EDITOR
Robert Danielson

EDITORIAL BOARD
Kenneth J. Collins
Professor of Historical Theology and Wesley Studies
J. Steven O’Malley
Professor of Methodist Holiness History

EDITORIAL ADVISORY PANEL
William Abraham, Perkins School of Theology
David Bundy, New York Theological Seminary
Ted Campbell, Perkins School of Theology
Hyungkeun Choi, Seoul Theological University
Richard Heitzenrater, Duke University Divinity School
Scott Kisker, Wesley Theological Seminary
Sarah Lancaster, Methodist Theological School of Ohio
Gareth Lloyd, University of Manchester
Randy Maddox, Duke University Divinity School
Nantachai Medjuhon, Muang Thai Church, Bangkok, Thailand
Stanley Nwoji, Pastor, Lagos, Nigeria
Paul Numrich, Theological Consortium of Greater Columbus
Dana Robert, Boston University
Howard Snyder, Manchester Wesley Research Centre
L. Wesley de Souza, Candler School of Theology
Leonard Sweet, Drew University School of Theology
Amos Yong, Regent University
Hwa Yung, United Methodist Church, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

All inquiries regarding subscriptions, back issues, permissions to reprint, manuscripts for submission, and books for review should be addressed to:

The Asbury Journal
Asbury Theological Seminary
204 N. Lexington Avenue, Wilmore, KY 40390
FAX: 859-858-2375
http://place.asburyseminary.edu/asburyjournal/
© Copyright 2016 by Asbury Theological Seminary
# The Asbury Journal

**VOLUME 71:1**  
Spring 2016

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>From the Editor, <em>Robert Danielson</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>A Tribute to Ellsworth Kalas</td>
<td><em>Kenneth Cain Kinghorn</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Personal Reflections on Christian Endeavor</td>
<td><em>Christine D. Pohl</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Sending Silent Missionaries: How One Man’s Writing Helped Transform Youth and the Global Church</td>
<td><em>Brian Hull</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Floating Christian Endeavor as a Model for Mission to Migrants</td>
<td><em>Robert A. Danielson</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>The Kingdom Life and the Witness of the Church</td>
<td><em>Art McPhee</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Justice and Truth, Theology in the Context of Emerging Young Adults</td>
<td><em>M. Andrew Gale</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>From Jerusalem to Jerusalem: Essential Contours of the Modern Messianic Movement</td>
<td><em>Benjamin J. Snyder</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>Globalization and its Effects on the Expansion of the Church: Doing and Being Church Among Immigrants in the USA</td>
<td><em>Sheryl Marks-Williams</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
145 Folk Religion and the Pentecostalism Surge in Latin America
   William Price Payne

Features

175 From the Archives: Christian Endeavor: Badges, Conventions, and Youth Ministry

184 Special Book Review Essay
   Aaron Perry

198 Book Reviews

219 Books Received
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.

ISSN 1090-5642
Published in April and October
Articles and reviews may be copied for personal or classroom use. Permission to otherwise reprint essays and reviews must be granted permission by the editor and the author.

Postmaster: Send address changes to:
The Asbury Journal
Asbury Theological Seminary
204 North Lexington Avenue
Wilmore, Kentucky 40390

Beginning with the Fall 2016 issue of The Asbury Journal, the journal will become completely online at:
http://place.asburyseminary.edu/asburyjournal/.

People and institutions wishing to receive print versions, can buy print copies of the entire volume at the end of the year. Free full volumes will be used to complete any outstanding subscriptions.
“For Christ and the Church!” This was the primary slogan and theme of the Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavor, which is being celebrated in this issue of *The Asbury Journal*. But it is also a great slogan to accompany the Advanced Research Program’s Interdisciplinary Colloquium held on October 9, 2015 at Asbury Theological Seminary and themed, “The Church and Its Expansion.” The papers from this colloquium are also presented here, along with one other paper to round out this global theme. In 2015, Asbury Theological Seminary Archives and Special Collections became the home for material from the International Society of Christian Endeavor, currently headquartered in Edmore, Michigan and material from the World Christian Endeavor headquartered in Germany. While many younger readers will be unfamiliar with Christian Endeavor, or C.E. as it was often known, this organization was the first Christian Youth Ministry, which expanded to millions of members in over one hundred nations in the world, from its founding in 1881 in Portland, Maine, until today. In this edition of *The Asbury Journal*, Dr. Christine Pohl shares how C.E. impacted her life and ministry at a personal level. Dr. Brian Hull and myself write on this historic impact of Christian Endeavor, through the writing ministry of its founder, Dr. Francis E. Clark, and through one small offshoot, the Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor, which provides an interesting model for potential mission among migrant workers in today’s world. In *From the Archives*, more of the history of C.E. is discussed through its use of badges over the course of its history.

From the Interdisciplinary Colloquium comes a number of papers, which would be right at home in any Christian Endeavor Convention. Dr. Art McPhee explores the themes of the kingdom of God within Jesus’ teaching and its force for the ongoing work of evangelism and church planting. Andrew Gale picks up a theme very much at home with C.E. in looking at the effects of postmodernism and views of justice and truth on the theology of emerging young adults. Benjamin Snyder examines the development and growth of Jewish believers in Christ in the modern Messianic movement. Thomas Lyons takes us back to Luke-Acts to examine the relationship of water baptism, the laying on of hands, and glossolalia as evidence of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Sheryl Marks-Williams picks up the theme of immigrants once more to look at how the church in the United States can do more
to both include and plant new congregations among immigrant populations in our nation. All of these themes clearly pick up on Christian Endeavor’s slogan, “For Christ and the Church!”

Finally, a fascinating article by William Payne examines the modern growth of Pentecostalism in Latin America, and examines this growth through the lens of folk religions. He proposes the interesting idea that Pentecostalism has come to take the place of folk Catholicism as a new sort of folk Christianity, which can feed the need of popular religion without becoming syncretistic. This argument deserves much more focus from the Church as global Pentecostalism continues to take center stage in World Christianity. In addition to this wealth of articles about the mission and goals of the Church reaching out through the power of the Holy Spirit as it spreads the Good News of the kingdom of God, we also start this issue with a reflection on the life of Dr. Ellsworth Kalas, whose life also exhibited the theme of Christian Endeavor, as one who truly lived “For Christ and the Church!”

In conclusion, I want to announce that this issue of The Asbury Journal will be the last print issue. For the past few years, we have been taking The Asbury Journal online, where it currently has been downloaded over 82,000 times since we started going digital, and this has covered some 192 nations around the globe. We will continue to publish digitally, and make this material free for all who want to visit our site at http://place.asburyseminary.edu/asburyjournal/. Back issues are currently being made available, and we will offer a volume of the combined issues for sale at the end of each year for those who wish to still read us in print. I sincerely hope as the articles in this issue show, The Asbury Journal’s commitment to spreading scriptural holiness and the teachings of the Wesleyan-Holiness heritage through the world has not waned, but only grown stronger. We, like Christian Endeavor before us, continue forward into this new digital world with a common theme, we do what we do, “For Christ and the Church!”

Robert Danielson Ph.D.
Kenneth Cain Kinghorn

*A Tribute to Ellsworth Kalas*

*Kenneth Cain Kinghorn* is a retired Professor of Church History and Historical Theology at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore. He is the author of numerous books including: *Gifts of the Spirit, The Gospel of Grace, The Heritage of American Methodism, John Wesley on Christian Beliefs, John Wesley on the Sermon on the Mount, John Wesley on Christian Practice,* and *The Story of Asbury Theological Seminary.*
J. Ellsworth Kalas was born in Sioux City, Iowa, on 14 February 1923—the same year that Henry Clay Morrison began Asbury Theological Seminary. The members of the Kalas household went to church twice weekly, and the family attended church every night during its frequent revival meetings. Father and Mother Kalas had limited formal educations, yet they were readers and faithful Sunday school workers. Ellsworth’s father was intellectually curious enough about national and world events to subscribe to *The Sioux City Tribune*, even though it cost three cents a day and five cents on Sundays. At that time, many workers in the United States received a wage of one dollar a day. Ellsworth said of his parents, “I will never stop marveling at their courage; not the courage of a moment in raw battle or in crisis, but the 24/7 courage to get up every morning . . . struggle to find work, and eat modestly.”

Ellsworth was six years old when the Great Depression began to blanket America. Twenty-five percent of the country’s wage earners, including Ellsworth’s father, lost their jobs. To economize during those difficult days, Ellsworth went barefoot in the summer to lengthen the life of his shoes. To obtain inexpensive housing, the family moved into an apartment, for which water was available only from a faucet across the hall. Two bathrooms—one for men and one for women—accommodated a dozen apartments. Years later, Ellsworth remarked, “Today, some of my friends have walk-in closets bigger than any bedroom I knew in my boyhood. . . . But we had a surprising sense of dignity and self-respect, and we believed that virtue had its own rewards, and we intended to pursue those virtues.” When he was a child, Ellsworth sometimes sat on the front steps and saluted those who passed by with a hearty “Good morning.” Later he mused, “This experience may have prepared me for the long decades of greeting people at church doors on several thousand Sunday mornings.”

Ellsworth said that he was awkward on the elementary school playground, but agile in the classroom. “I didn’t survive even the first cut when I went out for the football and basketball teams,” he said, “but this meant that I gave my full energy to the debate team and the a cappella choir—matters far, far more valuable to me in the years since then.” He eventually memorized most of the hymns of the church, and for the rest of his long life he never needed to open a hymnal for congregational singing.

During Ellsworth’s eleventh year, he came to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Others noticed that he was serious about God and the activities of the church. His family attended the Helping Hand Mission Church, which had started as a rescue mission. He later reflected, “There was nothing glamorous about this church experience, nothing to make me think the ministry was a profession.”
Nonetheless, as a boy he sensed that God was calling him to become a preacher. He bought a five-cent notebook to record sermon illustrations and information gleaned from the preaching he heard. In junior high school, his good grades qualified him to take Latin, which he opted to do. He understood that Latin would give him a better grasp of language and grammar, both of which would make him a better preacher when he grew up.

After his boyhood commitment to Christ, Kalas began to read the entire Bible every year, a practice he continued to follow the rest of his life. He said, “Every day I find something new. . . . The newness is a result of the depth of the material and the quite wonderful way the Holy Spirit adapts it to the changing patterns of my life. . . . All of the . . . books I’ve written . . . are a product of my lifetime of Bible reading.”

When Kalas attended a fiftieth-anniversary class reunion, a former classmate showed him a printed interview that had appeared in an eighth-grade student publication. “My answers were almost unbelievably inane,” he said. “But when the interviewer asked what I hoped to be when I grew up, I answered something like this: ‘I want to be a preacher and write books.’” Before he reached his teen years, he informed his pastor that he would be glad to fill in for him if he ever needed to be away on a Sunday. In his mid-eighties Kalas remarked, “When I recall some of the arrogant things I said in my teens and twenties, I’m astonished that God didn’t judge me a hopeless case and smite me dead.” Nonetheless, in his early teen years, the “boy preacher” began holding revival meetings in neighboring churches.

In 1951, Kalas graduated with honors from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in literature. In 1954, he obtained his Bachelor of Divinity degree from Garrett Theological Seminary. At Garrett, he received the Trustees Award for Scholarship and the [Daniel] Kidder Preaching Prize. He then took further graduate study in American history at the University of Wisconsin and at Harvard University. Dr. Kalas also received honorary degrees from four colleges and universities.

Kalas served Methodist pastorates for thirty-eight years. In Wisconsin, he served churches in Watertown, Green Bay, and Madison. His last pastorate was in Cleveland Heights, Ohio at Church of the Saviour. During his tenure there, he developed a television ministry that attracted thousands of viewers. Next, he served for five years as an evangelist with the World Methodist Council (1988–93). In this ministry, he preached in remote places and in venues where the congregations numbered in the thousands. Regardless of time, place, or circumstance, he considered it an honor and joy to preach the word of God.
Ellsworth Kalas’s pulpit presence was impressive. He was a tall man with a resonant baritone voice and a winning smile. He possessed a mastery of the English language, an encyclopedic knowledge of Scripture, and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He preached without notes, and often his messages moved congregations with the effect of a biblical prophet.

Kalas was also a churchman who stayed abreast of denominational developments. His work with the World Methodist Council and with board and committee memberships gave him exposure to the pulse of the church. In 1987, Kalas and several other prominent United Methodist pastors issued a letter of invitation that led forty-eight leading United Methodist members of the clergy to gather in Houston to draft and sign The Houston Declaration, This document called for the church to resist doctrinal drift and to maintain its stated commitment to classical, orthodox Christian doctrine and theology.

Dr. Kalas authored more than forty books, developed lectures for a variety of occasions, and wrote twelve Sunday school quarterlies for the United Methodist Church. He prepared a groundbreaking study, Christian Believer, designed to teach Christian theology to lay people. His devotional book The Grand Sweep; 365 Days from Genesis through Revelation enriched the lives of many people and led them to read daily from the Bible. His “backside” books on the Bible and its characters reached bestseller status.

In 1993, Dr. Kalas joined Asbury Theological Seminary’s faculty as a professor of preaching. He communicated his love of English to his students, and he appraised every word of their sermons, including their sermon titles. He affirmed the good work of his students’ written sermons, while making corrections in a way that encouraged them. He emphasized biblical fidelity to his students, and he said, “Beginnings matter, beauty matters, art and poetry matter, history matters.”

In 2004, Kalas became director of Asbury Theological Seminary’s Beeson International Center. The mission of this center is to form bridges between the Seminary and the global Church. The center focuses on preparing leaders for America and other nations to produce “legacy-quality demonstrations of what God will do through leaders who are convinced their worlds call for biblical transformation.”

In 2006, during a time of presidential transition at the Seminary, the school’s Board of Trustees asked Dr. Kalas to become the school’s interim president. During Kalas’s years as a pastor, he had received invitations to be considered for the presidency of several colleges and seminaries. He declined these overtures. However, the invitation to lead Asbury Seminary was different. He recalled, “When Jim Smith [the board chairman] . . . asked me to allow my name to be considered
as the interim leader at Asbury, I knew that I must say yes.” Ellsworth Kalas’s presidential term began on 18 October 2006. He was eighty-four years old.

Kalas had a good understanding of both the church and the academic arena. His integrity, wisdom, and interpersonal skills fitted him for the presidency of this large and growing seminary, with students from more than twenty nations. As a bonus, Ellsworth was one of the best preachers in America. President Kalas’s leadership at the Seminary proved effective in the several areas that needed special attention. At the 2008 spring meeting of the Board of the Seminary, the trustees changed his title from Interim President to President. When Ellsworth retired from the presidency of Asbury Seminary in 2009, he continued to teach homiletics.

When Ellsworth retired, people asked him, “What do you plan to do now?” He replied, “I plan to grow…. God delights in growing things, especially growing people. I’ve learned that we have to be intentional if we want to grow…. The growth I have in mind is focused on God.” In response to questions about retirement, he advised, “Buy a house on Gratitude Street…. The longer you live there the more you will love it. And believe me, you will enjoy your neighbors…. You purchase this property with humility, by acknowledging that you are deeply indebted to both God and people. You confess that you wouldn’t have anything if it weren’t given to you. The important thing is not only to realize this, but to acknowledge it— to say ‘thank you’ as often as you can, to God and to people.”

Having read many of J. Ellsworth Kalas’ writings and enjoyed a long friendship with him, this writer believes that Ellsworth’s life accords with the poetic words of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time.
Dr. J. Ellsworth Kalas
(Feb. 14, 1923 - Nov. 12, 2015)
Christine D. Pohl

Personal Reflections on Christian Endeavor

Christine D. Pohl is the Associate Provost for Faculty Development and Professor of Church in Society at Asbury Theological Seminary. She received her Ph.D. in Ethics and Society at Emory University in 1993, and she is the author of several books including Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition and Living into Community: Cultivating Practices that Sustain Us.
Outside of my family, Christian Endeavor was the most significant source of Christian formation for me during my junior and senior high school years. It provided a setting in which I formed close friendships, encountered other Christian traditions and communities, and learned leadership and service skills. In understated but important ways, it also helped to bond its young members to Christ and to their local church.

During my years in CE, I knew little about its origins or its important, even seminal, place in the development of youth ministry. I did know that it was where I wanted to be on Sunday nights. Combining discipleship, service projects, fun and fellowship, the weekly gatherings were a central part of my life.

In fact, no matter where my family was on Sunday afternoon, we were almost always back at church in time for the CE meeting on Sunday night. For my parents, who had four children, this meant a commitment of about twelve years to having their Sunday evenings shaped by Christian Endeavor. For my mother especially, it also meant a great deal of support work—running the annual CE dinner for two hundred people, arranging activities, and baking countless cakes for the weekly refreshments.

Our sponsors were a wonderful couple, Mr. and Mrs. Marshall. He was a New York City police officer; she had been in the WAVES during WWII, and together they were raising three children. They were so beloved that my siblings and I named our turtles after them. Embodying a generous combination of guidance and good humor, they consistently encouraged CE members toward faithfulness, creativity, and leadership.

The church within which I grew up was what we would now call “mainline,” with an independent congregational polity and a theologically liberal pastor. Christian Endeavor provided my most consistent exposure to the importance of the Lordship of Christ. The pledge we repeated regularly, “Trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for strength, I promise Him that I will strive to do whatever He would like to have me do…” reminded us of the centrality of Christ to our lives. The motto of CE, “For Christ and the Church,” undergirded our group identity. Romans 12:1-2 were our foundational guiding verses.

