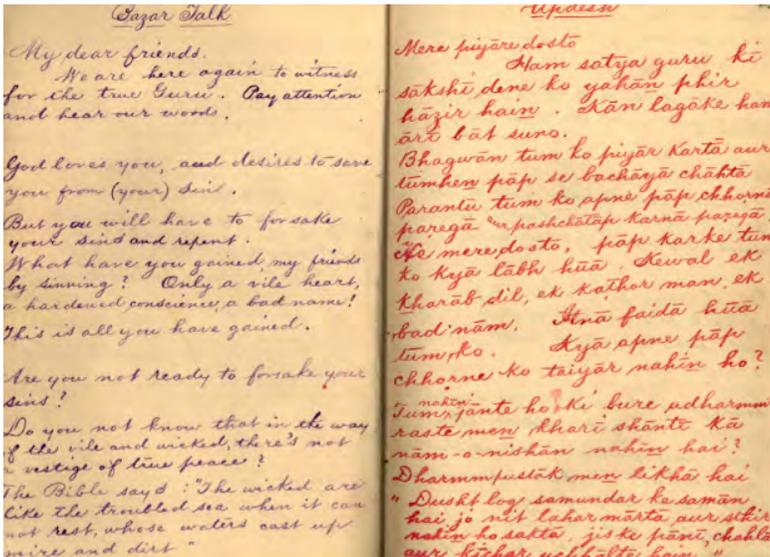
**Their Manners, Customs, Religions, Etc., Together with their  
Experience in Mission Work.**

The Lecture will be Illustrated by a Large Wall Map of  
India, and the Native Costumes will be exhibited  
by the Missionaries. The Meeting will be  
Enlivened by the Singing of New  
Missionary Songs, And also

**Hymns in the Native Languages of India.**

Notice for a Missionary Meeting by the Wards about 1897

Yardy<sup>4</sup> writes of their approach to mission, “After learning Hindi, the Wards went to cities with no Christian witness, learned languages and dialects as needed, living and dressing simply. They established five mission stations in central India. They visited in homes, preached, and sold gospel portions in the bazaars-travelling village to village talking with anyone who would listen. Hindu festivals became opportunities for sharing the gospel.” The Wards’ work also expanded into relief work during a major famine, and E.F. Ward’s influence on Narayan Tilak, an Indian poet who wrote around 300 hymns in the Marathi hymnbook.



### A Sermon to be Preached in the Bazaar by Ward, both in English and Translated in an Indian Language.

In one entry in her diary from 1902, Phebe records her visit with Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) and her renowned Mukti mission. Ramabai was a well-known Indian Christian woman, who fought for women’s rights in India especially fighting against child marriage, and rescuing child widows, “fallen” women, orphans, and the sick. Her work established schools and hospitals to help heal and advance the cause of India’s women. Phebe Ward writes,

Friday March 28, 1902

Bro. Sherman, Bessie, Louisa and I started at 4:15AM for Khedgaou. Found a S.A. officer, Mr. Lewis, bound for the same place, so we all went together. Ramabai's *tonga*<sup>5</sup> waiting there when we arrived. Only a short ride, and we were in the grounds of the famous Mukti Mission. Everything looked so substantial, from the fine rooms we were ushered in to the great fat bullocks that took us in. Trees and plants everywhere. I saw three ferneries, and there may be many more. I stayed in Miss Abram's room. It was quiet and restful, but the children were curious to see. Louisa and some lingered around the door.

We were quite hungry when a substantial *chibhota hazir*<sup>6</sup> for three was sent in, to which we done justice. A little while after Ramabai came in with Maribai, her head nurse, who piloted us around. My directions were lost as she took us here and there into the great storeroom with the great iron barrels of *janari*<sup>7</sup> and *bajeri*<sup>8</sup>, into the room for supplies for the guests, and their cook and dining room for guests, into Ramabai's private room where the picture of her deceased husband hangs, into her brother's widow's room who is living with her, into dormitory after dormitory- system and cleanliness everywhere. Several wards in the hospitals for the Rescue Home girls that had loathsome diseases; a segregated ward for contagious diseases, a fever ward, a sore eye ward, a guinea worm ward, one for weak cases, with one or more matrons over each.

As it is Good Friday and a holiday, there was no work going on in the weaving departments. They have 50 looms for saris, they weave tape for beds, make lace buttons, and I don't remember what all. They think of raising their own cotton and will then make their own thread. They have mills for pressing out oil from seeds and a large dairy business; their butter made daily is very good. The yards are like a park around the large building built of stone near the church.

The church is a large building seating three thousand. It is a long building with two rounding sides capable of holding a large number. They have school in this building. She took me to the small room where they had their first school room- they have prayers there every morning at four with the teachers. At 9:00 AM they had a special service for Good Friday. It was a sight to see that large body of girls and young women in the immense building. The floor is of wood- narrow boards. The pulpit a raised wooden platform, with a seat running around its four sides, which serves for a step for the platform. Bro. Sherman preached in English about the resurrection morning. Bro. Gadre interpreted into Marathi. I was struck with this thought, that those women when they went with the message, Jesus met them. When we are going to preach the Word, Jesus will meet us.

After the service to the sound of singing, those children fell into line and marched out one by one through three doors at a time. It was an impressive sight, file after file to the right, to the left, here and there, back and forth until all were gone—no confusion keeping time to the music. Oh God, bless this mighty institution! Miss McDonald was on the alert to keep the tiny tots in order.

Then we went to breakfast in the guest's dining room, and had the privilege of eating with our fingers if we chose, although spoons and forks were provided. We ate on large brass *talis*<sup>9</sup>. *Dal*<sup>10</sup> in a small basin, *bbat*<sup>11</sup> and *nolkol*<sup>12</sup> with *chapatties*<sup>13</sup>—fresh butter also. A large *lota*<sup>14</sup> of water, with a dish to pour it into, stood beside each place with a deep plate over which we could pour water to wash our hands before we began eating and also afterwards. Each one was provided with a nice seat about four inches high and another one to hold our plate in front. A similar board at the back against the wall was quite helpful to lean on. Ramabai and Mr. Gadre ate with us; probably she with her English workers always eats here. After dinner Bro. Sherman sang, "Who will roll away the stone." Then we rested until after 4:00 PM in our own rooms. They brought us another lunch of cocoa, bread, and butter.

After 4:00 PM Meribai brought the *tonga* again, and we had a pleasant ride through the grounds out to two of her wells. The first one had an abundant supply of water, and of the five wells they had was the best and supplied the drinking and cooking water. Bullocks with *pakals* and *garis*<sup>15</sup> were carrying away water all the time from this beautiful well. In this dry and thirsty land, the size and usefulness of a large well always touches me deeply. On reaching the second well, we saw some distance from the Home; we found an enormous hole in the solid rock very deep. They had been digging for one year and a half, and people prophesied us water! But the stones used in building, dug from this immense pit, justified the outlay and she kept at it, and now they are getting to water, quite a little already in the rocky bottom. It will be such a valuable help to the large track of land lying around it, which belongs to Ramabai. The expense of a wall around it will not be heavy as the rock comes near the top.

From there we drove to the station with a native Christian woman from Ahmednagar who had brought a woman to the Rescue Home and was now going home. She had gone around with us in the morning as we overlooked the premises. Back again to dinner, which we ate with our fingers. Then we all took the train to Poona.

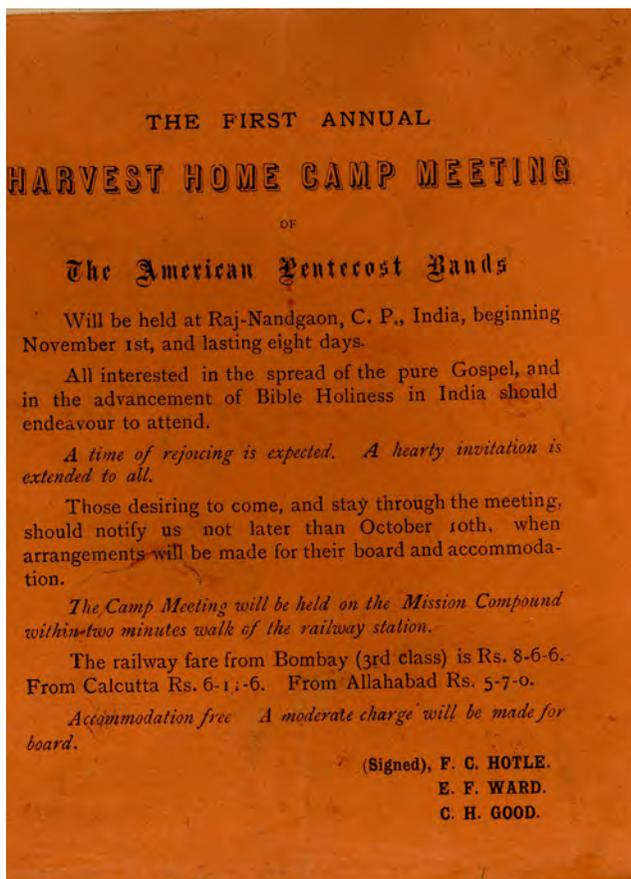


Drawing of Watchtower and Water Buffalo in Ward Diary



Photo of a Hindu Ascetic from a Ward Scrapbook

Ernest and Phebe Ward served as the very first Free Methodist missionaries to India, and indeed as the first foreign missionaries for the entire denomination as well. They served in Burhanpur, Ellichpar, Raj Nangaon, and Yeomtal, as well as a few other minor places. Phebe died while on furlough in Seattle in 1910. Ernest Fremont Ward would die in 1938 after 40 years of missionary service in India. The Ernest F. Ward Collection contains diaries, letters, scrapbooks, and notebooks collected by various members of the family. It is a treasure trove of material revealing early holiness missions to India.



A Flier for a Pentecostal Camp Meeting in India

The archives of the B.L. Fisher library are open to researchers and works to promote research in the history of Methodism and the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. Images, such as these, provide one vital way to bring history to life. Preservation of such material is often time consuming and costly, but are essential to helping fulfill Asbury Theological Seminary's mission. If you are interested in donating items of historic significance to the archives of the B.L. Fisher Library, or in donating funds to help purchase or process significant collections, please contact the archivist at [archives@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:archives@asburyseminary.edu).

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Most images used courtesy of the Archives of the B.L. Fisher Library of Asbury Theological Seminary who own all copyrights to these digital images. Please contact them directly if interested in obtaining permission to reuse these images.

<sup>2</sup> This image comes from the book, *Echoes from Bharatkhand*, by Ernest F. Ward with additional chapters by Phebe E. Ward and Introduction by Rev. W. A. Sellow, published in 1908 by the Free Methodist Publishing house in Chicago. Image in the public domain.

<sup>3</sup> "Going Out: Ernest and Phebe Ward" by Sherrill Yardy in *Free Methodist World Mission People*, July-September 2011, pp. 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Or *tanga*, is a light carriage used in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, which is traditionally pulled by a horse and has two-wheels.

<sup>6</sup> *Chbota haazri* was a small traditional meal of northern India during the British Empire, which was served in schools or barracks, usually served shortly after dawn.

<sup>7</sup> A type of sorghum.

<sup>8</sup> Or *bajir* or *bajra*, known in English as pearl millet.

<sup>9</sup> Or *thali*, a type of plate.

<sup>10</sup> A common Indian dish using lentils.

<sup>11</sup> Steamed or boiled rice.

<sup>12</sup> Or *noolkol*, an Indian term for kohlrabi.

<sup>13</sup> Or *chapatis*, are a type of flat, unleavened bread made from wheat.

<sup>14</sup> A small, spherical, brass or copper vessel used to hold water, often for cleaning or ritual purification.

<sup>15</sup> A traditional type of enclosed carriage with four wheels and two seats inside facing each other.

## *Book Reviews*

### **Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God**

Brian S. Rosner

New Studies in Biblical Theology

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic

2013, 249 pp., paper, \$25.00

ISBN: 978-0-8308-2632-2

*Reviewed by Timothy J. Christian*

Brian S. Rosner, in his book *Paul and the Law: Keeping the Commandments of God* published in 2013 by InterVarsity Press and part of their New Studies in Biblical Theology (NSBT) series, tackles one of the most difficult, controversial, and overly written upon topics in biblical studies – Paul’s theology of the law. Instead of trudging through the well-worn path, Rosner takes a unique and fresh approach by grounding the discussion in 1 Cor. 7:19 – “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands is what counts (NIV)” – instead of the typical road of starting with Romans or Galatians. His main points about Paul’s theology of the law are threefold: Paul repudiates, replaces, and reappropriates the law. First, the repudiation is explicit (chap. 2) and implicit (chap. 3), the former summarized in that Christians are not under the Mosaic law and the latter in that they do not walk according to it. Second, the replacement (chap. 4) is with the law of Christ to love, which is the work of the Holy Spirit by faith. Third, the reappropriation is twofold: as prophecy (chap. 5) and as wisdom (chap. 6), the former being a prognostic forerunner to the gospel and the latter that the law is applicable to Christian living. Rosner concludes that this threefold framework is the hermeneutical key to understanding Paul and the law.