I do not remember much in the way of focused evangelistic outreach, though we were certainly encouraged to bring friends from school to CE meetings and special activities. The emphasis was primarily on developing the youth of the church toward responsible Christian adulthood. As I look back on those six years, several features stand out.
1. CE provided my first significant exposure to the wider Christian world. Because it was an international, interdenominational, and interracial movement, activities beyond our local group brought us into contact with Christians from varied backgrounds. Attendance at city, state, national, and international gatherings gave me a vision for a much bigger and more diverse Christian community than what I was exposed to in the local church. The larger gatherings also tended to be more explicitly evangelistic, biblical, and response-oriented than our weekly meetings.

2. CE gave me major opportunities to develop leadership skills and a love for serving in the church. Members were expected to take turns leading the meetings, and officers were given significant responsibilities. Our CE group was very involved in the local church and we were expected to take part in its activities, leadership, and worship services.

3. CE provided important experiences of friendship among members and with adult leaders. Our CE sponsors were the first adults beyond my family with whom I developed close relationships. They were mentors before we used that language. Putting on plays, roller-skating, beach parties, helping with church activities, and sharing meals were an important part of growing up. It was nothing very flashy, but the activities often also served to connect us with other adults in the church.

I graduated from high school and from Christian Endeavor just as the American youth movement exploded in various directions. Youth ministry and Christian outreach soon developed in forms quite different from CE. But the steady, church-based nurture and encouragement from Christian Endeavor provided a strong foundation as I negotiated college years that were extremely volatile. CE provided a background and a basis from which I was able to move among very diverse Christian worlds—mainline, evangelical, and charismatic—with both an appreciative and discerning approach.

When I learned that Asbury Theological Seminary had acquired the archives of Christian Endeavor, I felt as if two very separate but crucial parts of my Christian journey were unexpectedly but happily being connected. I praise God that both have challenged me over and over again to faithfully “serve Christ and the Church.”
Brian Hull

Sending Silent Missionaries: How One Man’s Writing Helped Transform Youth and the Global Church

Abstract

Francis Clark started the Christian Endeavor Society in one small church in Portland, Maine. This article highlights Clark’s writing as one of the main factors in the incredible growth of Christian Endeavor all over the world. Clark wrote because he could do it well and it was the only way for him to reach many of the people he wanted to communicate with. Clark wrote mostly about Christian Endeavor and his writings included pamphlets, articles, editorials, books, and Christian Endeavor reports. Clark wrote everywhere he could, including while he was traveling. Clark was effective, reaching people all over the world through his silent missionaries.

Keywords: Francis Clark, Christian Endeavor, missionary writing, young people, history of youth ministry

Brian Hull is an Associate Professor of Youth Ministry at Asbury University. He has his Ph.D. in Intercultural Studies from Asbury Theological Seminary and his M.A. in Christian Education with a Youth Ministry Diploma from Nazarene Theological Seminary. Brian has served in youth ministry for more than 20 years, including work at the local church and denominational levels. Brian continues to present and write about youth culture, youth as leaders, and the Christian Endeavor Society.
Introduction

On a cold and snowy February night in 1881, Francis Clark, a young pastor of a Congregationalist church in Portland, Maine, would start the first Christian Endeavor Society. The purpose of this group was to reach young people for Christ and empower them for serving and leading the church. From the seeds of this small group of young people, Clark would see a global movement grow and blossom into eighty thousand societies with over five million members. The spread of Christian Endeavor began with the pen of Francis Clark and Clark’s writing would become a significant factor for growth throughout his life. Clark would use his gift of writing to inform the world about this new innovation, educate societies on best practices, inspire new innovations, and unite young people for Christ and the church. This article will examine why Clark wrote, what he wrote, where he wrote, and evaluate the effectiveness of his writing.

In the late 1800’s Sunday school had moved into the church. Its shared curriculum was now aimed at mostly younger children. Young people often left Sunday school by the time they were in their early teens with no real place to serve in the church until they could become church members at 18 years of age. This left a significant gap in reaching and training young people in the church. Clark’s innovation, the Christian Endeavor societies, trained young people to serve in the church by giving them opportunities to participate, to take action in their faith, and to lead. This interdenominational approach of empowering young people for service was widely successful because it was simple, adaptable, and reinforced the local church.

Christian Endeavor would grow organizationally as well. By the time of Clark’s death, Christian Endeavor societies would be found all over the world; everywhere from local churches in the West to Floating Endeavors in the sea to new evangelistic movements in the Far East. Christian Endeavor would become organized into Christian Endeavor International and the World Christian Endeavor Union. Christian Endeavor conventions were held all over the world and would see hundreds of thousands of young people attend. Christian Endeavor would develop leaders for the church and for the world, boasting alumni as leaders of businesses, civic organizations, denominations, countries, and local churches.

Clark would remain the leader of Christian Endeavor throughout his lifetime and would send his writing as “silent missionaries” around the world to advance the cause of Christ and the church. Clark wrote because it was effective, cheap, and powerful and he was good at it. He wrote over 4,000 articles and over 50 books. These don’t include the many pamphlets, convention reports, and sermons.
that Clark wrote in over 40 years as the leader of Christian Endeavor. Clark would travel all over the world for the cause of Christian Endeavor and would write almost non-stop while traveling or not. His writing was effective as a source of inspiration, support, encouragement, and unity for Christian Endeavor. Francis Clark used his silent missionaries to reach around the world for Christ.

**Reason for Writing**

One of the reasons that Clark turned to writing was that it was not possible to reach people any other way. Clark had an awareness that other churches and pastors were trying to reach young people just as he was in his local church, so he shared his idea and the early results. Clark wrote an article about the Christian Endeavor Society entitled, “How One Church Looks After Its Young People,” which appeared in *The Congregationalist* newspaper. “This article, which was merely a brief description of the methods and plans of the Society of Christian Endeavor, now so well known, brought me an unexpected correspondence. I expected to hear no more from this than from any other newspaper article; and, as every writer knows, that is usually very little. But this article seemed to be on a subject which was exercising the minds of many” (F. Clark 1906: 53-54). Clark had stumbled upon two important ideas: how to involve young people in the church and how to share his ideas with others.

In October 1881 North Church in Newburyport, Massachusetts formed the second society. Rev. Charles Perry Mills in his first year at North Church had seen his young people experience a revival with many conversions, much like had happened where Clark was pastor at Williston, and adopted Christian Endeavor as soon as he heard about it (F. Clark 1906: 57). Newburyport was the first to “second the motion” of Christian Endeavor, but the article Clark wrote reached even further. “… a pastor in Honolulu placed in his scrap-book an article by Dr. Clark, entitled ‘How One Church takes care of its Young People.’ This article led the pastor to think that a Christian Endeavor Society would be a good thing for his Church. It was started, and a scrap-book article had led to it. These Honolulu Endeavorers often had passing travellers of different nationalities visiting their meetings, and they in turn carried the seeds of Christian Endeavor to many other places” (Chaplin 1900:49).

The article was reprinted in *The Sunday-School Times*. The original article and its reprint grabbed the attention of many. “So many were the requests for information that I was soon found necessary to print with a gelantine pad some copies of the constitution which the Williston Society had adopted, to send to inquiring friends” (F. Clark 1906:54). The church wanted more information and
ideas, but Clark did not have the means to accommodate their demands. He shared what he could and it proved fruitful.

Clark was overwhelmed with requests for more information. A year after the formation of the first society, Clark recorded in his journal, “It does take a good deal of time to answer all the letters about the Young People’s Society but I think it pays. It seems to me I can do more good by working up this method of Christian nurture for the young than in any other way. I am almost ashamed to write so much for the papers about it but I feel the importance of the subject exceedingly” (E. Clark 1930:80). After the second society formed, “Demands upon the parent society and its pastor for information concerning the work became more and more numerous. A private bureau of information was practically established, whose expense was largely divided between Mr. W.H. Pennell, the first signer of the constitution, and the pastor. The constitution was printed, and one or two leaflets were prepared to save busy men the labor of an overburdening correspondence” (F. Clark 1906:58). These leaflets, copies of the constitution and a few other documents were copied and sent to those with interest. Within the first year three or four societies were added. In 1882, to add support to the ideas and sparse leaflets about Christian Endeavor, Clark wrote and published the book, *The Children and the Church: And the Young Person’s Society of Christian Endeavor As A Means of Bringing Them Together*. The effectiveness of written communication and the interest in Christian Endeavor were growing.

Clark may not have set out to use writing to expand a youth society, but he was also not a new comer to writing. While attending Dartmouth, Clark would learn and begin to show excellence in both oration and journalism. Journalism was something that Clark seemed to enjoy and was able to do well. His first serious attempts were in the summer of 1872 when he accompanied his father on a trip to New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward’s Island and served as a correspondent for both the *Boston Globe* and the *Congregationalist* (E. Clark 1930:48). Clark earned some money doing this and began to excel at writing. Clark was one of the ten editors chosen from the senior class to write for *The Dartmouth*, the college paper (Chaplin 1900:13). Journalism became an important part of Clark’s life and became a serious career option, causing him to wrestle with his call to ministry. He did decide to attend seminary and go directly into ministry, but Clark clearly enjoyed and was skilled in writing.

Not only was writing Clark’s best option for sharing about Christian Endeavor, it was also inexpensive and reached a growing market. As the American economy began to grow, schooling became more prominent and technology eased the cost and difficulty of publishing. Reading began to take a significant place in
the lives of people. “Reading played a very prominent role in the lives of most Americans in the Gilded Age. …reading material was the only mass medium and a vital leisure activity” (Shrock 2004:151). The volume of printed material increased as did the options for reading material.

The print industry underwent changes that revolutionized print culture through standardization of production, increased efficiency, and large bureaucratic structures, which produced a mass market. While the first half of the nineteenth century had been characterized by a scarcity of published reading material, the second half of the century witnessed a massive growth in printed material. The expansion of distribution networks such as railroads, postal subscriptions, and mail order catalogs vastly increase the ability of all Americans to receive printed material. Accompanying this was in increase in the amount of printed matter available to Americans in the Gilded Age; the new books published grew by 300 percent between 1880 and 1900. There was a corresponding growth in newspaper, which experienced a 700 percent increase in circulation between 1870 and 1900. (Shrock 2004:151)

Not only was a mass market being created, there were finally ways to print and deliver the supply to meet the demand.

Publishing magazines and papers specifically aimed at young people also became successful. “Particularly important leaders in respectable middle-class magazines were the Youth’s Companion, with its behemoth circulation of 500,000 in 1900…” (Shrock 2004:165). The effectiveness of these papers and of publishing in general was not lost on Clark.

Into this growing field of printed publications, a young pastor with experience in journalism leapt. Clark had a story to tell, a vision to share and the means to communicate. He was able to utilize this new tool to reach the world. Francis Clark always liked to write. During college, as mentioned above, he wrestled for a while with writing as an alternate vocation. He understood his own proclivity toward writing. “We read of people who are born with silver spoons in their mouths. It is equally apposite to speak of other people who were born with a pen between their fingers. Without intending to boast at all of literary achievements, I think I may claim to belong to the latter class, certainly not of the former. I cannot remember a time when I did not like to write if I had anything to write about” (F. Clark 1922:670). His first book, The Life of William E. Harward, was written in 1879 while he was still at Andover (E. Clark 1930:85). It turns out that Clark had an enormous amount of things to write about, starting with the Christian Endeavor Society. “The journalistic urge was in constant evidence. Mr. Clark seems never to
have been happier than when he had a pen in hand. In 1884 arrangements were
made to write regularly for The Christian Work, Illustrated Christian Weekly Messenger,
Homiletic Monthly, Pulpit Treasury, and Wellspring” (E. Clark 1930:93). Clark, the writer,
did what he had a desire and outlet to do: tell people about the success of the
Christian Endeavor Society in his own church.

Content of Writing

Clark would write widely over his lifetime. His writings would cover
pamphlets, articles, editorials, Christian Endeavor reports and books. While Clark
wrote largely about Christian Endeavor and the church, he also wrote travel books
and articles. His writings about Christian Endeavor would cover the spectrum of
pastoral care to devotionals to sharing best practices.

As Christian Endeavor grew, Clark and the other leaders realized the need
for a publication of their own. The effectiveness of the pamphlets was waning and
Clark’s writing was sought after on a regular basis. The idea of starting a paper
for the Society was formally presented in the President’s address at the fourth
convention by then President Van Patten. Two years later the dream became a
reality. Van Patten reported in his President’s report at the 6th convention,

For the past three years the importance of having some periodical that should adequately represent the Christian Endeavor movement, its aims, its methods, and its necessities, has been a subject discussed in all our meetings. Its establishment was longed for, but never accomplished because the United Society never had the funds necessary to do it. But those active promoters of our work, Mr. Clark, Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Hill, and other friends, decided that it would not do to wait longer, but what could not be done by the society must be done by private enterprise. And so, having opportunity to secure control of The Golden Rule which had already been to some extent identified with us, they bravely undertook the task of establishing a Christian Endeavor paper.” (Sixth Annual Conference of the Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavor 1887:43)

At that same convention Clark was elected President of Christian Endeavor
and “Mr. Clark was named the first editor-in-chief of the paper. Its name was
subsequently changed to The Christian Endeavor World, and it attained a circulation
of nearly 100,000” (E. Clark 1930:99). The new paper grew a large audience that
coincided with the growth of the movement. “An Editor-in-Chief of the Christian
Endeavor World, formerly the Golden Rule, he had for many years the responsibility of
conducting an important weekly organ. How ably he guided it may be gauged from
the fact that the official organ of Christian Endeavor became, in the course of years, one of the most popular and successful of the religious weeklies in America… It is not too much to say that Dr. Clark’s literary and journalistic work was one of the prime factors in the progress of the movement” (Chaplin 1900:125). The paper became a vehicle for Clark to do what he seemed to care for most: help the church. It became a weekly source of encouragement and support, a gathering of best practices, and a reminder for Christian Endeavorers that they were not alone.

When Clark took over as editor-in-chief in 1892 The Golden Rule had a circulation of 70,000 in the United States with only three other religious weeklies with a larger circulation. By 1896 the circulation of the paper had grown to 106,000 and it remained in the top four Christian weekly papers in the United States (Batten 1897). The effectiveness of the paper of meeting a need in the church was without question. This growing circulation also led to further spread of Christian Endeavor Societies.

The growth of the movement continued. Clark realized very quickly that this manner of “preaching” was effectively a missionary work. Speaking about his first year of Presidency and the issue of handling growth,

There was only one thing to do, and that was to thank God for Guttenberg and the printing-press, and make the most of the printer’s ink. This has been done to the best of our ability; much thought and much time have been put into these publications, and, as a result, in part at least, of those labors, two thousand five hundred and seventy-three societies have been added to the previously long list, an increase in one year of over one hundred per cent. This method of preaching by the use of “white paper and black type” has the advantage of being accurate, swift, capable of reaching an universal audience, and being comparatively inexpensive. One of these missionaries can be equipped and sent, at a moment’s notice, to California for two cents, to China for five cents, or to South Africa or Australia for another nickel. These silent missionaries have been nine in number and have been called THE GOLDEN RULE.” (Seventh Annual Conference of the Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavor 1888:51)

Clark was able to utilize this new method of mass media to inform and transform churches and their ministry to young people all over the world.

The writings of Clark became his “silent missionaries” that he could send at a moment’s notice all over the world. The paper was very successful and “It was the pioneer of a host of Christian Endeavor publications, in all corners of the world” (Chaplin 1900:126). The writing did not stop for Clark.
Much of my time of late has been occupied with writing fortieth anniversary stories of Christian Endeavor, which the *Independent*, the *Continent*, *New Era*, *Christian Herald*, and the *Boston Transcript* have asked for. The latter, next Saturday, will give us a page, and when I had sent in one article, like Oliver Twist, asked for another. The story seems to be more in demand than ever before, and all the religious papers have carried it. Former Governor Glynn of New York, though a Roman Catholic, wrote for his Albany paper a very laudatory signed editorial. (E. Clark 1930:178-179)

Clark was an excellent writer and this helped the paper gain readership and Christian Endeavor to gain a following. “Partly because he was personally acquainted with so many of those for whom he wrote, and partly because of the intense earnestness and transparent sincerity of the writer, his books make the reader feel as if he had been admitted by special favour to the friendship of the author…” (Chaplin 1900:129). In the paper, Clark would often write several articles and in the beginning would write the editorial responses to letters. However, his pastoral tone seemed to win people over. “One of the ways in which Dr. Clark’s fluent pen was most serviceable was in the weekly inditing of a ‘Familiar Letter’ to the readers of the *Christian Endeavor World*. Sometimes a chatty account of some great Convention; sometimes an echo of work or experience; sometimes a stirring call to some one of the forward and upward steps which ‘Father Endeavor Clark’ from time to time advocated by tongue and pen; sometimes, and most frequently, a heart-to-heart talk about the deepest things” (Chaplin 1900:127). This kind of connection became important for Clark as he travelled and assisted with Christian Endeavor conventions.

Clark travelled all over the world in his lifetime for the purpose of supporting Christian Endeavor. The articles in *Christian Endeavor World* would go before and behind him, encouraging Christian Endeavorers. He would often arrive in countries he had never before visited to find Christian Endeavor societies started and thriving in large part because of the paper. As mentioned above, Clark’s articles would find their way to strategic locations, like Honolulu, where they would be shared and their principles adapted and adopted.

Clark’s books also covered a large range of styles and topics. He wrote training materials for Christian Endeavor detailing organization and history (F. Clark 1903, F. Clark 1887, and H. Clark 1904). He wrote collections of Christian Endeavor stories highlighting some of the “heroes” of the organization’s history (F. Clark, 1892). He also wrote devotional books to support Christian Endeavors
emphasis on Scripture reading and prayer (Clements and F. Clark 1904). He wrote an autobiography at the end of his life, *Memories of Many Men in Many Lands* (F. Clark 1922). In books such as *The Kingdom Within*, he wrote and compiled books that were “selections” from Christian exemplars to help expose young people to a wider range of Christian literature and thoughts (F. Clark 1898). In addition to these books, many of the themes and topics of chapters showed up as sermons, articles, and pamphlets.