Concerning the aims, as series editor, D.A. Carson, notes in the preface, the NSBT endeavors to frame discussions in confessional Evangelicalism “to

help thinking Christians understand their Bibles better” (Rosner 2013:11). Rosner certainly achieves this goal in that the book (1) is void of technical terminology, (2) scarcely uses Greek and Hebrew, and (3) lacks criticalness. The book, then, reads more like an extremely conservative take on Paul and the law, than a scholarly work of biblical theology.

Concerning methodology, Rosner claims the superiority of his method because he uses the full range of Pauline texts unlike other works on the subject, yet admits later that he neglects considering 1-2 Thessalonians, Titus, and Philemon (Rosner 2013:209). This is disconcerting. Another issue of method is his deductive approach to biblical theology, starting with conclusions and then proving them using scripture. This makes the book feel scattered, unorganized, and lacking focus, not to mention it is proof-texting. An inductive approach however is much preferred for biblical theology. Rosner should have discussed Paul and the law in Romans, then in 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, and so forth until he covered the whole Pauline corpus and ended with a synthesis of the evidence. Ben Witherington III’s works on NT theology are the most reputable exemplars of this method, especially his two volume work *The Indelible Image* which Rosner cites (Ben Witherington III, *The Indelible Image: The Theological and Ethical Thought World of the New Testament: Volume One. The Individual Witnesses*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2009; and Ben Witherington III, *The Indelible Image: The Theological and Ethical Thought World of the New Testament: Volume Two. The Collective Witness*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2010).

Concerning citation, Rosner’s bibliography is exceptionally stunted, citing only 211 sources for a 222-page monograph. While most are high quality and recent, he nevertheless leaves out several important works, especially vital Evangelical commentaries on Romans from N.T. Wright, Ben Witherington III, and Craig S. Keener which speak to the topic. This is simply unacceptable and seems to indicate that he is avoiding scholars associated with the New Perspectives on Paul.

To further corroborate, from comments like “[Paul’s] polemical response to Judaism” (Rosner 2013:218) and remarks construing Replacement Theology, it is clear that Rosner holds to the Old Perspective and that this book is an attempt at a rebuttal of the New Perspectives. Unfortunately, the book does not live up to its name, being more interested in *keeping the Reformed tradition* than *keeping God’s commands*. Even though Rosner’s threefold framework of Paul’s theology of the law – repudiation, replacement, and reappropriation – is solid, the way in which he frames it – being extremely conservative, deductive, Old Perspective, and

lacking critical engagement with pertinent secondary sources inside and outside of Evangelicalism – is disappointing.

**The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts**

Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald, eds.

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2013, 616 pp., hardcover, \$49.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-3962-1

*Reviewed by Ruth Anne Reese*

All language is embedded in a context, and it is important to know that context in order to fully understand what is being communicated. Joel Green and Lee McDonald have provided a valuable volume that lays out the contexts that inform the New Testament. The book is divided into five sections. The first section entitled “Setting the Context: Exile and the Jewish History” addresses 400 years of history leading up to the New Testament. The second section entitled “Setting the Context: Roman Hellenism” lays out details about life in the Roman Empire. Here there are essays covering such items as religion, economics, slavery, and education. The third section looks more specifically at “The Jewish People in the Context of Roman Hellenism.” The 12 essays in this section look at the temple, groups of people such as Samaritans, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Zealots. There is information on the synagogue and on the way that health and healthcare were understood in the ancient world. The fourth section provides information on “The Literary Context of Early Christianity.” Here, readers are familiarized with literacy in the ancient world, pseudepigraphical writings, and the influences of such authors as Homer, Josephus, Philo, and the Rabbis on our understanding of the New Testament. In the final section we are given a tour of “The Geographical Context of the New Testament.” The events and writing of the New Testament took place during the rule of the Roman Empire, and this section does a good job of introducing us to such places as Egypt, Palestine, Syria, the province of Asia, as well as Rome itself. The book ends with a few additional resources and a helpful set of indexes.

This book is a collection of 44 different essays by 34 different authors. With such a collection of contributors and topics, it would be easy for a book to feel uneven in the quality of the essays. However, each essay is informative, well

written, and easy to read. The essays are between 7-10 pages in length, making them manageable reading; yet they are long enough to give sufficient depth to the topic being discussed. This book would be an excellent book for use by pastors, teachers, and students. It provides significant access to up-to-date research on a wide variety of backgrounds relevant to the New Testament. In addition, each essay ends with an annotated bibliography that points readers towards significant resources for further research. Overall, this book is a significant contribution in the area of New Testament backgrounds and will be of value for many.

**A Missional Orthodoxy: Theology and Ministry in a Post-Christian Context**

Gary Tyra

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic

2013, 393 pp., paper, \$30.00

ISBN: 978-0-310-516743

*Reviewed by Jeremy B. Griffin*

Gary Tyra's book has two main goals with the first being "about doing theology and ministry in an increasingly post-Christian context in a way that is faithful to both the biblical text and the missional task" (11). The second goal is to lessen the gap and decrease the tension between the emerging church and traditional evangelism. He hopes evangelicals realize "that it is not necessary to choose between a fighting fundamentalism and a new liberalism" (362). The hope for Tyra is that the emergent church, traditional evangelicals, and even those who know little about the church would embrace this missional orthodoxy.

The book has two parts; with part one laying the foundation for a missional orthodoxy and part two outlining the theology. Tyra is not promoting a missional orthodoxy that is "a magic bullet, some sort of spiel that when presented properly cannot fail to reclaim post-Christian hearts and minds for the Christian cause" (363). Throughout the work, Tyra is nuanced in his engagement with theology, holds to theological realism, promotes a critical realist epistemology, and ultimately wants Christianity to be recontextualized. The author sees the

ultimate goal of contextualization as presenting the gospel in a compelling and comprehensible way (67).

Chapter two outlines the possible contextualization approaches from Christians, with five theological responses to the changing modern/postmodern North American context. They are: 1) Abject assimilation or capitulation, the response of liberalism, that changes the faith, hoping to make the faith more acceptable and palatable to culture, 2) Accommodation, the response of the emerging church in general, as they embrace postmodernism “to cure the many ills of traditional Christianity,” 3) Incarnation or recontextualization, the task of missional orthodoxy, where the church holds to a post-postmodern epistemology and seeks to “recontextualize the Christian faith,” 4) Toleration, the common focus of traditional evangelism, where Christians acknowledge some of the features of postmodern culture and attempt to contextualize the faith, and 5) Repudiation, the response of fundamentalism, that does not contextualize the faith and ignores current cultural changes (87).