Clark also wrote and delivered an annual report at the Christian Endeavor conventions every year. These “state of the society” addresses were inspirational, challenging and pastoral. These worked to unify the message of Christian Endeavor across the world and drive Christian Endeavor societies to join in the annual goals and agendas of Christian Endeavor. Many innovations were shared this way including: the Junior Christian Endeavor society (1884); the Intermediate Society (1885); the Alumni Fellowship Association (1921); the use of local, state, and district unions (1886); an emphasis on tithing (called the Tenth Legion) (1896); an emphasis on sending and funding missionaries (called the Macedonian Phalanx) (1894); a focus on Scripture reading and prayer (called the “Quiet Hour”) (1897); the Family Endeavor (1898); and the implementation of “Christian Endeavor Experts” (1906) who knew the history and values of the society.

Clark wrote largely about and for Christian Endeavor, but not exclusively. From his travels he recorded travel logs, which were widely popular in the United States including *Our Journey Around the World*, which went through five editions (F. Clark and H. Clark 1895). He also used the insights gained from travelling to celebrate the culture of recent immigrants to America (F. Clark 1913 and F. Clark 1919). Clark was able to make money off of these travel writings which helped fund his commitment to Christian Endeavor.

**Location of Writing**

Clark started to realize his effectiveness as a writer in college, paying for some of his schooling through journalism. Clark financed his summer travels during seminary through his writing, serving as a newspaper correspondent, receiving payment from newspapers as well as a transportation pass for journalists (E. Clark 1930:62). Because he enjoyed it and he realized it was an effective way to communicate, Clark wrote… a lot.

In looking back at his writing towards the end of his life, Clark notes,
For more than thirty-five years I have contributed one or more articles and editorials to the Christian Endeavor weekly before mentioned, at least an average of two a week. In the early days of the paper, when I was more responsible for its contents than now, I used to contribute five or six articles, longer or shorter to each issue. When I count up the appalling total of two articles a week for thirty-five years, and fifty-two weeks in the year, I find that the number of contributions amounts to more than 3,600. At least a third as many must have appeared in other publications of which I can recall at least a score, like *The Christian Herald*, *The Youth’s Companion*, and most of the leading denominational papers of American Protestantism (F. Clark 1922:673).

Clark, busy with the work of organizing, communicating, and inspiring people for Christian Endeavor, wrote everywhere, including and especially during his travels. “I have been more favored than most busy men in having opportunities for such literary work, because much of it has been done in what would otherwise have been largely wasted time, on steamers or railway trains. The work has beguiled the tedium of many long journeys” (F. Clark 1922:673). Clark wrote extensively himself, but had help in transcribing his many works. “Many of the articles have been toilsomely written with one of my many fountain pens that have been worn out in the service. Quite as many perhaps have been dictated to my secretary, or to my good wife, who on many journeys together has carried her useful little Blickensderfer, otherwise known as her “Kezia,” in her trunk. I have never learned to use a typewriter myself, but why should I when I have such efficient and willing helpers in my office and my home? Moral: Young man, marry your stenographer, or get her to learn the art of typewriting after you are married as I did” (F. Clark 1922:674). Clark tried to use all his down time to write. On his trip to South Africa from India, “In fifteen minutes I am on deck again with some solid reading and my lap tablet, for the last four hours of the morning. I have already written one little devotional book on Jeremiah, and am at work on another, called “The Great Secret,” I hope they will do some good; at any rate they have done me good” (E. Clark 1930:135).

In addition to writing while traveling, Clark would set aside time away from his Boston office to write. “Although France, like most Catholic countries, has never been a field for extensive work in Christian Endeavor, Dr. Clark occasionally spent vacations from the busy periods of travel in the south of France and along the Riviera. Much of his voluminous writing was done here and on similar holidays snatched from travel” (E. Clark 1930:119). Clark continued to value and utilize writing throughout his life.
Effectiveness of Writing

Clark’s writings were effective in ways anticipated and not. His writings did go to places where Christian Endeavor representatives could not reach, they reached places before Clark could arrive, and they kept the momentum going for Christian Endeavor long after Clark had left. They operated as instrumental to the cause of Christian Endeavor in the global church. While Clark realized the effectiveness of his writing in promoting Christian Endeavor around the world, he also realized that its effectiveness in reaching people was out of his own control.

If there ever was a psychological moment for the cause I had at heart, it was the moment when these articles and this book appeared in print. Rather let me say, it was God’s moment, for throughout my whole life I have been impressed a hundred times over with the Divine leading in these matters. The right time, the right occasion, the right man, without any knowledge or planning on my part, seem to have been found; - the time, the occasion, the man that of all others could promote this organized effort of Christian nurture. (F. Clark 1922:671)

Clark seemed to realize that his unique set of skills in writing and networking were for such a time as this.

Clark could send these articles and books at a very cheap cost, very quickly all over the world. Missionaries and Christian Endeavor alumni would bring them along as they traveled the world. Key articles and information would be distributed at key geographical points in the world as well, like Hawaii, where they would be taken to places which before were not reached. Often these missionaries and alumni would utilize these writings to support and substantiate their efforts in starting Christian Endeavor in these new locations. These operated as encouragement, as well as a place to learn best practices from those implementing Christian Endeavor all over the world. Clark commented in his journals how he would often arrive somewhere only to find Christian Endeavor already in place and growing. The Christian Endeavor World and other Christian Endeavor books already finding their way as “silent missionaries” to begin the work.

Conclusion

The power of the pen proved mighty in the hands of Francis Clark. From his first article describing the success of his new innovation, Christian Endeavor Societies, to his last editorial describing the need to embrace all cultures, Clark used writing as a tool to spread the news of Christian Endeavor. Francis Clark’s silent
missionaries reached all over the world and worked to encourage, empower, and unify the Christian Endeavor societies and their work with young people and the church. Through these simple, cheap, and effective tools, Clark learned to grow an organization that would reach all over the world for Christ and the church.

**Works Cited**

Batten, George  
1892  
*Directory of the Religious Press of the United States: a List of All Religious Periodicals with Their Denomination; Frequency of Issue; Number of Pages; Size of Pages; Whether Illus.; Subscription Price; Circulation; Distribution; Editor and Publisher.* New York: George Batten.

Chaplin, W. Knight  
1900  

Clark, Eugene Francis, and Sydney Clark  
1930  
*A Son’s Portrait of Dr. Francis E. Clark.* Boston: Williston Press.

Clark, Francis E.  
1887  

1892  

1898  
*The Kingdom Within; Selections From the Imitation of Christ.* Boston: United Society of Christian Endeavor.

1903  

1906  

1913  

1919  

1922  
Clark, Francis E., and Harriet E. Clark  
1895 Our Journey Around the World: an Illustrated Record of a Year's Travel: or Forty Thousand Miles through India, China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Egypt, Palestine, Greece, Turkey, Italy, France, Spain, Etc.  
Hartford, Conn.: A.D. Worthington & Co.

Clark, Harriet Elizabeth Abbott  

Clements, John R, and Francis E Clark  

Shrock, Joel  

United Society of Christian Endeavor  

1888 Seventh Annual Conference of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor: Held in Battery D Armory, Chicago, Ill., Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, July 5, 6, 7 and 8, 1888, with Papers Read at the Conference. Boston, MA: The United Society of Christian Endeavor.
Robert A. Danielson

*Floating Christian Endeavor as a Model for Mission to Migrants*

**Abstract**

This article explores how the little-known history of the Floating Societies of Christian Endeavor can provide a useful model for modern mission approaches to mission among transnational people, especially migrant workers, who seldom settle in an area long enough to be effectively reached by traditional church planting methods. Evangelizing and discipling people on the move is not a new problem for the church, but one which was addressed in the late 19th century and early 20th century in attempting to reach sailors for Christ. The model developed by the Floating Societies of Christian Endeavor were flexible, lay-led movements that leveraged traditional mission outreach to sailors coupled with the innovative youth organization of Francis E. Clark and the Christian Endeavor Movement. A similar model is suggested for work among migrant worker communities for today's church, albeit with some warnings from the historical problems of the Floating Christian Endeavor.

**Keywords:** Migrant workers, mission, Floating Christian Endeavor, transnationalism, seafarers

Robert Danielson serves as the Scholarly Communication Librarian at Asbury Theological Seminary. In addition, he is an Affiliate Faculty member teaching in the areas of World Religions and Mission. He manages First Fruits Press for the seminary and is currently the editor of *The Asbury Journal.*
Introduction

Mary Jenkins, later Mrs. Mary Marsh, told the story in 1922 of how early in her life she had worked with Madison Edwards, who had an active ministry with sailors on government ships. She recalled how one day in church the wind suddenly shifted direction and Madison Edwards came up to her and told her there was a ship that was going to leave with the wind, and they had Christian Endeavor pins for some of the sailors on board. Mary and Madison left in the middle of the service and chased down the government ship in the small mission boat. They climbed over the side of the ship and held a quick service and gave out small New Testaments along with Christian Endeavor pins for those who had recently signed the pledge. Mrs. Marsh later remembered, “Two of those lads never came back. One was badly hurt in a shipwreck. He broke his leg and injured his chest. He gave his little Testament to his shipmates and said, ‘Take it back to Woods Hole and give it to Madison Edwards, and here’s my pin, give it to Miss Jenkins.’ I think Mr. Edwards has the little water-soaked Testament in his collection of sailor mementos.”

Such a story summarizes well the impact and influence of the Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor, which sought to reach young men in the dangerous and hard work of life at sea with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

While the history of this movement is a fascinating story in its own right, it also presents a model of mission that may prove valuable for new mission fields in today’s rapidly globalized world. This model would be especially useful for those whose jobs are transient, who live and move frequently to different areas; people for whom an organized church in one stable location are unreachable, and yet who are some of the people most in need of the gospel message. In examining ministry to people like migrant workers, or people who work on vessels at sea, we seldom consider history as a source for effective models of ministry. This paper hopes to present such a model from the past and argue that it may provide a modern effective way to do ministry among some of the least evangelized people on earth.

Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor

In 1890, only nine years after Dr. Francis Clark founded the Christian Endeavor Society in Portland, Maine, a small local Christian Endeavor society met in Falmouth, Massachusetts. One of the members was Madison Edwards, the young son of a captain of a lighthouse relief vessel, who had felt a call to ministry and began preaching on board ships when he was sixteen years old. Also at this meeting was the society’s young secretary, Miss Antoinette Palmer Jones, a young unmarried seamstress who lived with her parents near the telegraph office. The society met in the First Congregational Church of Falmouth, and the young
people in this group had earlier offered to help Madison Edwards if he needed them for his work with sailors in nearby Woods Hole. If he needed help, he would telegraph Miss Jones because of her proximity to the telegraph office and she would gather available members of the society to come and assist him. On this particular evening, Madison Edwards and Antoinette Jones discussed the design of the Christian Endeavor Society, and thought about how it might be altered to work with young men on board ships at sea as a sort of lay-led floating church. They drew up plans for such a group, and Antoinette Jones wrote to the Boston headquarters of the Christian Endeavor Society and received permission to try out their idea. On May 12, 1890 the first Floating Society of Christian Endeavor was started on the Revenue Cutter *Dexter*, and about a month later Antoinette Palmer Jones was named the superintendent of the Floating Christian Endeavor.

Antoinette Palmer Jones co-founder of the Floating Societies of Christian Endeavor (Jones image in the public domain)
Madison Edwards, co-founder of the Floating Societies of Christian Endeavor
(Edwards image in the author’s personal collection)

With Madison Edwards’ abilities in connecting with sailors, and Antoinette Jones’ organizational abilities, the Floating Christian Endeavor became a huge success. By 1901 there were 6,000 members in 150 societies, and this included societies in the Japanese, British, and German navies as well as in the navy of the United States. The Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor had survived war in the Spanish-American War, with members involved in almost every major battle of the war. George W. Coleman in his report before the annual International Christian Endeavor Convention on the work of the Floating Christian Endeavor, used the words of a popular advertisement of the day and compared the societies to Ivory Soap, claiming it was “99 and 44/100 percent pure, and IT FLOATS!” One of the Floating Christian Endeavorers to emerge as a hero for the Society from the war was Carlton H. Jencks, a sailor on the U.S.S. Charleston who had helped found the Christian Endeavor Seaman’s Home in Nagasaki, Japan, when he was eighteen years old. Shortly after, he transferred to the U.S.S. Maine as a gunner’s mate and was killed when the ship went down in Havana, Cuba on February 15, 1898. The idea of noble Christian youth fighting and dying in war stirred patriotic feelings both inside and outside the Christian Endeavor Society.
Floating Christian Endeavor Society of the *U.S.S. Charleston* in Nagasaki, Japan

Carlton H. Jencks is holding the parasol.

(Courtesy of the Archives of the B.L. Fisher Library, Asbury Theological Seminary)

Despite such heroic images, life at sea was difficult, dangerous, and hardly open to Christian values. Port cities were notorious places for drinking, gambling, and prostitution. Sailors were typically young men, often not more than boys who had recently left home, and government ships at this time offered little to no religious services or time for the development of a Christian life. Members of the Floating Christian Endeavor pledged like others in the Christian Endeavor Society to meet frequently and to participate in worship, contributing more than just singing at every service. They wore Christian Endeavor pins on their uniforms to proudly proclaim their allegiance to Christ and the Church to whomever they met. In contrast to their fellow society members on land, such allegiance and loyalty tended to be met with cursing and insults, but they carried on and sought to bring others into the society. As one speaker noted,

Floating Christian Endeavor stands for faithful testimony on board ship. Its members are marked men. The little badge worn on the blue uniform speaks constantly to all on board, telling that one at least is not ashamed to own his Master and his Lord.
Floating Christian Endeavor knows no church save the church invisible. Differing from the Society on land, it is the fruit that grows directly from the vine, rather than from the branches. Its point of union is loyalty to Christ. Church organization is impossible afloat. Many most sincere Christian sailors are not members of any church.

It is a sufficient test of sincerity for a man on shipboard to be willing to take the pledge, and wear the pin of the Society. The hypocrite is a fungus which does not long endure the fire of persecution at sea. A Christian sailor is under constant observation. A thousand eyes mark every word, every action. There is nothing to be gained by a false profession of faith in Christ, therefore Christian sailors are usually true stuff. Unite these men, identify them, and you have organized a mighty agency for evangelization.

When shipmates were moved to other ships, new societies formed and so the organization grew. Even more importantly changes were seen in the lives of the young men on board the ships.

It is only four months since the Floating Christian Endeavor Committee organized a Floating Christian Endeavor on that ship (the Thetis). Since that time the drunken brawls that had been so frequent on board and ashore have become a thing of the past, and in their places are substituted prayer meetings and revivals. I have been twenty-eight years at sea in the darkest scenes of vice with which a sailor is surrounded, and I am convinced that the exhortations of the members of the society are of wonderful influence - sufficient to soften any heart and inclining the hardest sailor to mend his ways.

The success of the Floating Christian Endeavor was relatively short for a number of key reasons. First, the onset of World War I brought the complications of massive wartime movements and the ability to organize the societies on board ship may have become impossible. Second, the U.S. government increased its number of chaplains and other religious organizations such as the Y.M.C.A. also became more involved in ministry. Finally, Miss Antoinette Palmer Jones, the co-founder, speaker, organizer, and corresponding secretary of the Floating Christian Endeavor died in the influenza epidemic on December 15, 1918 at age 62 in the midst of the conflict. The unique system she had put into place fell apart in the middle of this time of conflict, and no other person could step up to fill her position. The Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor faded into memory.
Floating Christian Endeavorer from the Solace (Courtesy of the Archives of the B.L. Fisher Library, Asbury Theological Seminary)

A close-up of his Christian Endeavor pin. (Courtesy of the Archives of the B.L. Fisher Library, Asbury Theological Seminary)
The Model of the Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor

After that brief historical introduction, it now becomes important to describe the model Edwards and Jones developed from 1890 to 1918. The model essentially consisted of two types of “Floating” societies: shipboard and land-based societies. As described in 1897,

The organization is two-fold- the regular “floating societies” on land composed largely of Endeavorers interested in this field of missionary work and the societies on individual ships. The latter are always small, and through the constant changes of sea life are generally transient… All naval vessels have chaplains, but the chaplain is an “officer” and the seamen are only men, so there is a gulf there that cannot be bridged to establish genuine fellowship with the chaplain. The Christian Endeavor societies accomplish this, and when officers are members the barriers of rank disappear in the meetings.

Shipboard societies have already briefly been described. These were simply lay-led Christian Endeavor societies that met on U.S. naval ships. They had fewer committees than other Christian Endeavor Societies, by nature of their work they were all male, and their signed pledge included abstinence from alcohol, which was not in the regular pledge. But other than these minor differences they were essentially the same. The land-based societies were still called “floating” societies, but they were organized in churches, missions, and reading rooms around the U.S. that were already committed to work among seamen. This network frequently involved women who collected reading material, made hats, socks, mufflers, sweaters, and other items for the use of sailors, organized meals and clean entertainment for sailors when the ships were in port, and made comfort bags (which frequently contained needles, thread, and other essentials for ocean life along with a New Testament, a religious pamphlet, and perhaps a personal letter). These land-based societies would also lead shipboard visitation, religious services in port, visit sailors in local hospitals, and generally help meet needs as they arose.

This dual approach to ministry created an amazingly effective network. When a ship, say from Boston, arrived in a port, such as San Francisco, the shipboard Floating Christian Endeavor Society would already know of the existence of any land-based Floating Christian Endeavor Society, and that land-based society would be ready and willing to meet the needs of their members on board the ship, who they could easily identify by their Christian Endeavor badges. The land-based societies helped encourage and strengthen the shipboard societies wherever they came together. If the shipboard society was out at sea, it could operate effectively
on its own, knowing that support would most likely be available if needed in the
next major port.

In this dual model, there is one element which is stable, supportive, and ready to spring into action, while being aware of the needs of the migratory societies. The other element is spiritually self-sufficient, with its own local leaders, but is also aware that when they might be at their weakest that there is a supporting network of societies already aware of their potential needs, spiritually behind them, and ready to support them as needed. When the Floating Christian Endeavor faded away following 1918, the individual elements of the land-based societies essentially become separate units continuing to minister to sailors who came into local ports in the traditional way ministry to sailors had been done, but the essential network fell apart, and the shipboard societies never reorganized.

While traditional ministry models to migrant peoples have frequently developed networks of stable, non-transitory bases from which to do mission, few have attempted anything like the model presented by the Floating Christian Endeavor, which pairs such a network with moveable lay-led ministries that travel with migratory people, and on occasion tap into the resources of the stable non-transitory bases. I would argue that the short history of the Floating Christian Endeavor was not due to the model on which it was structured, but rather the lack of the technology needed to make such a model effective. Antoinette Jones had to keep her entire organization moving based on simple correspondence, which often could not include the ship-based societies, and yet she grew the organization to a global network of over 6,000 members. With modern communication technology and a more secure infrastructure, such a model offers great promise for missions to migratory people in today’s world.

The dualistic model is fairly simple. Figure 1.1 shows four non-mobile bases and their various connections with each other in a basic network of relationships. It also shows one mobile base and its temporary connection to a non-mobile base with which it is in close proximity. Figure 1.2 shows the same network and the one mobile base, now separated from the non-mobile base. In this case, the mobile base must act as a self-contained unit. In terms of ministry, it means it must conduct its own services and meet the needs of its own members until such a time as it can reconnect with another non-mobile base in the network (Figure 1.3). One thing this model demands, which was absent in the Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor is a well-developed discipleship program, which could develop lay-leaders quickly in the mobile bases so that these individuals could lead the mobile units when there is no non-mobile base available.
Figure 1.1
Basic Structure of the Floating Christian Endeavor Model of Mission

Figure 1.2
The Moveable Unit of the Model Operating Independently
The Need for Mission in Modern Migratory Transnationalist Networks

The need for mission to migratory people did not die out in the early 20th century, and the issue of how to do mission with migrating people remains with us today. As early as 1976, migrants were being divided into three categories: new migrants (those migrating for the first time), return migrants (those who return to the place of their birth—often referred to today as transnationals), and repeat migrants (those who migrate more than once). For many ministries, the work involving migrating people has been focused on helping new migrants, and even repeat migrants settle in to their new society and adjust. Helping them find housing, jobs, learn the local language; locate social services, education and medical care, and integrating them into local communities of worship. This is a great ministry for refugees or other migrants who have to relocate to a new country for economic or political reasons. Academic research has increasingly focused on transnational immigrants, people who have moved to a new cultural environment, but continue to maintain social, economic, and personal contacts with people in their homeland on a regular basis. Ministries, such as churches rooted in their traditional cultural practices and ethnicities, help to work out the unique issues people in this community often face. However, very few successful missionary efforts have been aimed at another type of migrant, those who live in a constant state of migration. This would include seafarers, or sailors, which continue to work in our world today,
as well as agricultural farm workers who migrate from place to place depending on
the harvest and the work available. It is to this group of mobile migrants that I think
the Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor have the most to offer as a model
for mission.

First, it is important to realize the needs of seafarers still exist. The
International Labour Organization, in its report on International Labour Standards
on Seafarers sums it up this way,

An estimated 90% of world trade makes use of maritime
transport, depending on more than 1.2 million seafarers
to operate ships. Many seafarers ply waters distant from
their home. Seafarers and shipowners are often of different
nationalities, and ships often operate under a flag different
from their origin of ownership. Seafarers are also frequently
exposed to difficult working conditions and particular
occupational risks. Working far from home, they are vulnerable
to exploitation and abuse, non-payment of wages, non-
compliance with contracts, exposure to poor diet and living
conditions, and even abandonment in foreign ports.11

In looking at the distribution of seafarers by their nations of origin, we see the
following distribution of the top nations, which make up 44.9% of the total number
of seafarers today:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>21.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>8.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>5.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>4.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>4.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>3.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>3.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>0.85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This shows that seafarers are a large population of people from mixed backgrounds,
but often coming from non-Christian nations, with very specific needs as migrant
people. They are perhaps one of the least evangelized groups today because of the
nature of their work. They are constantly on the move, and ministries based solely
in port cities can only provide temporary answers to spiritual and social ministry
needs. A model of floating, lay-led churches, connected to a network of shore-
based ministries could be one model to reach this population of 1.2 million with the Good News.

Second, such a model also has a potential to work with migrant agricultural workers. A description of this community can be summed up in the following,

Between 1 and 3 million migrant farm workers leave their homes every year to plant, cultivate, harvest, and pack fruits, vegetables and nuts in the U.S. … Migrant farm workers are predominantly Mexican-born sons, husbands, and fathers who leave what is familiar and comfortable with the hopes and dreams of making enough money to support their families back home; feed themselves; purchase land and a home; and – like many immigrants who came before them – ultimately return to their homeland. While others come from countries such as Jamaica, Haiti, Guatemala, Honduras, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and other states in the United States their aspirations remain the same. They are young, averaging about 31 years of age. Some arrive as single men, while others leave their families behind while they seek work, and others travel and work with their families. For those who travel without their families, once they realize that they will need to maintain their U.S. earning capacity, they would much rather have their families settle with them in the U.S. More than half of all farm workers – 52 of every 100 – are unauthorized workers with no legal status in the United States… (S)acrifices range from separation from their countries of origins, families, and what is familiar to learning to navigate a foreign land where little is known about them and whose customs, language, foods, and ways of life are different from what they know.13

Other challenges face them as well, as is laid out in a report from the Southern Poverty Law Center.14 They note that 41% of the immigrant workers they surveyed had experienced wage theft from employers, only 37% reported receiving appropriate aid for on-the-job injuries, often subjected to exposure to toxic pesticides and not made aware of services or rights they may have, these workers are often the most marginalized workers in the United States.

To make such a model successful in our modern globalized world, it would need a strong network of stable ministries based in churches or parachurch organizations with an organized system of volunteers who can prepare to meet immediate needs, such as contacts with medical personnel, legal advisers, and local social service organizations. They need to understand the needs of the people they are serving in terms of personal contact, social interaction, and communication with family in foreign countries. On top of these types of services, the stable ministries should provide spiritual outreach and ministry, bringing new converts into a discipleship program that can be completed either online or in stages at the
next stable ministry in the network. Graduation from this discipleship program should lead to the individual becoming a lay leader in a migrating church, who can organize, teach, and lead spiritual gatherings even when there are no stable ministries from the network in easy reach. These lay leaders need to find a way to be easily recognized by others in the group, and learn to reach others in their immediate sphere of influence, whether other seafarers or other agricultural migrant workers. The discipleship program should be simple, designed for people who might have limited education, but who exhibit strong leadership abilities. It should be a program shared by all of the stable ministries in the network, so that if one person had finished module three in one place, they could complete module four in another location without entering a completely new curriculum. Such a model, like the Christian Endeavor should be non-denominational, interracial, multi-lingual, and flexible. Discipleship should focus on key elements of the Christian faith held by all groups involved in the ministry and not specific denominations.

It is also important to learn from the mistakes or problems faced by the historic Floating Societies of Christian Endeavor. Their network depended too much on the organization and leadership of one woman, whose unexpected death in a time of crisis led to its demise. Leadership of any new model should include an organized team that is flexible, yet committed to working with a migratory group of people. If one of the team leaves the group, it should be strong enough to survive until that person is replaced on the team. Preparations need to be made for various situations. It is still unclear to the author how Floating Societies on German navy vessels survived during World War I, or if they in fact disbanded quickly, since the leadership was from a nation at war with Germany. Political events can easily disrupt ministries that cross geo-political lines, and this needs to be considered carefully. Communication between groups was essential for the Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor, even though it was only by letter perhaps once a year. With modern technological tools, it would be expected that communication could become a greater strength in any new version of the model. However, communication remains essential. Mobile groups need to be able to easily locate new stable units of the ministry, and any discipleship program with migratory workers would need to find some way to continue communication between teachers and students before the end of the program.
Conclusion

In our postmodern world, we seldom look to the past to help understand new ways to meet new challenges, but there are times when mission and Church history can provide useful models for current challenges. Rapid globalization and advances in communication and transportation has led to a tremendous growth of people moving around the planet. In facing the issues of migration or diaspora, we have found ways to reach those who have migrated to a new place and are seeking to settle down. We have also found ways to relate to those who have migrated but maintain contacts with their homelands as transnational people. But we still struggle to find a model for reaching those who never settle down, those mobile migrants who must constantly move for economic reasons. It is impossible for church ministries to move with them, and it is impossible to guarantee that there will be another similar ministry in every new place they go. The Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor offer a model from the mist of history that might be worth reviving.

Stable ministries that serve as a support network can branch out in numerous churches or ministries in multiple places, while a discipleship program among the migratory peoples can train lay-led leaders to emerge from within the group, who can conduct a mobile church when traditional ministries are not within reach. Such a model could be applied to modern seafarers or agricultural migrant workers, or any other group of migrants who must be constantly on the move. Such a dual approach is practical and can take advantage of modern advances in technology not available to its historical antecedents. All that remains is to find an organizational team with the passion to develop such a mission, and a discipleship tool that can develop the lay-leadership needed for the mobile units.

End Notes

1 Sea Breeze (43:3) “Address of Mrs. Marsh” April 1922, pp. 44-45.

2 For more on the life of Madison Edwards and his other ministries, see They Kept the Lower Lights Burning: The Story of the Seaman’s Bethel and Its Chaplains by George W. Wiseman.


4 For more detail on the Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor, see A History of the Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor by Robert A. Danielson.

6 Ibid.


8 Speech by Navy Chaplain Robert E. Steele at the 1903 Annual Conference in Denver, CO. p. 136.


---

**Works Cited**


Danielson, Robert A.  
2014  
*A History of the Floating Societies of the Christian Endeavor.*  
Wilmore, KY: First Fruits Press, retrieved at: 
http://place.asburyseminary.edu/academicbooks/8/.

Extension.org  
2015  
“Migrant Farm Workers: Our Nation’s Invisible Population,” 
retrieved on March 21, 2016 from 

Galić, Stipe, Zvonimir Lušić, and Danijel Pušić  
2012  

International Labour Organization  
2016  
“International Labour Standards on Seafarers,” retrieved on March 21, 2016 from 

Jones, Antoinette  
1895  

Kau, James B. and C.F. Sirmans  
1976  

Marsh, Mary Jenkins  
1922  
“Address of Mrs. Marsh,” *Sea Breeze* (43:3) April.

Showalter, Douglas K.  
2011  

Southern Poverty Law Center  
2009  
*Under Siege: Life for Low-Income Latinos in the South.* Retrieved at: 

Steele, Robert E.  
1903  
http://place.asburyseminary.edu/ceinternationalbooks/40/.
Art McPhee

*The Kingdom Life and the Witness of the Church*

**Abstract**

This paper was presented in Asbury Theological Seminary, on October 9, 2015 at the Advanced Research Program’s Interdisciplinary Colloquium on the subject, *The Church and Its Expansion*. This paper explores the role of the kingdom of God in Jesus’ teaching and its potential impact on the Church for the work of evangelism and church planting. As a central theme of Jesus, it becomes a metaphor and a model for how the Church should be involved in ministry to the world around us.

**Keywords:** Mission, Kingdom of God, Great Commission, Church Planting

Art McPhee is the Sundo Kim Professor of Evangelism and Practical Theology Expertise: Evangelization Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.
Introduction

In the days of Jesus, Palestine was a place of acute political and social unrest. On the one hand, there was great dissatisfaction with Roman control and restrictions. On the other hand, even a whiff of public dissent brought more brutal bans and restrictions. Add to that vicious cycle the rising, hope-against-hope expectation among Jews that God must be getting ready to intervene with the sending of the long-awaited Messiah and the inauguration of his everlasting kingdom, and you have an even more volatile mix.

Some Jews, later called Zealots, were anxious to stir the potion and bring it to a boil. Although they were not yet a cohesive group, bands of them conducted hit-and-run attacks against rich Roman officials, tax collectors, and informants. Some think Judas Iscariot and Simon the Zealot, named together in Matthew 10:4, may have had such empathized with zealot leanings.1

Other Jews, including some of the Pharisees execrated Roman rule behind closed doors but feared public demonstrations that might arouse the fears or ire of the Romans. One thinks, for example, of the emergency meeting of the Sanhedrin after the commotion caused by the raising of Lazarus by Jesus. “If we let him go on like this,” they fretted, “the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” John tells us they resolved, therefore, to set a plot to kill Jesus.2

The Kingdom of God

Where did the early first-century buzz about the inauguration of God’s kingdom come from? The origin of kingly language for God first came to the fore when Israel got established in Canaan. Other nations had earthly kings, but Israel’s king would be God. So, for example, when the Israelites wanted Gideon to rule over them, he refused, declaring, “I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you. The Lord will rule over you.”3 Thus, as other nations served human kings, Israel’s duty was to serve God alone, and to obey God’s teaching.

So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being.4 (Deut. 10:12-13)

Kings in Service to God

In time, Israel did accept human kingship, but with a difference. Israel’s kings received their appointments from God and were enthroned as servants to God. We
are told the Lord chose Solomon, for example, to sit on the throne over Israel, but
the throne was not his throne, it was “the throne of the kingdom of the Lord.”

If Israel's kings forgot or forsook their obligation, it was the responsibility of
the prophets to remind them of their servant role to God. And, alas, most of them
were hard of hearing or forgetful. Thus, in due time the Davidic dynasty collapsed
and with it the nation. To paraphrase Jeremiah, “The shepherds were stupid, and did
not inquire of the Lord; so they lost their land and their sheep.”

Two Visions of God's New Kingdom

By Jesus' day, an expanded vision had emerged of a coming kingdom for
Israel. This was met with great interest by Jews chafing under the degrading
humiliation of Roman rule. God's promises to Abraham and Sarah contained faint
hints of this event.

I will make you [Abraham] exceedingly fruitful; and I will make
nations of you, and kings shall come from you. … I will bless
her [Sarah], and moreover I will give you a son by her… and
she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from
her.

But later writings were sparking serious study, speculation and a swelling suspicion
that God was getting ready to act. For example, in the Qumran community, where
the Dead Sea Scrolls, were found, the Book of Daniel was having great appeal due
to two stories that pointed to the decisive and lasting victory of a coming kingdom
of God over the autocratic and arbitrary authority of all beastly oppressors
including, quite clearly, Rome itself. Both stories were about dreams, one of them
a dream of Daniel, an exile in Babylon. The other was a dream of Babylon's King,
Nebuchadnezzar, which Daniel, with God's help, was able to recite and interpret.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream vexed him visibly. It consisted of two images. The
first was a great statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, middle and
thighs of bronze, and legs and feet of iron (iron mixed with clay in its feet). Daniel
told the king that the statue represented a succession of world kingdoms beginning
with Babylon itself. But there was a second part to the dream, about which Daniel
said the following:

While you were watching, a rock was cut out [of a mountain],
but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of
iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the
bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the
same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the
summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace.
But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.  

The rock, it turned out, represented a fifth but very different kingdom, upon which Daniel elaborated as follows:

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy.

Daniel’s own dream turns up in the seventh chapter. It, too, describes four kingdoms, represented this time by four beasts rising from the sea—beasts that, again, were to be replaced by an everlasting kingdom of God, ruled by “one like a son of man.”

Characteristics of the Coming Kingdom

The two dreams added substance to the concept of the coming kingdom of God. The details remained a matter of conjecture, but its attributes were coming into focus.

1. It Would Be a Supernatural Kingdom. That is what Daniel affirmed when he described it as cut from the mountain, “but not by human not by hands.” The kingdom was of divine, not human origin.

   The early church father, John Chrysostom of Constantinople thought this might be a reference to the virgin birth. Whether he was right or not, this much is clear: this kingdom represented by the rock has a different starting place than all the others. It is not the result of human conquest, or human intrigue, or human anything. It is all of God. God taking the initiative. God stepping into history.

2. It Would Be a Singular Kingdom. Daniel also intimated God’s kingdom would be unlike any other. It not only would have a different beginning but a different character.

   The rock representing the kingdom, like other rocks in the Bible, is a symbol of strength and power. But it is not the same tyrannical, terrorizing power used by Rome and the other powers represented in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. It is the one
kingdom not associated with the statue in the dream. It is separate, solitary, singular, unique. It is not anything like these other kingdoms. How’s that? Consider, for example, what Jesus says in his Sermon on the Mount about loving enemies, turning the other cheek, taking the log out of your own eye before judging, doing to others as you would have them do to you, doing nothing for effect, not taking oaths, not taking revenge, and the like.

3. It Would Be a Secure Kingdom. “It will never be destroyed,” said Daniel.

After a while, the rise of earthly kingdoms ends and their demise ensues. It happens to them all. The Romans must have thought that Jesus’ kingdom was hammered shut like a coffin when they drove their spikes into the cross. But, on the third day, their rock was rolled aside. And it was clear that a new kingdom was emerging, one that as Daniel foretold would never be destroyed.

4. It Would Be a Spreading Kingdom. In Jesus’ description, the kingdom of God starts very small—like a mustard seed. But it doesn’t stay that way. In Daniel’s words, “the rock that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.” Other images—for instance, the yeast in the loaf—convey the same idea. The kingdom of God will eventually encompass all the nations and the whole of creation. Indeed, its scope will include “the renewal of all things.”

5. It Would Be a Sure Kingdom. Again, in Daniel’s words, “In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor shall this kingdom be left to another people.”