Tyra then uses the divisions of systematic theology to outline a missional orthodoxy: The Bible, God, Christ, Holy Spirit, Human Beings, Salvation, Church and Final Things. He is not using these divisions to establish an unchanging universal theology as many systematic theologians do, but uses Biblical Theology, some Practical Theology and two main conversation partners, Marcus Borg (*The Heart of Christianity*) and Brian McLaren (*A Generous Orthodoxy*). Tyra explains that McLaren can be difficult to understand because when one reads McLaren’s works one is often left wondering if he believes what he is writing or if he is writing simply to provoke discussion. The false theological antithesis promoted by both Borg and McLaren are explained, analyzed, and deconstructed for each section of theology, then a better way forward for missional theology is created.

Space only allows one example of how Tyra forges this missional orthodoxy. In charting the doctrine of God, Tyra looks at Borg’s antitheses where people must choose between the different views of God he promotes. For Borg, God is either “out there” or “right here,” a “God of Law” or a “God of grace,” a “God of requirements and rewards” or a “God of love and justice.” Tyra says, “Despite all of these attempts to indicate otherwise, the theological image generated by Borg is that of a benevolent life force in which the universe exists” (158). Similarly McLaren’s antitheses are that there are two ways to view God and one must choose between the God A and God B, with God A being the way that

people in Israel, ancient times, and the early church viewed God (the views from the Old Testament). Whereas God B is “evolving or emerging over the span of several centuries following Christ’s time on earth” (165), and this view comes from the New Testament.

To build this missional orthodoxy of the doctrine of God, Tyra states there is an alternative to these opposing views of God and instead of seeing God as “out there” or “right here,” God is actually paradoxically both at the same time. Instead of seeing God as different in the Old and New Testaments, with God being about the law in the Old and grace in the New Testament, Tyra thinks that one does not have to suggest a massive disconnect between these two created versions of God. He postulates that God “is true to his own loving, holy, and just nature” and “has graciously provide his covenant partners with certain behavioral standards while at the same time mercifully making provision for their self-sabotaging missteps” (172). Borg promotes that idea that one must choose between an impersonal God who is a distant force, who is not interested in human affairs, or a personal God that caused the Holocaust. Tyra looks a C. S. Lewis, Craig Van Gelder, Dwight Zscheile, T. F. Torrance, Karl Barth, and scripture to show that “the God of the Bible is great, good, and wise” and that “this is a theology proper that has missional legs precisely because it is messy, involves paradox, requires a capacity to engage in nuanced (rather than either-or) thinking, and calls for a willingness to walk humbly rather than arrogantly before God.” He then says, “This kind of theological realism is an exciting, coherent, existentially relevant way of understanding God” (179).

Overall, chapter two, which outlines different contextualization responses from Christians, was the most substantial chapter and the highlight of the book, in my opinion. Lacking is the author’s engagement in chapter two with the works of Paul Hiebert, and I was surprised that Hiebert was not referred to it in the contextualization continuum. Also, Tyra is careful, nuanced, and understanding of both authors’ positions and even appreciates what the authors have contributed, but by the end of the book Borg and McLaren feel like theological whipping boys for Tyra. While other readers may not have that feeling, I felt that way at times through the book.

However, this work excels in using the categories of systematic theology and constructing a theology that is missional. The author, I think, has accomplished this task. If theology is not applicable to one’s context then it ceases to become theology, for theology is answering the questions of today’s world. As for the

application of this book, it is doubtful that this work will gain much ground with people on far sides of the Christian spectrum, those holding to liberalism or fundamentalism, but those are not the author's primary target audience. This work could help bring together some emergent and traditional thinkers. This book could be used in a systematic theology class to demonstrate how systematic theology can be more relevant in today's world and the book could be used in a class on contemporary theology in North America.

### **Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically**

Beth Felker Jones

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2014, 256 pp., paper, \$22.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-4933-0

*Reviewed by Logan Patriquin*

While organizing her work in a typical fashion, Dr. Jones has anything but the same goal in mind as many other introduction to theology texts. The aim of *Practicing Christian Doctrine* is clearly indicated in the title and further explained in the introduction. Her main point seems to be that beliefs must be rooted in learning but cannot remain purely cognitive. She explicitly states, "our beliefs must be put into practice, and faithful practice matters for what we believe" (2). From this perspective, one must not approach this text expecting a deep systematic theology. Yet, even with the limits imposed by the brevity of an introduction text and a different objective, the reader of this book will find themselves commendably drawn into every position discussed.

It is always nice to come across an ecumenical work that highlights points of similarity and unity over-against hostile differences. This work is unashamedly evangelical. Yet, Beth Jones is content on leaving the door as wide open to interpretation as historical Christian Orthodoxy will allow. She accomplishes this task by repeatedly pulling from Christian history as well as current global thought in nearly every section.

Jones begins her work by defining theology and then continues on to discuss the sources of theology—the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. From there, she moves into the nature of general and special revelation and eventually ends up with a discussion of the Trinity, the attributes of God, and then a valiant exchange on theological anthropology. While always having previously highlighted means of practice of doctrine at the end of every section, it is at this point in her work where the practical element of doctrinal beliefs starts to differentiate her work from others.

The author's attention now turns to Christology, Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology. Throughout these next major sections Jones introduces the historical and biblical basis of each doctrine as well as current and historical controversies. In her section on Christology, Jones speaks with amazing clarity on the major heresies of old and present. Her discussion of Nestorianism is one such area where even with space constraints she is able to articulate the real theological issue at hand in a way that major voluminous works only seem to scratch. However, while having skated through to this point with relative poise and depth, when arriving at the doctrine of Sanctification, the author is noticeably light. Also, its lack of explicit mention in the section on Pneumatology is disconcerting.

Even with the relative handicap of space and a different aim, Beth F. Jones is able to helpfully introduce many aspects of theology while also calling forth reflection and action on the part of the reader. In refreshing true Thomistic form, throughout her work she stresses the undivided nature of created reality and the goodness of the material world. For her, the problem is not materiality but sin. Jones reveals her Wesleyan roots by consistently restating the affects of sinful brokenness through all streams of doctrine in a way that would make Luther's heart content, yet she still holds unswerving optimism because of the work of God. This text is a valuable work that should have a home in undergrad and graduate classrooms as well as the in the hands of seasoned ministers and laity alike. All who are in search of a helpful introductory theological text that will require response have found it in *Practicing Christian Doctrine*.

## **Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making, Volume 1**

James D. G. Dunn

Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company

2003, 1,019 pp., hardcover, \$68.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-3931-2

*Reviewed by Joy Ames*

James D. G. Dunn's *Jesus Remembered* is the first volume of the Christianity in the Making series, which aims to deliver a "comprehensive overview of the beginnings of Christianity" (xiii). The first phase of this work centralizes upon Jesus and asks one key question: "What was it about Jesus which explains both the impact he made on his disciples and why he was crucified?" (3). Dunn proposes that the answer to this question comes through understanding the traditioning process standing behind the construction of the gospel accounts. He argues that these traditions allow the reader to understand the way Jesus was remembered by his first followers. In other words, Dunn argues, ". . . that the Gospel traditions provide a clear portrayal of the remembered Jesus since they still display with sufficient clarity for present purposes the impact which Jesus made on his first followers" (6).