In other words, ultimately, this is the only kingdom that can everlastingly be depended on. It is the only one worth seeking, the only one worth one’s allegiance, the only one that will not never fail. Like the loves of Scarlett O’Hara, eventually everything else will be gone with the wind: “and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace could be found.” Only God’s kingdom is eternal; even the stars are not. No doubt, that is what the author of Hebrews had in mind when he wrote of the kingdom that “cannot be moved.”

6. It Would Be a Sovereign Kingdom. From the Daniel 7 dream, we see the kingdom is under the supreme authority of one like a Son of Man—that is, Jesus! When, after John’s arrest, Jesus came to Galilee saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near,” ears must have perked up. Was Jesus the one who would launch God’s kingdom in its fullness? Was he the promised Messiah? Although many were looking for the coming King and kingdom, their views of how...
it would transpire and what it would look like were all over the map. For example, most people presumed its arrival would come by conquest. However, Jesus’ life, death and resurrection would reveal a new reality.

**Jesus and the Kingdom of God**

*The Kingdom as the Persistent Focus of Jesus’ Preaching*

From the start, Jesus’ preaching featured the kingdom of God, just as John the Baptist’s had. After John’s arrest, he made his home in Capernaum and “from that time,” says Matthew, “Jesus began to proclaim, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’” Matthew adds that Jesus went all over Galilee, “teaching in the synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.” Moreover, his message was popular. Everywhere he went, great crowds came to hear him: from the province of Syria, the towns of the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

The nearness of the kingdom was also the message with which he sent his disciples: he “went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.” And when he sent them out, the message they were to proclaim remained constant. He told them, “As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.”

Jesus sending was consistent in a second way. Those he sent were not only to proclaim the kingdom with words but were meant themselves to be the message. Their words and deeds were to work together, each confirming the other, both of one cloth. His pattern was purposeful and persistent. When he subsequently sent ahead of him a group of seventy, he did so with the same instructions he gave the Twelve: “Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”

The nearness of the kingdom was to be seen in the presence of Jesus himself. It was evident in his healing ministry, including his exorcisms. Peter was struck by it on the Mount of the Transfiguration. “We were eyewitnesses,” he wrote. “Eyewitnesses of what? ‘Of his majesty!’ The aura in Jesus’ eyes, the lightning brightness of his garments, the glorious colloquy with Moses and Elijah on his departure (his exodus), and the astonishing attestation from heaven—the glory of that occasion—and the kingly figure at its center immediately before him remained with Peter for the rest of his life.
That, however, was the preview. With Jesus’ resurrection would come the inauguration of his kingdom—on earth. That is what he had taught them to pray for: “your kingdom come, on earth.” Easter is not about going to heaven. Easter is about the inauguration of the kingdom, new creation, the renewal of all things, on earth.

The Work of the Church

What does that mean for us? It means, as his disciples in the church, we have work to do—kingdom work, not church work, for Jesus came preaching the kingdom, not the church! There is much confusion these days between church work and the work of the church. Church work focuses on the church. However, the work of the church is all about the kingdom. It is about announcing salvation and shalom not for individuals alone but for all creation. The focus on people is at the heart of God’s program, but it is not the whole of it. Our redemption is a key consequence of Jesus death, resurrection, and ascension, and a vitally important one, but isolating it as we have so often done can hijack the larger glory and majesty of King Jesus and his kingdom.

The Great Commission

Both Matthew and Acts limit their descriptions of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances to his disciples to one matter: The Great Commission.

In Acts, the disciples ask, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” But, to their surprise certainly, he answers their expectation with a task: “It is not for you to know… but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The unavoidable inference is that witnessing has a direct connection to the fulfillment of the disciples’ expectation. I have wondered, in fact, if, perhaps, in that moment, Jesus’ earlier words came flooding back to them: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

That is not to say our witness brings about the fulfillment. I saw a church billboard once that boasted, “Building the kingdom for the last 28 years!” Erroneous statements like that are common in the church. Why don’t we know better? We don’t build the kingdom, God establishes and grows his kingdom. When Paul wrote, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God gave the growth,” he was, in essence saying, “We don’t do much; we’re just a couple of farmers.” And that’s right!
Nevertheless, the post-resurrection, post-Pentecost witness of the church to the nations concerning Jesus’ death resurrection, and ascension, and its proclamation of his kingship and kingdom matter, because the fulfillment of God’s ultimate purpose is connected to that witness.

Matthew’s only post-resurrection account of Jesus and the eleven disciples takes place on a mountaintop in Galilee, to which he had instructed them to go. Some have guessed it was Mount Tabor, where the Transfiguration may also have taken place. From there, the disciples could survey the eastern part of the Jezreel Valley in one direction and the Sea of Galilee in another. The background certainly heightened the experience of standing before the risen Lord Jesus and hearing him say, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Sometimes, we focus so much on the instructions Jesus gave in the Great Commission, we forget this first part is the most crucial part of the pericope. The Jesus standing before the disciples had, just days before, been dead in a tomb. Now here he was, alive, the conqueror of death and all the powers of hell! The nearness of the kingdom was, at the moment, the nowness of the kingdom— “all authority!”

What that setting and statement make clear is that the central message of the church is to be about Jesus. As Paul wrote to the church at Philippi and repeatedly affirmed:

> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

That is what the apostles preached: Jesus alive!

In consequence, the disciples were to make disciples just as he had made disciples of them. That is the one imperative in the Great Commission. Going into all the world, as the disciples inevitably would in light of the stunning revelation of Christ alive, they were to “make disciples of all peoples.”

Notice, that Jesus says nothing about individuals, nothing about the psychology of conversion, nothing about the inward, spiritual formation of the person. That does not mean those are not important or are left out, but the vision is larger. But, again, I want to emphasize the gospel is grander than that. Beyond that good news, the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ were the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham that his progeny would be a blessing to the nations. It was the ultimate affirmation of a fact accented repeatedly in the psalms and elsewhere: The
Creator God is not the God of Israel alone but of all of his creation, including every nation.

In Matthew, the command to make disciples incorporates three participles, which because of their attachment to the imperative verb have an imperative sense too. Nevertheless, the main command is not the going, baptizing, or teaching, but “make disciples.” For that reason, one wonders about translating “going therefore” as an imperative—as “Go!” Because it is also the first word, the impression left in English translations that there are two commands and that the first one is the main one. In other words, “Go, therefore…” stated at the beginning gives the impression the main thrust is to go! But that is not the main thrust, and “Go” instead of “going,” or “as you are going,” detracts from the force and primacy of the main thrust: to make disciples. Having seen the resurrected Lord, the awe-struck disciples were not about to stay in hiding. They were going! Can anyone imagine for a scintilla of a second they were going to keep quiet about what they had seen?

The reason for the emphasis on making disciples is that the kingdom life is a life of following and imitating Jesus. Far too often, the church has focused on something less than that: on decisions for Christ, or on church attendees, members, and converts. That is probably because we live in the age of measuring success by the numbers, and attendees, members, and converts are easy to count. But those are not the real measure of a church. Why not? Well, to use an illustration from the mountainous part of the country I grew up in, when we focus on those categories, we end up bringing people to the trailhead without helping them get on the trail! The two appositives, “baptizing” and “teaching,” emphasize (1) the immediate expectation of a public expression of commitment on the part of a new believer, and (2) the additional expectation of holding to Jesus’ teaching. A decision represents something less than that. Church attendance represents something less than that. In light of those two components of disciple making, it is difficult to sustain the argument, as so many do, that Jesus is satisfied with a verbal or cognitive yes. Even if we mean it, but we fail to follow through by giving Jesus our allegiance and obedience every day of every week, it is not enough. Jesus’ call is not a call to decide but to follow. It is more than the call of a teacher; it is the call of the risen Lord—the call of a king!

Discipleship and Following

Jesus, in fact, never said to anyone, “Come be my disciple.” He said, instead, “follow me.” In fact, “follow” and “following”—always in verb form—occur some 80 times in the gospels. Etymologically, a disciple was a student, a learner. But Jesus was not interested in merely filling his disciples’ heads with knowledge. Rather, he
expected them to do what he did: heal the sick, deliver the oppressed, and proclaim the nearness of the kingdom of God. Jesus was not just another teacher of the Tora. His disciples did not go to Rabbi Jesus’ house with their credentials to enlist for Bible study. Instead, he conscripted them for service! “You did not choose me,” he reminded them. “I chose you.”

Jesus’ authority was also apparent in his teaching as well as his call. His interpretation of the Mosaic and oral Torahs was not like that of a Hillel, or Shammai, or Gamaliel, or any other rabbi of his time. When Jesus entered the synagogue at Capernaum, everybody sat up. All of them were astounded at his teaching. Why? “Because he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” Mark says, “they were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority!” And because, in addition to what he said, Jesus delivered a man with an unclean spirit, the people in the synagogue were doubly astonished: “He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.”

Mark’s gospel does not tell us what Jesus taught, although his pattern was to use Galilean synagogues as a platform for declaring his message of the kingdom. Stylistically, his pedagogy had much in common with that of traditional teachers of the law. He used rabbinic stories, everyday metaphors, and familiar patterns of reasoning. There was nothing different there. In giving his Sermon on the Mount, however, heard by listeners who responded with the same astonishment and commentary as his Capernaum synagogue hearers, we see something different. Six times Jesus asserts, “You’ve heard it was said…but I say to you.” That was diametrically different from the pattern of traditional rabbis who worked the margins with the minimum for minuscule moderations in their elucidations of the Torah. Again and again, Jesus went beyond the letter of the Law to the spirit of the Law and, indeed, to the essence of the Father’s will.

That said, there is something more to add. Jesus’ authority was clearly not limited to his bold words. For example, whatever he said at Capernaum, the liberation of the man with the unclean spirit stamped an exclamation point on it. His authority transcended not just the Hillels and Shammas of his times, therefore, but even that of the demons!

“Teaching them to observe all things brings into focus Jesus’ priorities as well as his authority. In the Sermon on the Mount and its near twin, the Sermon on the Plain, we get one of our best glimpses of the “all things” he taught. And, not surprisingly, we see his persistent emphasis on the kingdom shining through again. What are his disciples to pray for? For the Father’s kingdom to come, and his will to
be done on earth. And what does he enjoin them to seek above all? “Seek first the kingdom!”

The Great Commandment and the Great Commission

The first mark of the kingdom is love, expressed by Jesus as love of God and neighbor. This was the sum and substance of his teaching. While the scribes and many of the Pharisees emphasized the details of the law, Jesus emphasized the priority of love. The upshot is that although the primacy of the Great Commission is key to understanding the work of the church, ultimately, it is not the first priority of the church. The first priority of the kingdom and, therefore, of the church is not making disciples but loving God and neighbor. Making disciples is an expression of love. If we forget that and reverse the order, putting the Great Commission first, our evangelism inevitably slips into manipulation and exploitation, and our church planting becomes all about filling seats and launching programs, not introducing our friends to our best friend, Jesus.

Unfortunately, that is where much of today’s church planting goes wrong. Too many are planting churches for the wrong reasons: for example, their frustration with existing churches; as a quick route to becoming a senior pastor (why not a serving pastor?); as a place to preach; or as a way to exercise an entrepreneurial bent. Similarly, too many are planting churches with the wrong focus—a focus on the church instead of the risen Christ.

Here is an example. These days, it is hard to find a book on church planting without a discussion somewhere of how to get ready for your first public worship service, called “the launch.” Usually, the launch involves great energy, and expense, and serves the church planting team in the way a grand opening is supposed to serve a business start-up, by drawing in new customers. The idea is that if you get 200 visitors to the launch and 100 of them return, at least you have a critical mass to go forward with.

But the obsession with a successful launch is supernumerary. It puts the church plant on the wrong path immediately. The New Testament emphasis is, rather, on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who came to show us the Father, who taught us how to live the kingdom life, who died to redeem us from our depravity, and who rose to reveal to us the victory of God over the powers of sin and death. Through the Holy Spirit, he has provided us with a launch already: with pyrotechnic tongues of fire, a Dolby rush of surround-sound wind, and simultaneous translation into at least 15 languages of one of the greatest sermons ever heard! When Rabbi Jesus rolled into town with his ragtag disciples, he had no need of a grand opening gala with free food, music, prizes, balloons, and giveaways.
He had no need for billboards, searchlights, or fireworks. There was no ribbon-cutting ceremony. Instead, there was announcement of good news for the poor, the imprisoned, the impaired, and the oppressed, and often, a live demonstration of that good news in action.

Rabbi Jesus’ detractors followed him around and alleged he was a gormandizer and a schmoozer, eating and drinking his way from house to house—”Oy vey!” But wasn’t that what all rabbis did when they came to town? They schlepped to the homes of hospitable friends and followers and reclined at table and talked Torah over tea and toast. It was their shtick! And they were good at it. They were yiddisher kops, and they knew every jot and tittle of their Bibles. What’s more, they were fun to argue and debate with. And that was how you learned. So, why not “eating and drinking?” Maybe, instead of a launch, we need a lunch! We would do well to remember how important koinonia and table fellowship were in the life of the first century church.

**Word and Deed**

Effective evangelism and disciple making requires a partnership of words and deeds. In fact, they can authentically be loving words and deeds in no other way! Practically speaking, when we engage in ministries of service, social programs, and deeds of kindness and compassion, without pointing to Jesus, we only point to ourselves. On the other hand, when we limit our evangelism and disciple making to words alone, what we say rings hollow.

The partnership of words and deeds is essential because God saves whole persons: body, soul, and spirit. It is no surprise at all, therefore, to see words and actions operating in tandem, as one cloth, in the ministry of Jesus. Thus, when John the Baptist sends messengers to Jesus with the question, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?” Jesus answers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”
The Great Commission is for Everyone

Another danger to avoid is thinking of the kingdom life as an evangelistic tour… or something missionaries do when they cross cultural boundaries. The Great Commission does not say anything about sending missionaries to Timbuktu, or even about sending them across the street. It says that, as they are going, even next door, all disciples are to engage in the task of making disciples. Wherever! Whenever! That is another reason, I think the initial adverb in the Great Commission is better rendered “going.”

Kingdom living is missionary living. It is a mission of holy love from everywhere to everywhere, every day. It is also community living. Jesus’ commission is a plural one. It is not about the sending of individual missionaries, therefore; it is about the sending of the church. For that, and many other reasons, it is a good thing we are past the Colonial era and the missionary thinking of the 19th and 20th centuries. Now, perhaps, we can have eyes to see that every local church is called to be a missional community. And every disciple is called to be a disciple maker.

Imitating Jesus

To accomplish that, two things are necessary. First, we need to imitate Christ. As Paul said to the Corinthians, “Imitate me as I imitate Christ.” One of the Anabaptists, Hans Denck said, “No one can know Christ truly unless he follows him daily in life; and no one can follow him daily in life unless he knows him truly.” That is our job: to take up our cross and follow Jesus daily in life. And this is how: by keeping in step with the Spirit and by doing what Jesus did.

So, what did Jesus do? Jesus said he did what he saw the Father doing and nothing on his own: “Whatever the Father does, the Son also does.” The church consists of disciples who imitate the Son in his obedience to the Father, because they, too, have become children of God, and he is their father too. As John puts it, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” How do we know that? In John’s words, “To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

Having put our trust in Jesus, identifying with him as children of God, we mimic him in his perfect obedience to the will of the Father: “Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing.” This is key! In the Bible, faith equals faithfulness, and faithfulness means following the will of the Father and example of the Son—in other words, living the life of the kingdom.
In the World

As we have already noticed, it turns out that the kingdom life is a missionary life. Just as the Father sent the Son, so the Son sends his disciples into the world.\(^34\) In Jesus’ great prayer in John 17, he intercedes for his present and future disciples, which includes us. But there is one request he will not make. “My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one,” he says.\(^35\)

Metaphors of the Church in the World

When Jesus said, “You will be my witnesses. He was not issuing a command; he was making a prediction. The church, by nature, would be a witnessing community. Virtually, all the New Testament metaphors for the church affirm that reality. They are never stated in the imperative, only in the indicative. In other words, the Scriptures don’t say, “Be salt! Be light! Be witnesses!” Instead, we see that because we are the people of God—children who belong to him—we will inevitably, inescapably, automatically be salt, light, letters, fishers, good seed, ambassadors, stars in the night sky, sojourners, witnesses—all of us! Just as the Great Commission is in plural form, so the “you” attached to these metaphors is plural. Or as Ben Witherington is fond of saying, it is always “Y’all.”

Think about the further implications of these metaphors for disciples. Salt has no impact without contact. Light is not light except in a dark place. Letters do not sit on desks, unsent. Ambassadors don’t shut their doors and stay home. Fishers don’t lock their boats in the boathouse. Sojourners don’t settle down in a Thomas Kinkade Cottage. No, they all go somewhere, do something. So, that is the second thing: (1) we need to live like Jesus; and (2) we need to do it publically, “in the world”: “I pray not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” Every one of those word pictures of the church underscores that.

On the Narrow Road

Jesus describes kingdom living with another metaphor that clarifies what it means to live in the world as light and salt, yet without getting caught up in the ways and values of the world. He puts it in the form of a caution: “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction… But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and few there be that find it.”\(^36\)

Why is the narrow road so hard to find and difficult to traverse? It is because it is not where you expect to find it. The narrow road is not some viney path that goes off into the wilderness. No, no. The narrow road goes right up the middle of
the broad road, only in just the opposite direction. Whereas once we were headed away from God, and away from the cross, and away from the light, we have now made a 180-degree turn (that is the meaning of repentance), and we are following the Lord Jesus and the saints of the ages on the road back to God and back to the light.

In other words, we are no longer living as the world lives. We have begun the journey to perfection in love, to Christlikeness, to all God intended us to be when he first thought of us. And, along the way, we tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love, the Jesus who rose from the dead, who has launched the kingdom of God, which, by grace, we are invited to enter through repentance and faith, and which we are privileged to serve if we will act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly in the footsteps of Jesus.

There will be two responses to us as we do. Some will be attracted by our lives and testimonies and will turn to follow us as we follow Jesus. But since we are pressing against the world’s traffic heading the other way, we also create friction, which causes some to react with rancor. But was it not so for the prophets? And for the martyrs? And for our Lord?

Further, we live in a world that is inherently darker than the world we would like. Systemic evil, modern warfare, conspicuous consumption, industrial waste, air pollution, heartless hackers—they have all sullied us, and sullied us all. These days, so it seems, the mean are meaner, and the swindlers are shrewder. The rich are richer and the poor are poorer. However, in the midst of it all—literally so!—we are called to another way: the way of economic fair play; the way of reconciliation; the way of the care of God’s earth; the way of lifting the poor from their poverty; the way of righteousness—the way of the kingdom of God.

How do we do that? Well, we do it with love and compassion, as Jesus did. We do it in the power of the Spirit. We do it by pointing to the unstoppable kingdom of God. We ask of people we meet on the way if they’ve heard of the freedom train. We say to them, “Why take a taxi to nowhere? Why take the road to destruction?” We point to the train: “This train is bound for glory!” we say. “Better jump on. There are no stops. For the freedom train is the kingdom train, and the engineer is the One who reigns—and reigns forever!”
End Notes

1 The two are named in sequence among the apostles in Matthew 10:4. However, “zealot” need not have been a political label but just as likely could have been a descriptive one.

2 John 11:45-53
3 Judges 8:22-23

4 Deuteronomy 10:12-13
5 1 Chronicles 28:5
6 Cf. Jeremiah 10:21
7 Genesis 17:1, 16

8 Daniel 2:37-38. Daniel clearly identified the Babylonian Empire as the first of the four kingdoms. From the first century until now, most interpreters have identified the others as the Achaemenid Empire (or First Persian Empire), the Macedonian (“Greek”) Empire, and the Roman Empire.

9 Daniel 2:34-35
10 Daniel 2:44-45
11 Daniel 7:13-14
12 Matthew 19:28
13 Daniel 2:35
14 Hebrews 12:28
15 Mark 1:15
16 Matthew 12:4-17
17 Matthew 4:23; cf. 9:35
18 Matthew 4:23-25
19 Matthew 10:1-8
20 Acts 1:6-8
21 Matthew 24:14
22 Matthew 28:16-20
23 Philippians 2:9-11
24 Mark 1:21-28
25 Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44


27 I understand the argument that “Go” calls to mind Jesus’ sending of the Twelve and Seventy earlier in Matthew. But that, to me, is not a strong enough reason to create what amounts in English to a second imperative, which because of its position at the beginning of the commission, promotes it to greater prominence than the central imperative to “make disciples.”

28 1 Corinthians 11:1. Similar statements are common in the epistles.


30 John 5:19

31 1 John 3:1

32 John 1:12

33 John 14:12

34 John 20:21

35 John 17:15

36 Matthew 7:13-14
M. Andrew Gale

*Justice and Truth, Theology in the Context of Emerging Young Adults*

Abstract

Emerging young adult church planters face challenging epistemological shifts within their congregations. With the proliferation of postmodern critique, the word truth has lost sway and is being supplanted by the concept of justice. In this article the author details this shift, looking at truth within postmodernism and justice as understood by the emerging young adult generation. He then offers a call for a rediscovery of an evangelical theology of justice and suggests helpful actions emerging young adult church planters can engage in that bridge this linguistic gap to their peers.

**Keywords**: justice, truth, emerging young adults, church planting, North America

M. Andrew Gale is a Ph.D. Candidate in Intercultural Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, KY.
Introduction

The global expansion of the church over the last two thousand years has been aided by the contextualizing of the gospel message as it traveled from people to people. Whether Paul at Athens or Peter with the Gentiles, the Christian message has been missionary in nature. The fact that Jesus spoke a language other than that of the sacred text which records his actions points to this phenomenon, called by Lammin Sanneh the translatability of the gospel (Sanneh 2009). The gospel message is contextualized as it whorls and weaves through cultures and peoples and finds its place in the hearts of new believers. This same contextualizing continues today, in subtle and less subtle ways. Within the emerging generation of Christian believers there is contextualizing taking place that is shaping church planting movements in North America. Emerging young adult church planters are challenged by the permeation of postmodern critique in the lives of those who sit in their pews (or folding chairs, couches, or stadium seating depending on the context). The change has affected both those who are joining church plants as well as those who are planting churches.

Like Paul and Peter before them, effective church planters today must understand the context within which they minister. To this end, engagement in church planting in the North American context amidst the emerging generation of young adults requires one to understand the theological shifts being made around the concept of truth. With the postmodern critique of absolute truth, the word truth has, in many places, been supplanted by the concept of justice. This shift is seen both in the growth of discussions around justice and the retreat or reworking of the use of truth. Whether cognizant of the shift or not, effective church planters often either succumb to the parlance of faith that is emerging in this generation or find creative avenues to engage and challenge places where these new iterations of theology are lacking. This article will trace the changes in theological emphasis among emerging young adults through two distinct, but connected strands of discourse. First, I examine the shifting epistemological paradigm of emerging young adults around truth, especially through the acceptance of the postmodern critique. Second, I explore the developments around the concept of justice within the context of emerging young adults. After laying these foundations, I offer what I see as a way forward for a church planter, which both embraces and challenges the developing theological perspective in light of cultural changes.
Emerging in a Postmodern Context

Emerging young adults have grown up in a culture that is discontinuously different than the culture of their parents (Kinnaman and Hawkins 2011:37–38). David Korten, when describing the world in which his daughter grew up, expresses much the same that “by the scale of evolutionary time, this has been an instantaneous break with the previous human condition” (Korten 2006:8). Researchers point to numerous reasons for this unprecedented change, from technology to globalization. Certainly an amalgamation of many factors has contributed to the marked change in this generation, but one factor that consistently surfaces as a culprit is the influence of postmodern thought. Though evangelical circles have attempted to eschew postmodern cultural critique, they have not been immune to the cultural shift. One place this is most prevalent is among the emerging generation of evangelical Christians. On one hand, Christian millennials hear from some in the church of the dangers of relativizing truth in postmodernity, on the other, they recognize there has been a drastic shift in concepts of truth that demands contextualization within their peer group if the church is to grow and expand. In this section, I will offer a sketch of North American emerging young adults that sets the context for the rationale behind the shift away from the term truth. There are two distinct factors shaping the way truth has left the vocabulary of emerging young adults: loss of language and loss of location.

The first factor shaping truth is the loss of language around the concept. This can be seen from the growing acceptance of the postmodern critique of truth as contextual (Webber 1999:23). Postmodernism is fundamentally a critique of its modern, positivist predecessor. With the rise of modern science, humanity began to use an epistemological framework of positivism that claimed “the purpose of science is to formulate universal and immutable laws” (Hiebert 1999:3). This positivist view became inextricably linked with Christianity, which utilized the foundation of universal law to validate biblical truth. God's truth, then, was seen as something static, unchanged by the culture in which it was expressed. To speak of a contextual gospel was irrational. Postmodernism challenged the view that there are universal laws, instead suggesting that everything we know is shaped by our context, making even theology relative (Hiebert 1999:57). Though the depth of this critique of truth as contextual may not have made its way into churches, the foundation of truth being relative dramatically changed the epistemological foundations of emerging young adults who have been inculcated by postmodern thought in educational settings. For emerging young adults, truth is uncouth and often unknown.
Sociologist Christian Smith, author of *Souls in Transition* and *Lost in Transition*, has done significant research on the emerging young adult demographic and offers startling findings in regard to issues of truth. For instance, Smith writes emerging young adults have difficulty distinguishing between “objective moral truth” and “relative human invention” (Smith and Snell 2009:46). He goes on to say this is not because emerging adults are unintelligent, but because they only understand their world through their subjective self-experience. In his follow up book, *Lost in Transition*, Smith continues this line of thought suggesting many emerging young adults cannot distinguish between something being a moral truth and a person’s perception of that truth. He uses slavery as an example, saying that just because there were people prior to the abolition of slavery who did not see it as a moral evil does not change the fact that slavery is morally wrong. “The truth status of that fact does not depend on people’s subjective recognition or assimilation of it, any more than the existence of germs or the Grand Canyon depends on people knowing about it” (Smith et al. 2011:61). Smith says that in the postmodern climate in which emerging young adults find themselves, religion has lost any ability to make truth claims that it might have had in previous generations (Smith and Snell 2009:101).

Postmodernism is not the enemy, though. The problem arises in an understanding of the postmodern critique that all truth is absolute truth. Had Christianity not been so indebted to a modernist worldview it may have weathered the semantic debate with the word truth. Anthropologist James Bielo, writing on a group he terms emerging evangelicals (a group consisting of more than emerging young adults, but nonetheless dominated by them) describes them as represented by a unique interplay of modernity and late-modernity, or postmodernity. Bielo says this interplay can be seen in many aspects, not the least of which is the abstraction of youth from absolute truth (Bielo 2011:8). The world in which emerging young adults live has not completely accepted the postmodern paradigm, but the critiques of postmodernism have made a profound impact on the ways they view themselves and the world around them. As Brian McLaren, a pastor noted for his postmodern theological bent, states, “to be postmodern means to have experienced the modern world and to have been changed by the experience – changed to such a degree that one is no longer modern” (McLaren 2001:16).

How has the shift of postmodernism affected emerging young adults? There are many changes one can point to showing the prevalence of this shift. N.T. Wright suggests postmodernity encourages a cynical approach to life. He notes a rise in suicide among young adults “who had imbibed postmodernity through every pore” (Wright 2013:32). The Barna Group found emerging young adults are not likely to identify the bible as sacred scripture (Kinnaman and Hawkins 2011:52).
The bible no longer holds a place of prominence in the lives of young adults. Admittedly, this has caused stress in churches as they stumble to find a footing within a demographic increasingly uninterested in the faith claims they espouse.

It is important to note here that there are many varied uses of the word truth. Some use it to refer to absolutes. Some use it more contextually, like a friend of mine who is an emerging young adult pastor and says in his sermons, “there is a deeper truth here.” He is not suggesting an absolute, but something that is worth more than a passing “amen.” My goal here is not to parse these different uses of truth, or the myriad others, but to bring to light the disparity in emotional reaction to this word. My friend recounted that he uses the word sparingly and dissimilarly than the generation prior. Words elicit feelings depending on our experiences with them. Depending on one’s upbringing, swear words catch our attention because we were taught not to say them. They were off limits. Saying a swear word in another language provides much less pleasure because of a lack of emotional attachment to that word. All of this is to say, regardless of whether Christian Smith is right about the moral truth of emerging young adults behaviorally, the word truth no longer has the positive emotional appeal to this generation that it had with generations prior.

Though the language of truth has lost sway in the emerging young adult community, this is only part of the dismal story for churches. For emerging young adults, truth has also experienced a loss of location, which is seen in their growing insecurity with the established church. Postmodernism brought with it a leeriness of institutions. David Kinnaman, president of Barna Research Group, suggests emerging young adults are more apprehensive of impersonal institutions, an apprehension leading them to approach the established church with caution (Kinnaman and Hawkins 2011:14). This results in emerging young adults’ critique of institutional congregational structures (Bielo 2011:100). When voiced, their critique of the established church surfaces from what is seen as the commodification of people through the uncritical acceptance of American cultural values of consumerism. Institutions are seen as disembodied structures, not a framework of values through which the church can flourish.

One example of a critique of institutional congregational structures is the rise of new monasticism. New monastic communities are made up of emerging adults who relocate from their comfortable suburban cul-de-sacs to urban centers as a way of being incarnational in their ministry approach (Bielo 2011:111, 128). Will Samson explores the critique of congregational structures as commodifying people in a chapter on the rise of new monasticism in the United States among emerging young adults. Samson discusses the battle in evangelicalism between cultural accommodation, the fact that churches need to attract people in order to
maintain the infrastructure they have created, and counter-cultural movements like new monasticism, who feel called to live outside confining institutional structures (Steensland and Goff 2013:94–108). The enormity of church institutions and the way they seem to commodify people to maintain their viability makes the established church seem compromised, if not completely unchristian, to many emerging young adults. The growth of new monasticism in the United States is not unlike the growth of church plants among emerging young adults, both of which are uncomfortable with the incongruences they find in established churches. This is evidenced by the exodus of emerging young adults from pastoral roles in these churches and their movement toward smaller church planting networks.

At the same time, to assume emerging young adults are vacating the church in droves lacks nuance as well. As Robert Wuthnow explains, there are many sociological factors that affect a person’s church attendance. One example he offers is that women are more likely than men to attend church, so marriage often affects church attendance. With emerging young adults choosing marriage later in life, the return to church is also protracted (Wuthnow 2007:56). The questions remains, what kinds of churches do these couples return to? It is these re-engaging couples with whom emerging young adult church planters are connecting. As they do, the planters want the couples to know they recognize the deficiencies of the established church which can be seen through something as simple as a taglines, like a recent church put on Facebook, “Same Jesus, different kind of church.”

Though one might think church plants are simply substitutes for established churches and thus relocate truth inside their bounds, the inclusive approach of many young church plants makes them wary of using language that might alienate their peers or too closely align them with the establishment. Emerging young adult church planters must now wrestle with how to remain relevant within a community who no longer accepts the lingua franca of the church. For young church planters the way they do this falls on a large spectrum of responses. One option is to reorient how one defines truth. In these settings truth gets understood in new, often pluralized terms, mainly as personal enlightenment. One example of this is a church that has the concept of deep listening as a core value of their congregation. In describing how deep listening plays a part in their church they write that “deep listening is also about opening ourselves to alternative points of view and the experiences’ and truths of others.” Personal enlightenment language is bound within an individualistic, Western cultural framework, which resonates with young adults, but does not find much traction in biblical literature.

Another alternative is to allow a new word to emerge that replaces truth linguistically. Wuthnow describes this as spiritual tinkering, a mark of emerging...
young adults (Wuthnow 2007:134–5). One commonly supplanted word for truth among emerging young adults, a correlation I will look at later in this paper, is justice. A recent church plant in Minnesota has a mission of environmental justice as their primary focus. Their tagline, in an image advertising the church on Facebook, reads, “Making space for Jesus + justice.” The website for the church looks much more like a community advocacy not-for-profit than a local congregation with forums on clean energy, climate change, and communities of color, and is targeted at other likeminded emerging adults. The lead pastor of the church was recently featured on Minnesota Public Radio with other theologians discussing the increasing engagement between faith and environmental issues. Environmental justice certainly has a place within the context of ecclesiology. My point is not to debate that, but to suggest a shift that is occurring in language where justice has supplanted truth, a word that is not mentioned in the current iteration of the church’s messaging.

Both of these churches mentioned above were featured in a recent New York Times article about young Methodist church planters with an environmental gospel (Oppenheimer 2015). Though I think churches such as these still represent the fringe and not the majority of church planting endeavors right now, they represent a shift that can be seen, even if more subtly, in mainstream church planting movements as well. This shift is away from language of truth and to a new language of justice. What is most striking about emerging young adults is not that they live without truth, but with unidentified truth. It is this unidentified truth that is often made manifest in the ways they approach justice. But before I explore the full movement from truth to justice, I want to look at the ways justice has been understood and re-engaged within the emerging young adult context.

**Justice and Emerging Young Adults**

Justice has become a major theme in Christian emerging young adult communities. They sing about justice. Tim Hughes, a British worship leader, has a worship song called “God of Justice.” Popular Christian music is picking up on this with more songs related to social action and issues like poverty. Emerging young adults pay money to attend conferences about justice. The Justice Conference, put on by World Relief, is one example and takes place annually at different major cities. The conference started in 2010 and over 12,000 people have attended. At other conferences, even those who do not have a specific focus on justice, conversations of justice still abound. At a Passion Conference in Atlanta a few years ago, college students raised over three million dollars in just days to fight issues of injustice. They are starting not-for-profits working nationally and internationally on issues of
human trafficking, poverty, disease, clean water, and violence. Multiple CEO’s of major Christian development organizations (i.e. World Vision, International Justice Mission, and World Relief) have published books related to issues of justice with a goal of engaging this emerging constituency. Whether emerging adults, in general, are engaged in justice related issues is still debatable by some (Smith et al. 2011:228), but within Christian emerging adults circles, the interest in justice is present. But just as vital as recognizing the prominence of justice is understanding the foundation on which it rests. For emerging young adults, justice can be understood in two ways: grounded in equality and participatory nature.

In order to clearly understand the movement of justice in emerging young adults, one must look at the language of justice in recent decades. John Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice* holds as one of the most influential texts on political philosophy of the 20th century. Rawls offers a view of justice as fairness, utilizing the social contract theory of Locke, Rousseau, and Kant (Rawls 1999:11). Rawls sets the foundation of the discussion on justice that others, like Robert Nozick, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Michael Walzer, debate. Though John Rawls may not have celebrity-like name recognition within the emerging young adult generation, his theories of justice and language of equality and fairness have certainly influenced the way they interpret justice.

Emerging young adults value equality in many forms. Socially, they are more accepting of lifestyle choices and sexual orientations different from their own (Kinnaman and Hawkins 2011:163). They are strong proponents of ethnic and gender equality. They want to repair broken relationships and eliminate global economic inequalities. Though a foundation of equality is not completely negative there are challenges. One philosopher, Nicholas Wolterstorff, deals with the importance of differentiating between equality and justice by offering a theological perspective to discourses on justice grounding his justice in the concept of inherent rights (Wolterstorff 2008:11). One of the distinctions Wolterstorff draws between his theory of justice and that of his contemporaries is that his foundation of inherent rights is based in the worth of a person, a worth given by their connection to God, which in turn gives a person rights (Wolterstorff 2011:152–157; Wolterstorff 2013:137). Wolterstorff clearly differentiates between a view of justice as inherent rights and one of equality, which would coincide with a Rawlsian view, claiming there are times when justice is present that equality is not and when equality is present and justice is not (Wolterstorff 2008:14).