Dunn's work makes a contribution to the field of historical Jesus studies through its model, which seeks to determine the core traditions found within the sources (Christian and non-Christian). Dunn's theory of transmission is built upon principles of orality involving the passing of tradition inclusive of individuals in the ancient context who served as references for information as well as those witnessing and remembering. His point is that the earliest churches deeply desired to remember and pass on this tradition, which is still reflected in the Gospels. Further, he clarifies that the starting point for the traditioning process comes through the acts and words of Jesus himself (239).

In short, Dunn comes to this task by segmenting his work into five parts. In part one, Dunn summarizes the numerous quests for the historical Jesus into two main trajectories, the "flight from dogma" and the "flight from history." A student who is looking for a brief summary of a voluminous field will greatly benefit from this approachable summary. Part two delineates the sources used by Dunn and provides the methodological framework that is employed. Parts three through five consist of the brunt of this massive tome and provide an overview of the mission of Jesus involving detailed comparisons of the sources to answer five significant

questions: 1) “To whom did Jesus direct his message of the kingdom?” 2) “What did acceptance of it mean for those who responded?” 3) “How did others see Jesus’ role as regards the coming of the kingdom?” 4) “How did he see his own role?” 5) “And did he anticipate his death as part of that whole?” (489).

One might be surprised that Dunn’s approach finds a close dialogue partner in Rudolf Bultmann who stated that form criticism’s main purpose is “to study the history of the oral tradition behind the gospels” (194). Dunn rightly frees himself from some of the assumptions that plagued Bultmann’s work (including Bultmann’s literary approach and “laws of style”). In particular, he takes the spotlight off of the early Christian communities and shines it on the core of the early tradition concerning Jesus. In doing so, Dunn’s work ought to be praised for both its oral paradigm and historical-critical approach, which do not fall to the temptation of depicting an a-historical or non-Jewish Jesus. In the end, Dunn summarizes that the core tradition concerning Jesus attests to the scholar’s ability to recognize Jesus’ Jewishness, his message as the message of the kingdom of God, and his role as a teacher, prophet, exorcist, and healer. Jesus’ sonship realizes his strength to fulfill his mission and his resurrection is viewed as metaphorical.

The major tension in Dunn’s work comes with what he might allow to actually be said about Jesus himself as distinct from what is said by those who remembered him and whom he impacted. Dunn astutely recognizes this tension when he writes, “I hope in what I have already written I have not been misunderstood to mean that nothing can be said about what (the one who) made the impact” (876). Dunn’s intention is that a notable amount of continuity be allowed between the mission of Jesus and its impact. However, due to his methodological approach which quests for the core tradition, after one surveys numerous pages of his analysis, which sometimes appears as Dunn’s constant attempt to separate the corn from the husk, the reader of this tome will at times puzzle to differentiate between when Dunn allows the Gospels to provide us the opportunity to sit amongst those who remembered Jesus and were impacted by Jesus and when Dunn suggests that the Gospels do afford the ultimate opportunity to sit at the feet of Jesus himself.

## Introduction to the Old Testament

Bill T. Arnold

New York, NY: Cambridge University Press

2014, 436 pp., hardcover, \$53.99

ISBN: 978-0-521-70547-9

*Reviewed by Theresa Lieblang*

In his book, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Bill T. Arnold has developed a textbook that is more than just an introduction to the Old Testament, but an introduction into the ancient Near East encapsulated around significant historical events, analogous literature, and archaeological artifacts. Some scholars such as Lasor, Hubbard, and Bush concentrate more on the historical data and theological themes in their text, *Old Testament Survey*, while Brevard Childs mainly focuses more on the critical scholarship in his text, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*. However, Arnold takes a more literary approach that explores the major historical events in Israel's history, comparative religions, and sociology.

The construction of Arnold's text is built upon the doctrine of monotheism and the world in which it evolved in the midst of a polytheistic society. Arnold begins his text at the macro level with a broad discussion of the history of the ancient Near East that includes an overview of the religious beliefs of the surrounding cultures, early civilization, then on into the development of the canon. As the text continues, the details of discussion become more on a micro level as the significance of each book is discussed based on its canonization, or theme. Each chapter includes additional pertinent information in a *sidebar* to enable a deeper understanding along with maps that are relevant to enhance visual understanding of a topic. Each chapter ends with a plethora of additional resources for further study on that particular subject material.

*Introduction to the Old Testament* is an ideal text for the beginning student who may be new to the study of the Old Testament as well as the more advanced student, and even the well versed scholar. Arnold has expanded this text beyond the books of the Old Testament by incorporating analogous literature from the surrounding cultures that corresponds with the stories in the Bible. Each book of the Old Testament has its own relevance in history; Arnold pulls out the relevance in each book to tell the story of the Old Testament. In some cases, this relevance may come in the form of a theme such as covenant, or land. In other cases we

witness how the relevance of these themes, combined with the growth of the people of Israel, are joined together into the development of Israel's monarchy, which includes triumphs as well as failures. In the last chapter of his text, Arnold includes a brief, but interesting discussion that unites the relevance of the Old Testament and how that fits into our contemporary society.

As I first began to read through this text my initial thought was that this would be an ideal companion text alongside a more advanced, or technical text, but about halfway through I changed my mind. Arnold's text introduced many terms, historical events, literature, and archaeological artifacts in this text alone that I was not introduced to until I took more advanced Old Testament courses. If I were teaching a course on the Introduction to Old Testament I would definitely include this text for my students!

### **How (not) to be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor**

James K.A. Smith

Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

2014, 160 pp., paper, \$16.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-6761-2

*Reviewed by Grant Miller*

Philosophy professor James K.A. Smith offers us a 160-page "small field guide" to Charles Taylor's monumental 900-page "commentary on postmodern culture," *A Secular Age* (2007). While making Taylor's main arguments more accessible to practitioners of the gospel who are attempting to navigate today's secular landscapes, Smith notes that our secular neighbors operate with "completely different mental maps" discovering all the "significance" they need without being bothered by the questions we, as Christians, love to answer. Guiding us through Taylor's work, Smith aims to show us how we got here, how to get our bearings, and how to remain faithful and bear witness in today's secular age.

First, Smith emphasizes how these landscapes and maps have always been highly complex and complicated. While "exclusive humanism" may offer significance without transcendence, our secular neighbors are often still haunted and "spooked by longings" they don't understand. At the same time, we Christians

have been greatly influenced by the beliefs and practices of “exclusive humanism,” equally haunted by its doubts.