Emerging young adults will most likely not cite Rawls as the foundation for their concepts of justice as equality, so where does this sense of inequality come from? One major factor is the increased access this generation has that is
unprecedented in comparison to previous generations (Kinnaman and Hawkins 2011:43). With the help of the internet, emerging adults gain nearly instantaneous connectedness and the inundation of news and information. The globalizing world that emerging young adults find themselves in is marked by global interconnectedness where consistent contact and interaction is possible regardless of distance (Inda and Rosaldo 2008:4). Emerging young adults, possibly more than any generation prior, have the capacity to see and experience firsthand global inequality because of the heightened access. Globalization has challenged Christians’ assumptions about God and social justice (Wuthnow 2010:3). Globalization has brought to the fore the realities of global injustice and also created systems where travel to nearly any place in the world is feasible.

For some this extensive access leads to apathy, a sense that the troubles in the world are overwhelming and unsalvageable. But for others it brings to light issues propelling them toward action. Their desire for change has become a defining characteristic of emerging evangelicals (Bielo 2011:5). Brian Steensland and Philip Goff pick up on this characteristic, and in response are studying the changes happening within the evangelical Christian community as evangelical emerging young adults are living in this newly accessible cultural context. They suggest “consciousness-raising movements” have led to a wider awareness of injustices around the world including global inequalities, sex trafficking, and health-related illness (Steensland and Goff 2013:16). These “consciousness-raising movements” have the capability of rapid mobilization through social media, as evidenced by campaigns like “Kony 2012.” The Kony 2012 website calls the campaign the “fastest growing viral video of all time” and says it reached 100 million views in 6 days (“Kony 2012”). Access enables avenues by which they can create networks with other likeminded individuals and communities interested in their cause. A 2013 report on millennials showed that 65% receive email or newsletter updates from at least one not-for-profit (“The 2013 Millennial Impact Report” 2013). Increased access points to where a sense of inequality is derived; the second component of justice in emerging young adults is participation.

For emerging young adults, justice is not simply recognition of inequality, but must be accompanied by action on behalf of the marginalized. This desire for participation is evident in Christian emerging adults as well. Action-oriented faith is a definitive characteristic of emerging young adults (Webber 2002:94). When one places a strongly action-oriented theology of justice within the context of a generation marked by access and mobility, the outcome is a growing number of socially engaged young people. Participation is obvious when one sees the growth in short-term missions over the past few years, where some estimate 1.5 million
North Americans are participating annually (Ott, Strauss, and Tennent 2010:xii). Robert Wuthnow reports that “nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of active church members in the United States have traveled or lived in another country” (Wuthnow 2010:3). In another survey, Robert Wuthnow and Stephen Offutt found that of the people who were teenagers during the 1950s, 1960s, or 1970s only two percent indicated they had participated in a short-term trip. The percentage has grown to 12 percent for those who were teenagers in the 1990s (Wuthnow and Offutt 2008:218). Globalization has made participation in the lives of those living in unjust situations a reality for people in ways it has not been in the recent past.

A theological term for this embodied social activism that has been promulgated by emerging young adults is incarnation. Incarnation has defined certain segments of Christian emerging adults, like that of the new monastic movement. Though all emerging young adults are not engaged in new monasticism, incarnation can be seen in the language of participation in church planting movements as well. James Bielo mentions that emerging evangelicals see themselves as missionaries within their own context (Bielo 2011:118). Church plants use the language of incarnation to describe the ways they engage and participate within the community they are planting. Churches are even foregoing Sunday services in order to engage in community service.

Though equality and action are components of justice, they do not speak to the Christian foundations of justice. Attempts to be relevant can too quickly simplify critical aspects of theology. Kara Powell and Chap Clark write of interviews with emerging young adults asking them to define Christianity. Most of their respondents said loving others and a third of respondents made no mention of Jesus at all (Powell and Clark 2011:33). Central to actions of justice is the theological foundations of those actions in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The outcome of a highly practice-driven approach to justice with a theoretical foundation focused mainly on equality is a humanistic notion of justice tied to rights. In a context outside of the church this is, possibly, an acceptable definition of justice. The challenge becomes when the church attempts to engage in the discourse on justice without distinguishing how that discourse may differ within a Christian context. In some senses, the justice that is often engaged by emerging young adults, and to which emerging young adult church planters call their congregation, is a justice lacking a foundation of truth rooted in anything but humanistic abstraction.

**A Way Forward**

A North American music group has captured the movement of truth within their emerging young adult generation in a song called “The Truth is a Cave.”
The opening verse expresses:

I was young and naïve, as I was told so I believed.
And I was told there’s only one road that leads you home.
And the truth was a cave, on the mountainside.
And I’d seek it out until the day I died.

As the person grows up, their view of truth changes. In the second verse one encounters a less innocent lyricist showing the departure of truth from the comfort of abstract ideal to modernity where it becomes a concrete force:

I was bound and determined; to be the child you wanted.
But I was blind to every sign you left for me to find.
And the truth became a tool that I held in my hand.
I wielded it and did not understand.

Finally, as the person continues wrestling with himself or herself they recognize their inability to discover truth. The song ends with a demure, yet hopeful verse:

I was tired
Of giving more than you gave to me
And I desired
A truth I wouldn’t have to seek
In the silence I heard you calling out to me.
(The Oh Hellos, \textit{The Truth is a Cave})

Through the analysis thus far, I explored the epistemological shifts of postmodernity which left emerging young adults with limited language to express truth and no trusted location for it to reside. Next, I showed how discourses on justice in emerging young adults are grounded in equality and participatory in nature. As the word truth and its modern intonation has left a sour taste in their mouths, they have chosen, not unlike the lyrics to the song, to abandon the word. But, though the word may be abandoned, I think a more fluid understanding of truth exists in the foundation of their use of the word justice. Justice is fundamentally grounded in truth, but does not currently carry the postmodern baggage that is encompassed in truth. Thus, the movement toward justice can be seen through the lens of a seeking after truth in a world mystified by truth claims. Justice does carry some varied meaning outside of truth, the major variation being that justice
is often understood as action oriented, participatory. In this way, I believe justice is better clarified in the emerging young adult context as embodied truth. In this closing section I suggest two moves that could be made by emerging young adult church planters to engage with their peers and aid in both the health and expansion of the church in North America: the first is to rediscover an evangelical theology of justice and the second is to encourage further dialogue around justice through praxis in ecclesial contexts.

The first chasm to cross in order to engage emerging young adults is the rift between evangelical theology and justice. There are many factors that contributed to the move away from justice, but the shift can be seen clearly in the early twentieth century and the debates over the social gospel. The social gospel pushed language that favored social action where evangelicals favored language of individual sin and salvation. The move away from social action was exacerbated by the theological growth of premillennialism and its view of society as irredeemable (Woolnough and Ma 2010:10). Society was not worth saving, simply the souls of those one encountered. A view of salvation focusing exclusively on individual sin disregards structural evils and reduces justice to its spiritualized understanding (Mott 2011:3). This theological shift away from language of social action was paired with the growing fear of the linkage of language of justice and Marxist rhetoric. Within this historical context, the evangelical church disengaged from conversations about justice, as it was seen as subversive and anti-Christian, and focused on language of individual sin. Justice, then, became defined only in the limited view of justice as spiritual justification. Robert Webber suggests that the social activism of emerging young adults arises out of a reaction to the early anti-social action fundamentalism of the twentieth century (Webber 2002:26–30).

Though this history does not fully encompass the current stance of the evangelical church, what it means for emerging young adults is that many did not grow up in an ecclesial environment that discussed societal justice as a theological component of faith, but relied primarily on a spiritualized concept of justification. Though the immediate impact of this move away from justice was not felt, as young adults are re-engaging the language of justice, the church does not have a foundation for them to stand on. In that case, many emerging young adults look at secular understandings of justice as their barometer for theological justice without recognizing and wrestling with the underlying presuppositions of truth that make up any claim of justice. Justice as simplistic equality does not offer a biblical foundation of truth. Unlike its predecessors, what emerging young adults need is not for the church to say their view of justice is incompatible with faith and must be discarded, but that it is only partial and must be strengthened. Emerging young
adults must be reminded that relevance cannot replace depth. What is needed is not a retreat of theology from justice, but quite the opposite, the retrieval of a Christological, evangelical theology of justice.15

One of the concepts in theology that could aid in the rediscovery of an evangelical theology of justice, especially within emerging young adults, is the liberation theology concept of praxis (Gutiérrez 1988:11). Praxis as a theological concept requires that we start with action taken on behalf of the world, but it does not end there. Action may be the first step, but praxis requires movement toward theological reflection of that action. Reflection without action is verbalism, action without reflection is activism (Freire 2000:87–88). It is in the second step, from action to theology that emerging young adults remain stalled. They participate, but fail to reflect on their participation in light of their Christian faith. In this way they understand justice, but fail to move toward the truth that lies waiting behind it. The challenge for some in accepting a concept like praxis is the history within which it was presented. Liberation theology, much like the language of social justice, was born and bred in Marxist rhetoric. But the concept, in general, can be understood outside of those terms.

Miroslav Volf, in his book Exclusion and Embrace, wrestles with justice within the postmodern context. Volf suggests a way of approaching justice through praxis by what he calls “double vision,” a term he borrows from Nicholas Wolterstorff. Double vision is the ability to stand in one tradition and learn from others (Volf 1996:213). Volf goes on to say that “reflection about justice must serve doing justice. If ‘double vision’ has a legitimate place in Christian life, then it will not be something we do before engaging in the struggle against injustice but as we engage in this struggle” (Volf 1996:217). Volf recognizes the participatory nature of justice within the emerging young adult context and encourages a reflective participation that does not wait for sound theology before participating, but develops a theology as part and parcel to action.

Praxis is also experiential and thus embraces the theological tendencies of this generation. Robert Wuthnow says that for Christians today truth is not founded in institutions or tradition, it is experiential (Wuthnow 2010:16). Robert Webber noted this shift even earlier, expressing it as a move from systematic doctrine to a narrative, context specific theology (Webber 2002:83). Praxis, which should happen within ecclesial settings, also offers correctives to one-sided views of justice by challenging churches that fall at either end of the spectrum in regard to justice. For those whose conversations around justice are only in a spiritualized sense, praxis pushes social action and requires a theology that recognizes the role of the reign of God on earth. For others who have utilized justice dissected from its Christological
foundation, praxis forces a view of justice that reflects theologically. Praxis, in essence, offers a way to meet in the middle and create a language for discourse.

Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice warn Christians that “one of the greatest dangers facing work for justice and peace birthed within a Christian vision is the gradual detachment of that work from its unique Christian roots and vision” (Katongole and Rice 2008:139). Emerging young adults are starting new churches because they do not see a theology from established churches that embrace the complexity of their world. And emerging young adult church planters often suffer from the same frustrations of the established church as their peers. Church plants attempting to engage the emerging young adult community must be willing to engage in dialogue about justice, but also not be afraid to move that conversation toward the foundation of justice, truth. Praxis that fails to reflect theologically is not praxis, but simply good works. Justice, in its full, Christological understanding, does more than simply offer temporary relief, it points to a truth that is living water. Church planting that understands its context will exude praxis, it will join emerging young adults in the work of caring for a hurting world, but will do it in a way that continuously reflects on that work in light of faith. We should encourage emerging young adults to seek out justice, in its full understanding, grounded in the biblical narrative. Recognizing truth within justice and finding ways to reflect, write, theologize, and express that truth in light of their faith while living in their postmodern context will be the next major task for this emerging community of believers.

End Notes

1 Emerging young adults are commonly identified as those persons born between 1980 and 2000. There are many terms scholars use for this generation (millennials, generation y, mosaics). Each of these is formulated out of a specific understanding of the emerging young adult community. I am choosing to simply identify them as emerging young adults to avoid the specific categorizing others have applied.

2 There are significantly divergent opinions in scholarship about whether society finds itself in postmodernity or late/liquid modernity. I am choosing to use the term postmodernity in this article to highlight the confliction with modernity that is found within the emerging young adult context, not to endorse or oppose a specific theory.

3 In a presentation of this article I was asked about the relevance of Brian McLaren and other early emergent church writers for current emerging young adult church planters. Though McLaren may not have the readership that he did a decade ago, the foundation of critique of the institutional church that he levied then still has ripple effects in current church planting efforts. If anything, this can be seen in the fact that the postmodern paradigm that McLaren espoused in his writings is
accepted as normative in many church plants. The impact of McLaren’s theology among emerging young adults, as well as similar writers in that genre like Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, seems to me to still be present.


8 For example: Matt West’s song “Do Something.”


10 This number was given prior to the most recent conference and can be found at: http://www.thejusticeconference.com/pdf/TJC15_PartnerApplication_Form.pdf (Accessed September 19, 2015).


13 Though Rawls’ justice is distinctively distributive in nature, the importance of his connection for this discussion is the language of fairness and equality that clearly shaped his argument. Justice as fairness can be seen in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, the contemporary expression of this view of justice is found in the writings of Rawls.

14 The increase in information and access within the emerging young adult community are factors in their actions toward justice, but one question that should be explored more is why they are factors. Is it simply because they see more injustice and want to be involved? One word I heard time and again from emerging young adults about the reasons they engaged in issues of justice was guilt. Guilt, no doubt from increased access, is a major motivating factor, but not one that has the power to sustain action in the face of complexity and difficulty.

15 One first step might be, as suggested by other theologian, to reclaim a place for justice in the New Testament by reviewing and expanding research on the uses of δικαιοσύνη (Mott 2011; Wolterstorff 2008).
Works Cited

Bielo, James S.  

Freire, Paulo  

Gutiérrez, Gustavo  

Hiebert, Paul G.  

Inda, Jonathan Xavier, and Renato Rosaldo, eds.  

Katongole, Emmanuel, and Chris Rice  

Kinnaman, David, and Aly Hawkins  

“Kony 2012”  

Korten, David C.  

McLaren, Brian D.  

Mott, Stephen Charles  
Oppenheimer, Mark  

Ott, Craig, Stephen Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent  

Powell, Kara Eckmann, and Chap Clark  

Rawls, John  

Sanneh, Lamin O.  

Smith, Christian, Kari Marie Christoffersen, Hilary A. Davidson, and Patricia Snell Herzog  

Smith, Christian, and Patricia Snell  

Steensland, Brian, and Philip Goff, eds.  

“The 2013 Millennial Impact Report”  

Volf, Miroslav  

Webber, Robert  

Wolterstorff, Nicholas


Woolnough, Brian E, and Wonsuk Ma

Wright, N. T.

Wuthnow, Robert


Wuthnow, Robert, and Stephen Offutt
Benjamin J. Snyder

From Jerusalem to Jerusalem: Essential Contours of the Modern Messianic Movement

Abstract

The modern messianic movement is only beginning to be noticed and is often met with confusion by Gentile believers. In an effort to promote better understanding and positive engagement with a view toward mutual collaboration between Jew and Gentile within the modern Church, this paper outlines the essential contours of the movement. Additionally, it appeals to a missiological model that offers a framework to aid the Gentile believer in understanding the movement. As a result of this awareness, this author hopes to see concrete engagement on the part of Gentiles with this expanding work of God among Jewish people.

Key Words: Messianic Movement, Jew, Gentile, Jewish Believers, Jewish-Christian

Benjamin J. Snyder, a former missionary with Mission Aviation Fellowship in the D.R. Congo, is a doctoral student in Biblical Studies (NT) at Asbury Theological Seminary. An abridged version of this essay was presented at the October 9, 2015 ATS Colloquium “The Church and its Expansion.”
Introduction

While on a trip to Ireland, a Messianic Jew asked a local Irishman, “What will it take to end the problems here?” The Irishman replied, “When the Jews come preaching Jesus.” So, taking the man at his word, the Messianic Jew planned a return trip to do just that. While on this second evangelistic trip he was handing out tracts when another local Irishman inquired, “Who are you?” The response was, “We are Jews who believe in Jesus.” The Irishman, befuddled at the idea finally stammered out, “Huh, Jews for Jesus.” After a brief silence, the Irishman’s clarity returned and he followed up by asking, “So, are you a Catholic Jew or a Protestant Jew?”

In an effort to ameliorate similar myopia, this essay outlines the major contours of the modern Messianic movement with several goals in mind. The movement is rapidly growing and basic awareness is needed among Gentile believers so the Church can positively engage and participate in what God is doing among Jewish people worldwide. As such we will first address the identity of those comprising the movement. Second, we will consider a missiological model with which to understand the various expressions of the movement. Third, we will survey the diverse theological perspectives held within the movement since it is not unlike the rest of the Church. Finally, we will consider the potential positive impact Messianic Jews may bring to our world. At the end of the essay numerous resources will be provided along with a chart outlining “eight typologies” of Messianic Jews. It is my hope that the reader will not only praise God for this exciting, worldwide work that is flourishing among Jewish people, but will also seek out concrete ways in which to participate in this unique expansion of the Church.

At the outset I should note that I am not Jewish (so far as I know) and thus represent an outsider’s voice with regard to the movement. While this carries certain limitations with it, I also have an advantage not necessarily enjoyed by Jewish believers. For one, while I would not dispute that insiders know themselves best, it is commonly known that insiders tend to lack the ability to recognize certain dynamics that characterize the group. Because cultural rules are inherently learned, insiders are blind to certain elements of their existence and unable to appreciate how outsiders understand them.