Over time, exclusive humanism became a new and exciting option alongside countless other live options. In this secular age, we are allowed and even encouraged to doubt like never before. In the end, Smith reminds us it is neither the maps of the “new atheists” nor those of the “religious fundamentalists” that guide most people today, but those of the haunted and doubting. We must learn to live faithfully and bear witness in an age free to doubt and praised for doing so.

I greatly appreciated Taylor’s reminder that it has been the stories and the heroes of science, much more than any scientific data, that has drawn converts to exclusive humanism. Stories have allowed secular people and societies to imagine human significance without the burdens of “eternity and its demands.”

Smith does an excellent job explaining how belief in God has become just one of countless, highly contested live options today. He helps us understand the cognitive, affective, and evaluative consequences of secularism influencing the way we think, feel, and make decisions in the secular age. Smith urges us to be more honest about our own doubts and sufferings as we seek God and promote human flourishing alongside our secular neighbors.

As intended, Smith’s guide is a great resource for scholars studying religion and secularization as well as practitioners serving God in the secular age. Practitioners, however, may still be seeking more concrete examples of how Christians can use this understanding to bear witness among the increasing numbers of people who embrace doubt and identify themselves as spiritual but not religious. Smith’s work remains highly philosophical and could be supplemented by testimonies of doubters who have found faith in Christ in the secular age. Contributions from the faithful in the majority world, where the church is still growing rapidly, could also be extremely helpful. Majority world Christians experience and navigate the pressures of the secular age in unique and diverse ways that continue to inform and inspire the larger body of Christ.

## **A Handbook of Ancient Greek Grammatical Terms: Greek-English and English Greek**

T. Michael W. Halcomb

Wilmore, Ky.: GlossaHouse

2013, 200 pp., paper, \$14.99

ISBN: 978-0-6158-0409-8

*Reviewed by Benjamin J. Snyder*

This reference work, which features a bilingual dictionary from Greek to English and English to Greek, is part of the larger AGROS (Accessible Greek Resources & Online Studies) series. However, the value of this book does not lie in its connection with this series, but in its being a reference work which stands on its own. A feature that sets AGROS apart from other Koine Greek curricula is that it is designed to include conversation. That said, this book does not depend on the user's conversational abilities in Koine since its function is reference.

The two main objectives of the book are as follows: “1) to provide learners with a quick-access guide to ancient Greek grammatical terms; and 2) to assist learners in building their grammatical vocabulary so they can better engage discourse, whether written or spoken, that occurs in ancient Greek” (3).

With reference to the first objective, the book admirably accomplishes its job. The mere fact of having a list of over 600 grammatical terms in one place, with sources no less, is a wonderful aid to the student and scholar. As the author points out, however, proper understanding and use of the terms will require that one consult the attestation(s) of a given term in the context of its primary source. Due to the diverse nature of the Greek language in antiquity, “a term used in Attic might not have been used the same way in Koine and vice versa” (3). Later, the author contradictorily avers that, because this work provides examples and explanations in English, one will not have to “consult any number of other works to understand the grammatical concept under discussion” (6). This is only true if a “working definition” is all that is sought.

Whether the author attains to the goal of objective two is uncertain. It is clear that this book will aid students in increasing their vocabulary, but one must ask how useful it will be to know these terms. While on the whole this reviewer is in favor of discussing topics of antiquity on their own terms (in this case with the

grammatical terms presented in this book), it remains to be seen whether they will be adopted by the already established Koine Greek curricula on the market and finally make their way into classrooms. If such an adoption does not take place, these terms will likely serve as nothing more than trivia for the end user. On the other hand, it requires a text like this to promote such awareness and interest, and for this the author is applauded.

To be fair, the second objective appears to be limited to being able to “better engage discourse” that one might come across in reading or speaking. However, it is rare for Koine Greek students to be reading material in which such terms occur; and even when they do, a standard lexicon or reader will normally provide the necessary information, certainly for a “working definition.” In other words, will students actually benefit from a specialized resource like this unless they are reading an ancient Greek grammar in Greek? It is even more rare that students *converse* in Greek, so if this book is solely intended to complement the AGROS series, which *does* employ conversation, then the student of this series will be the intended audience who gains the most from this title.

A final critique of book relates to the choice of terms and their connection with “grammar.” For example, ἐντολή is glossed “command,” sourced from 1 Cor 7:19, and defined as “An order given by an authoritative figure” (44). First Corinthians is neither a grammar, nor is this word found in a context related to Greek grammar. It is true that one may speak of a “command” in grammatical terms, but we should at least expect the source to be a Greek grammar, not the NT. Another example is προσῳδία “Accent (mark), pitch” (82). Consultation of the source provided (Plato, *Republic* 399a) reveals that in context this term is not in reference to Greek grammar but to oral, not written, music. While this term may be used with reference to the grammatical accent marks of Greek, we should expect the source to be a Greek grammar or at least occurring in the context of a grammatical discussion if attested in a non-grammatical work. More examples could be provided, but this should not give the impression that most of the terms are superfluous; indeed, the majority of terms are helpful.

Should this work be revised in the future, besides the removal of non-grammatical terms and the updating of primary source references to those grammatical in nature, a structural change might be of some advantage. Since the information provided in the Greek to English section is the same as that found in the English to Greek section, a simple index could be provided in place of one of

the sections. For example, if the Greek to English portion is retained, the English to Greek could simply be a list of English equivalents with the appropriate page number linked to the Greek term. This would considerably reduce the size of the book and the same information would be accessible from either language direction.

In sum, this book will serve students of the AGROS series well. Beyond this role, however, it is uncertain how helpful this work will be to the average Koine Greek student.

### **Journey Toward Justice: Personal Encounters in the Global South**

Nicholas Wolterstorff

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2013, 272 pp., paper, \$21.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-4845-6

*Reviewed by Dan Dake*

*Journey Toward Justice* is a part of the Baker Academic Turning South series, and the main purpose of the series is to exhort western Christian scholars to fulfill their obligations of intellectual service to their brothers and sisters in the Global South. Nicholas Wolterstorff, philosopher and professor emeritus of Yale University, serves as a paragon of scholarly engagement in the Global South, and an example of the fruits such engagement can bear. In *Journey Toward Justice*, Wolterstorff recounts his experiences with the Global South, and how that fundamentally shaped his reflections on the nature of justice, and sundry related issues.

*Journey Toward Justice* is divided into six parts. Part one lays out the experiences that motivated Wolterstorff in the 1970's to engage in the injustices suffered by Palestinians and South Africans, and the impact that had on his view of justice. Part two, provides a skeletal framework for his *particularistic* inherent rights view of justice (as opposed to right order theorists' accounts like Oliver O'Donovan's). Part three engages in the historical precedence of an inherent rights view of justice, tracing the view through the canon lawyers of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and some early Church Fathers (Ambrose, Basil of Caesarea, and John Chrysostom) back to Holy Writ. Part four examines Wolterstorff's subsequent experiences with injustices in the Global South, and his views on the psychological

and sociological dynamics of right-order justice, the contribution of the arts to justice, hardening of hearts toward justice, and on the structure of social justice movements – which offers a new contribution to Wolterstorff’s public thought. Part five displays Wolterstorff’s views on the authority and role of the state, retributive and reprobative punishment, and the concept of forgiveness. Part six addresses perhaps *the* scarlet thread throughout Wolterstorff’s theorizing – *shalom* – and how that fecund concept draws together seemingly disparate parts – justice, hope, and beauty – into a systematic expression of the Christian mind.

*Journey Toward Justice* has much to recommend it, and two aspects deserve mention for the present review. First, it is an excellent distillation of his theory of justice and related views. Parts two and three provide a summary to his *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*, whereas parts three and five summarize the core content of *Justice in Love*. Parts two, three, five, and six receive some treatment in his *Understanding Liberal Democracy*. For any reader interested in an introduction to Wolterstorff’s thoughts on political philosophy and theological politics, *Journey Toward Justice* is a wonderful inlet to that sea of scholarship. *Journey Toward Justice* also provides a living example of Wolterstorff’s method of theorizing. He holds that to function as both a Christian and scholar is to allow the belief content of “our authentic commitment” to control the weighing and devising of theories in our respective fields (see his *Reason within the Bounds of Reason*). *Journey Toward Justice* offers a condensed sample of this approach. For example, his theorizing about justice owes a great deal of debt to the conception of worth and dignity that scripture attributes to the human species (chapters 12, and 14). It offers a new *grounding account* of worth (contrary to the common *capacity* account) in the Divine act of love (part 2 and 3). Any Christian scholar – and for that matter any Christian – will benefit greatly from observing and emulating this type of methodological engagement.

To end on a disagreement, I turn to his conception of forgiveness. Wolterstorff holds that forgiveness in a strong way is conditioned on both the wrongdoer and the wronged. The wronged cannot forgive the wrongdoer apart from the offender’s recognition and remorse of the wrong done. But can this be right, when so many of us have the contrary intuition, that is that we can forgive someone apart from their recognition or remorse of the wrong done. Consider the following scenario: person x murders person y’s spouse, and then commits suicide. Under Wolterstorff’s account, person y is burdened -- for y’s earthly life -- with the negative and retributive emotions that are saddled with an unforgiven deed (barring the possibility that y can forget about the deed). Thus, the wrongdoer – to a

significant degree – can control the quality and state of the wronged. That does not seem right. Further, on Wolterstorff’s account, it is hard to see how forgiveness and reconciliation are distinct concepts, since if his conditions are met the two distinct concepts seem to be simultaneously met. For a helpful contrary view see Eleonore Stump’s account in “The Nature of Love” in *Wandering in Darkness*.

In *Journey Toward Justice*, Wolterstorff contributes another articulate, powerful, and promising aspect of the Christian vision in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are all the beneficiaries of Nicholas Wolterstorff’s achievements in philosophy and theology, and owe him a great deal of gratitude.

### **The Human Being: A Theological Anthropology**

Hans Schwarz

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

2013, 416 pp., paper, \$35.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-7088-9

*Reviewed by Jason C. Stigall*

In his latest theological exposé, Hans Schwarz, a distinguished Lutheran theologian and professor of Systematic Theology and Contemporary Theological Issues at the University of Regensburg, Germany, has written an “encyclopedic” work concerning the question of what it means to be human. His book, *The Human Being: A Theological Anthropology*, is a comprehensive account that discusses biblical, theological, philosophical, and scientific perspectives on human life. Schwarz attempts to leave no stone unturned and arranges his publication into three parts. The first part is an assessment of the special occupancy that humanity holds in the world. The second part is a detailed appraisal of Human Freedom from the perspectives of the natural sciences, Christian scriptures, and Church traditions. Schwarz concludes his account with a survey of Humanity as a Community of Men and Women. This thorough theological survey travels along a trajectory touching on each of the three aforementioned parts by attempting to answer the questions of who we are, what the extent of human freedom is, and what it means to be a community of men and women.

In answering the question of who we are, Schwarz begins his discussion with the biblical texts, their original languages, and terms used to describe humanity. The discussion continues with an assessment of human anthropology in the natural sciences, Darwinian evolution, and some of the more recent findings in genetics. The first part concludes with Schwarz highlighting that which differentiates humanity from the rest of the living world.

In answering the question of what it means to be free, Schwarz begins part II with the perspective of contemporary neuroscience and its understanding of human freedom. The conversation continues on with both the biblical account of human evil and the understanding of sin and evil within the tradition of the Western Church. Schwarz details that in the examination of part II where we find this notion that paradise and communion with God have been lost, but that a way of reconciliation has been made by the triune God to be attained in the context of human community.

In turning to the last part, Schwarz assesses the question of what it means to be a community of men and women. Here, he discusses sexuality, gender roles, marriage, and the concept of community as a unity of man and woman. He finishes the discussion with an account of vocation, work, and final human destiny. Schwarz concludes his work with a distinctive statement on what it means to be both *human* and *Christian*. He stipulates, “*Christians are Easter people living from and toward that Easter experience of a new creation*” (385).

All in all, Schwarz completes the comprehensive task of this book in just over 400 pages. At times, it assumes a technical familiarity with scientific terms, philosophical concepts, and transliterated terms from the original languages of the Bible. Nonetheless, the interaction with this material takes place in very clear and lucid prose. In particular, I found the interaction with the natural sciences to be an invaluable aspect of the work. It must also be noted that Schwarz’s Lutheran background strongly influences the theological scholarship that he interacts with in this work. The works of Martin Luther, as well as a long list of prominent 20<sup>th</sup> century German-Lutheran theologians (Paul Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann, Claus Westermann, & Wolfhart Pannenberg), permeate the footnotes. It leaves to be desired some more explicit clarification in the subtitle (or at least in the introduction) that the bulk of theological interaction would take place within the Lutheran tradition. Nonetheless, Schwarz’s work is extensive, noteworthy, and a reference that I will draw from for some considerable time to come.

## *Books Received*

The following books were received by the editor's office since the last issue of *The Asbury Journal*. The editor is seeking people interested in writing book reviews on these or other relevant books for publication in future issues of *The Asbury Journal*. Please contact the editor (Robert.danielson@asburyseminary.edu) if you are interested in reviewing a particular title. Reviews will be assigned on a first come basis.

- Allen, Michael and Scott R. Swain  
2015 *Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4979-8. Price: \$19.99.
- Anatolios, Khaled, ed.  
2014 *The Holy Trinity in the Life of the Church*. Holy Cross Studies in Patristic Theology and History. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4897-5. Price\$30.00.
- Arnold, Bill T. and Richard S. Hess, eds.  
2014 *Ancient Israel's History: An Introduction to Issues and Sources*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-3930-0. Price: \$44.99.
- Baker, David W.  
2014 *Genesis 37-50: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press. ISBN: 978-1-9327-9268-3. Price: \$49.95.
- Beale, G. K.  
2015 *Revelation: A Shorter Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6621-9. Price: \$35.00.
- Bender, Kimlyn J.  
2014 *Confessing Christ for Church and World: Studies in Modern Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. ISBN: 978-0-8308-4059-5. Price: \$40.00.

- Bird, Michael F.  
2014 *The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6776-6. Price: \$30.00.
- Branson, Mark Lau and Nicolas Warnes, eds.  
2014 *Starting Missional Churches: Life with God in the Neighborhood*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. ISBN: 978-0-8308-4116-5. Price: \$18.00.
- Brunner, Daniel L., Jennifer L. Butler, and A. J. Swoboda  
2014 *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology: Foundations in Scripture, Theology, History, and Praxis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4965-1. Price: \$26.99.
- Burns, J. Patout, Jr. and Robin M. Jensen  
2014 *Christianity in Roman Africa: the Development of its Practices and Beliefs*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6931-9. Price: \$55.00.
- Burridge, Richard A.  
2014 *Four Gospels, One Jesus?: A Symbolic Reading*. Third edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7101-5. Price: \$20.00.
- Campbell, Douglas A.  
2014 *Framing Paul: An Epistolary Biography*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7151-0. Price: \$39.00.
- Carman, John B. and Chilkuri Vasantha Rao  
2014 *Christian in South Indian Villages, 1959-2009: Decline and Revival in Telangana*. Studies in the History of Christian Mission Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6867-1. Price: \$35.00.
- Crisp, Thomas M., Steve L. Porter, and Gregg A. Ten Elshof, eds.  
2014 *Christian Scholarship in the Twenty-First Century: Prospects and Perils*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7144-2. Price: \$22.00.
- Decker, Rodney J.  
2014 *Reading Koine Greek: An Introduction and Integrated Workbook*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-3928-7. Price: \$49.99.
- deClaissé-Walford, Nancy, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner  
2014 *The Book of Psalms*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN: 978-0-8028-2493-6. Price: \$60.00.

- Diller, Kevin  
2014 *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma: How Karl Barth and Alvin Plantinga Provide a Unified Response*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. ISBN: 978-0-8308-3906-3. Price: \$30.00.
- Fee, Gordon D.  
2014 *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Revised Edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7136-7. Price: \$65.00.
- Fergusson, David  
2014 *Creation*. Guides to Theology Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7196-1. Price: \$18.00.
- Froehlich, Karlfried  
2014 *Sensing the Scriptures: Aminadab's Chariot and the Predicament of Biblical Interpretation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7080-3. Price: \$25.00.
- Gehrz, Christopher, ed.  
2015 *The Pietist Vision of Christian Higher Education*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. ISBN: 978-0-8308-4071-7. Price: \$26.00.
- Green, Gene L., Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo, eds.  
2014 *Jesus Without Borders: Christology in the Majority World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7082-7. Price: \$20.00.
- Halcomb, T. Michael W.  
2013 *A Handbook of Ancient Greek Grammatical Terms: Greek-English and English-Greek*. Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse. ISBN: 978-0-6158-0409-5. Price: \$16.41.  
2013 *800 Words and Images: A New Testament Greek Vocabulary Builder*. Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse. ISBN: 978-0-6158-2883-1. Price: \$22.99.
- Halcomb, T. Michael W. and Fredrick J. Long  
2014 *Mark: GlossaHouse Illustrated Greek-English New Testament*. Accessible Greek Resources and Online Studies Series. Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse. ISBN: 978-0-6922-0600-3. Price: \$19.99.
- Halcomb, T. Michael W. and Jordan Day  
2013 *The Path to Learning Greek*. Accessible Greek Resources and Online Studies Series. Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse. ISBN: 978-0-6157-9985-8. Price: \$21.99.

- Halcomb, T. Michael W., Kristi G. Halcomb, and Lydia C. Halcomb  
 2014 *Where are the Carrots? A Story in Koine*. Accessible Greek Resources and Online Studies Series. Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse. ISBN: 978-0-6159-6054-8. Price: \$9.50.
- Harrison, J. Klay and Chad M. Foster, eds.  
 2013 *1-3 John: A General Reader*. Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse. ISBN: 978-0-6158-2854-1. Price: \$12.99.
- Johnston, Robert K.  
 2014 *God's Wider Presence: Reconsidering General Revelation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4945-3. Price: \$25.99.
- Kapic, Kelly M., ed.  
 2014 *Sanctification: Explorations in Theology and Practice*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. ISBN: 978-0-8308-4062-5. Price: \$28.00.
- Keener, Craig S.  
 2014 *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: 15:1-23:35*. Volume Three. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4838-8. Price: \$59.99.
- Leonard, Bill J.  
 2014 *A Sense of the Heart: Christian Religious Experience in the United States*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. ISBN: 978-1-4267-5490-6. Price: \$44.99.
- Levering, Matthew  
 2014 *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation: The Mediation of the Gospel through Church and Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4924-8. Price: \$44.99.
- Lewis, Donald M. and Richard V. Pierard, eds.  
 2014 *Global Evangelicalism: Theology, History and Culture in Regional Perspective*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. ISBN: 978-0-8308-4057-1. Price: \$30.00.
- Long, Fredrick J. and T. Michael W. Halcomb  
 2011 *A Parallel & Interlinear New Testament Polyglot: Luke-Acts: in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, English, German, and French*. Hexapla volume One. Wilmore, KY: Glossa House. ISBN: 978-0-6155-3789-4. Price: \$29.99.
- Long, Fredrick J. and T. Michael Halcomb  
 2014 *Speaking Koine Greek: A Conversational Phrasebook*. Accessible Greek Resources and Online Studies Series. Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse. ISBN: 978-0-6159-7627-3. Price: \$9.99.

Loyer, Kenneth M.

2014 *God's Love Through the Spirit: The Holy Spirit in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley*. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press. ISBN: 978-0-8132-2599-9. Price: \$65.00.

Madueme, Hans, and Michael Reeves, eds.

2014 *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspectives*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-3992-8. Price: \$26.99.

Matz, Brian

2014 *Patristics and Catholic Social Thought: Hermeneutical Models for a Dialogue*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press. ISBN: 978-0-268-03531-0. Price: \$36.00.

Maughan, Steven S.

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