Second, I represent an insider’s voice with regard to Gentiles. While a representative from the Messianic movement could say similar things (and some have), the points raised here may be received differently because I say them as a Gentile. Additionally, the Messianic Jewish conversation at this stage (from my perspective) is largely an internal dialogue, insiders addressing fellow insiders. The
implication to be drawn which motivates this essay, is that for the Church to be an effective global witness, the Messianic movement cannot remain a solo act but needs the harmony of Gentile believers. This coming together depends on both Jewish and Gentile believers.

Finally, to avoid being arbitrary I depend on the writings of Messianic Jewish believers for the identification of the essential contours mentioned herein. Additionally, I draw on the many presentations I had the privilege of attending during the 2015 International Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism in Jerusalem.

A Community Struggling for Acceptance: “...they were strangers and exiles on the earth” (Heb 11:13, ESV)

Who are Messianic Jews? The mere challenge of deciding what to call a Jewish person who believes in Jesus is evidence of the difficulty of providing a definition. David H. Stern, a foundational voice in the modern Messianic Movement, discusses nine different titles. They are, with his evaluation, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jewish Believer</th>
<th>Vague: believer in what?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Messianic Believer</td>
<td>Vague: Jewish or Gentile?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew Christian</td>
<td>An older term emphasizing ethnicity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Christian</td>
<td>Neutral: emphasizes ethnicity, but is typically associated with Western notions of Christian identity; sometimes used by scholars to refer to Jewish believers between the 1st - 4th centuries CE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Jew</td>
<td>Similar to Jewish Christian but not used by scholars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilled Jew</td>
<td>Vague: implies that a Jew “completes or fulfills his Old Testament faith.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Jew</td>
<td>Negative: indicates that one reads and follows the Old and New Testaments but implies rejection of Rabbinic traditions which some believing Jews do not do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jew for Jesus</td>
<td>Confusing: it derives from a ministry by this name that was founded in 1970.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messianic Jew</td>
<td>Refers to “Jews who follow Jesus and maintain a loyalty to their Jewish Heritage.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This list may be supplemented with a further title, “Jewish believers in Jesus,” which is advocated by Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries.* For our purposes, “Messianic Jew” is equivalent to “Jewish believer in Jesus.”

The reader might wonder why the title “Christian” is not simply adopted. One problem from the perspective of a Messianic Jew is that it implies conversion from Judaism to Christianity, i.e. two distinct religions. Ample research has now documented that the hard lines with which we distinguish between Judaism and Christianity did not exist in antiquity and did not develop until much later in history. As Samuel Sandmel so aptly notes, “If it had not happened that the name Christianity became attached to this religion, its essential Jewish nature would not require pointing out.” Another reason “Christian” is avoided is that the NT does not use this term as a self-designation by believers. Even if it did, it still would not imply that its followers comprised a separate religion.

It must be stressed that avoidance of the title “Christian” is not intended to divide believers into two qualitatively different groups. Rather, it (1) seeks to avoid association with “Western” notions attached to the modern understanding of the title and (2) cognizant of this historical development it honors the fact that the church was originally Jewish and that the Gentiles were ingrafted, not the other way around (Rom 11:17-21).

No matter the title, and more to the point, Messianic Jews are generally rejected by the two groups to which they claim allegiance, i.e. the Jewish people and the Church. Sadly, if history is our guide, Jews and Christians have been in general agreement on this point: one cannot remain Jewish and believe in Jesus.

A modern case study will illustrate the point. Edith Stein, a Jew who died in 1942 at Auschwitz during the holocaust, had come to faith in Jesus twenty years prior via the Catholic Church. In 1987 Pope John Paul II beatified her and then in 1998 canonized her. David Novak, a Conservative Jewish Rabbi and theologian, says of her in response to these events,

Jews have been able to dismiss most modern Jewish converts to Christianity as people motivated by social or professional ambition, self-hatred, ignorance, or mental imbalance. But anyone who knew Edith Stein or who knows anything about her life would have to admit that none of these categories applies to her. Indeed, Edith Stein comes across as sui generis. She might be the most uniquely problematic Jew for us since Saul of Tarsus.
He continues, asserting the common dichotomy also shared by many Christians and which the Messianic Jewish community now challenges.

Edith Stein represents our impasse. She cannot be a bridge between Jews and Catholics because in this world one cannot be simultaneously both a faithful Jew and a faithful Catholic. Since the Jewish and Catholic communities are mutually exclusive, and both Jews and Catholics derive their identities from God’s covenant with their communities, no member of one community can also be a member in good standing of the other.18

However one evaluates Novak’s ultimatum, it reflects the unspoken expectation that Jews must first become Gentile before coming to Jesus. This is a stunning reversal of the Jerusalem Council wherein Jewish believers met to determine whether Gentile believers had to become Jewish to experience salvation in Jesus (Acts 15). But lest one miss what was taken for granted, at this early stage it was completely normal for an ethnically Jewish person to believe in Jesus and still live as a Jew. There was, in fact, no predominantly Gentile form of the faith to which to “convert.”

Thus, the modern Messianic Jewish community represents a significant challenge to the false dichotomy constructed between Judaism and Christianity. Accordingly, it is the goal of the organization called Toward Jerusalem Council II to remedy this problem. In their words,

...one day there will be a second Council of Jerusalem that will be . . . the inverse of the first Council described in Acts 15. Whereas the first Council was made up of Jewish believers in Yeshua (Jesus), who decided not to impose on the Gentiles the requirements of the Jewish law, so the second Council would be made up of Gentile church leaders, who would recognize and welcome the Jewish believers in Yeshua without requiring them to abandon their Jewish identity and practice.19

Lest I give the impression that all Jewish believers in Jesus share this vision, both Stan Telchin20 and Baruch Maoz21 who are ethnically Jewish and identify as Christians from the Reformed tradition believe the modern Messianic movement to be a disingenuous modern construct which threatens the unity of the church. They appeal to texts like Gal 3:27-28 and Eph 2:15. Coincidentally, this same pushback is raised by the Jewish community (even using the same NT texts!), which judges Messianic Jews to be deceitful.22

Telchin, Maoz, and Novak raise a poignant question: is it legitimate to construct a modern Messianic Jewish identity? Even, Richard Harvey observes that
not only does the movement lack “a theological tradition” but it also must “construct a new social and religious identity.” The question is one of authenticity with real world implications. For example, if a non practicing, ethnically Jewish person comes to faith in Jesus, should he or she adopt a Jewish mode of life in the Messianic Jewish movement? Or, does he or she continue to live an “assimilated” life since that was reality before his or her expression of faith in Jesus? Is it incumbent upon a Jewish person to live as a Jew when he or she chooses to follow Jesus?

The question is further muddied by defining what it means to live as a Jew. For, Jewish identity is not arbitrary, it is founded upon divine revelation which is why answering this question is critical to the Jewish believer. While it would be admitted by any Jewish group (e.g., Orthodox, Reform, or Conservative) that Jewish identity is adapted in some way to a modern context, it is nonetheless founded upon (an interpretation of) Torah. Yet, this now requires defining “Torah,” the standard used to define Jewish identity. Since this is debated among Jewish groups, it should be no surprise that agreement is lacking among Messianic Jewish groups too.

Messianic Jews in general acknowledge that the Messianic Jewish identity is a modern construct, but this is not sufficient reason to call it illegitimate. Stern, for example, reframes the question by denying that Messianic Jewish identity is ultimately a symptom of a “psychological problem” or an identity crisis. Rather, it is due to historical developments that no continuous Messianic Jewish identity exists. It follows then that there used to be one and it is perfectly legitimate to reconstruct it now.

Second, all conversions imply an associated life change, i.e. a cultural change. While one’s American, Asian or African cultural identity does not cease upon coming to faith in Jesus neither does it remain the same. Indeed, it is the perennial challenge of believers to determine how to live first as a follower of Jesus within a given culture (i.e. live counter-culturally) and only then as a member of larger society (i.e. live like the surrounding culture). To frame it a different way, if both Christians and Jews expect their converts to change their behavior in accord with the accepted values of their faith tradition, then why should it be a problem for Messianic Jews?

So, who are Messianic Jews? It should be evident at this point that the answer involves diversity. The following illustration shows the continuum of possibilities:
Thus, when one meets a Jewish believer in Jesus, one should not automatically assume that he or she is like “X” but rather listen to how he or she describes him or herself.

The C-Spectrum as a Limited Aid to Understanding Messianic Jewish Identity

Whether the reader is prepared to grant the legitimacy of Messianic Jewish identity, it nonetheless exists. The C-Spectrum serves as an aid to comprehend the diverse expression of this identity. John Travis (a pseudonym) developed it in order to illustrate the various levels of contextualization that could happen following the conversion of a Muslim.

As one moves from left to right on the continuum, there is a gradual reduction in “foreignness” both in how the Gospel is lived as well as how nonbelievers perceive the identity of the believer. There are four principle categories used when analyzing a group. They are: (1) the language of worship, (2) the cultural form of life and worship, (3) the manner of self-identification, and (4) how believers are perceived by local non-believers. Thus, a C1 believer resembles a Western Christian whereas a C5/C6 believer is externally indistinguishable from a local nonbeliever. For this reason, the C5/6 category is often referred to as an “insider movement,” which has generated much debate among scholars, missiologists and missionaries given the potential for syncretism. They are also viewed with suspicion on the part...
of local non-believers since C5/6 believers may be perceived as a deceitful threat if found out.

If one compares this illustration with the previous one, certain similarities will be readily evident. Because of this, some point to Messianic Jews as exemplars of the C5 category. That is, Messianic Jews are thought to legitimate C5 Muslims on the assumption that if it is acceptable for the former, it must be for the latter. The following table provides some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C5 “Messianic Muslim”</th>
<th>C5 “Messianic Jew”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>Isa (Jesus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attend</strong></td>
<td>Mosque/create an “Isa Mosque”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Worship</strong></td>
<td>Muslim manner of expression including Ramadan, abstinence from pork &amp; alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scriptures &amp; Beliefs</strong></td>
<td>Reinterpreted in light of Isa, rejected if not possible to reinterpret</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now that I have offered the model as an aid, I hasten to define its limitation. That is, I do not see Messianic Jews as equivalent to an “insider movement” and they should not be used as justification for establishing the legitimacy of insider movements. As Timothy Tennent has rightly noted, a key difference between Muslim believers and Jewish believers is one of identity and he rightly objects that Jewish believers “found Jesus within Jewish, religious identity” in a way that Muslim believers never can. That is, the religious culture of a Jewish believer in Jesus is not at odds with following Jesus in quite the same way as the religious culture of a Muslim believer.

Space does not permit a full working out of the differences between Muslim and Jewish believers in this regard, and the reader may disagree, but it is important to point out the limitations of the C-Spectrum as applied to Messianic Jews here. Nevertheless, the value of this spectrum lies in helping the reader to identify differences among various expressions of Messianic Judaism as well as to
“place” various groups with which he or she may interact whether or not there is agreement with the “orthodoxy” of a given category.

**A Community of Theological Diversity**

The diversity of Messianic Jewish identity can in part be explained by its theological diversity. For example, one’s “theological” view of Torah, i.e. whether it is binding or how it is binding, has a direct impact on how one lives as a Messianic Jew. This fact is also reflected in Orthodox, Reformed, and Conservative Judaism each of which adhere to different views of Torah.34 Because the Messianic Jewish community is in process of defining itself, this theological diversity is a necessary side effect of a live discussion.

Due to space constraints the following is a mere cursory survey related to views regarding the observance of Torah. Because my intent is to present the diversity of the movement and not to adjudicate the “correct” view(s), no comment will be made along these lines. The individuals listed below represent significant voices in the formation of Messianic Jewish Theology and are surveyed by Richard Harvey in *Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology*.35

Since I am unable to cover the other critical topics of Christology (i.e. Messianic Jewish understanding of Jesus) and Eschatology (especially as it relates to views of the modern State of Israel) I point the reader to Harvey’s book and provide a summary table of his “Eight Typologies” at the end of the article.

**Torah**

Torah as used here refers to the Mosaic Law. It may also include Rabbinic Tradition depending on the view represented below. Messianic Jews generally agree that the Torah is not applicable to Gentiles (Acts 15) in the same way it is for Jews. Some prefer to speak of a “Messianic” or “New Covenant” Torah which applies to both Jew and Gentile, but in different ways.36 Since the focus here is only on Messianic Jewish self-understanding we will not consider its application to Gentiles. The first table presents a general view of Torah.
We turn briefly now to his survey of the practical application of Torah with regard to Sabbath, *kashrut*, and Passover, the most common elements of Jewish identity. The various proponents are grouped accordingly with each individual perspective.

**Sabbath**

Observing Sabbath is one of the most well known practices of Judaism and for good reason since it is the “sign” of the Mosaic covenant (Ex 31:13-17). If Torah is in effect then it should not be surprising to find its observance important to Messianic Jews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Abandon</th>
<th>Adapt</th>
<th>Adopt</th>
<th>Accept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basis</strong></td>
<td>Jesus fulfills Mosaic Law and renders it obsolete (e.g., Matt 5:17; Rom 10:4; Heb 8:16). Only the universal moral law (10 commandments) applies.</td>
<td>Jewish cultural identity is defined by the Mosaic Law and preserved in Jewish tradition. Observance carries no religious merit with it and is not a requirement.</td>
<td>Jesus and his followers were Law observant. Yet they abandoned and adapted some practices, and placed few requirements on Gentile believers.</td>
<td>Orthodox Torah observance is in effect even through Jesus. All Messianic Jews should follow Rabbinic tradition as people fully identified with Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intent</strong></td>
<td>Avoidance of legalism and rebuilding the “middle wall of partition” (Eph 2:14)</td>
<td>Preserve Jewish identity through calendar, circumcision and <em>kashrut</em>.</td>
<td>Preserve religious validity of Torah although as mediated through Jesus.</td>
<td>Torah observance is the proper response of gratitude to God’s grace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proponents</strong></td>
<td>Baruch Maoz, Stan Telchin, Arnold Fruchtenbaum</td>
<td>Gershon Nerel</td>
<td>Daniel Juster David Stern</td>
<td>Mark Kinzer, Hashivenu, Messianic Jewish Rabbinical Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of Sabbath</td>
<td>Representative</td>
<td>Summary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full Rejection of Rabbinic Tradition</strong></td>
<td>Baruch Maoz</td>
<td>Reinterpreting Jewish tradition with Christian meaning is not Jewish. Ritual elements of Judaism are fulfilled in Jesus anyway.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arnold Fruchtenbaum</td>
<td>Following Jewish tradition often places one in conflict with biblical truth (e.g., prayer said at the lighting of Sabbath candles). Yet, each is free to observe as one desires so long as it is not imposed on others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gershon Nerel</td>
<td>Sabbath has never been annulled but one must follow the Rabbi (Jesus) and not the Rabbis in one’s observance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modification of Rabbinic Tradition</strong></td>
<td>Barney Kasdan</td>
<td>Ritual is not legalism. Jesus observed Sabbath (e.g., Luke 4:16-21) and Hebrews 4 permits its observance in light of Him. Jesus also corrected Rabbinic tradition from within.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daniel Juster</td>
<td>Sabbath is linked to God’s covenant with Israel and thus tied to Jewish identity. Rabbinic tradition, which accords with the New Covenant, are to be retained. Focus is always against legalism but toward Jesus.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Fischer</td>
<td>Jesus strictly observed Sabbath and did not annul the Torah (Matt 5:17-20; Rom 3:31). His conflict over Sabbath was over specific traditions, not the observance of the day in general. Focus is on the worship of God in Jesus.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance of Rabbinic Tradition</strong></td>
<td>Mark Kinzer (Mess. Jewish Rabb. Council)</td>
<td>NT disputes over Sabbath are over how to observe, not whether to observe. Rabbinic Tradition is a fence around Torah and accepted, e.g., no buying or selling, restricted travel, prepare food in advance, hand washing, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kashrut

This term means the same as the more commonly known term, “kosher.” It is an English transliteration (not a translation) of the Hebrew verb רשׁך (kasher), which means “fit” or “appropriate.” Modern kashrut is based on the Pentateuchal commands related to the dietary laws and is considered to be a significant outward expression of Jewish identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View of Kashrut</th>
<th>Representative</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weakness or Freedom in Messiah</td>
<td>Baruch Maoz</td>
<td>This is simply “weakness” as in Rom 14:14–15:13 (cf. Mark 7:14-19). Messianic Jews seek to be identified as Jewish but “pick and choose” how they observe which is rejected by the Jewish community anyway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arnold Fruchtenbaum</td>
<td>Ritual laws are no longer in effect. However, one must be culturally sensitive when around Jews, but abstinence is not required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Led by the Spirit</td>
<td>Daniel Juster Michael Schiffman</td>
<td>No clear rationale for food laws and such distinctions pertained to the “age of the Temple.” May be beneficial, but still no requirement exists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Only - Torah Still Valid</td>
<td>Barney Kasdan</td>
<td>Rabbinic interpretation is rejected (e.g., not mixing dairy and meat in the same meal) in favor of explicit biblical regulations. In Mark 7, Jesus does not annul the food laws, only eating with ritually clean hands. Rabbinic observance is ok if done with proper intent and spirit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gershon Nerel</td>
<td>Jesus upholds Torah, thus motivation should be more than just cultural identification. Food laws were even given to Gentiles (Acts 15:29); not tied to salvation and should not be a source of quarrel (1 Cor. 10:25).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>David Rudolph</td>
<td>Mark 7:19b is directed to Gentiles in the same way as Acts 15:29. Jesus and his followers all observed kashrut, which still applies to Jews today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative Judaism</td>
<td>Mark Kinzer (Mess. Jewish Rabb. Council)</td>
<td>Torah is normative for Messianic Jews and thus kashrut. Abolishing these equals abolishing the Jewish people. He and the MJRC follow the guidelines of Conservative Judaism on their regulations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Passover**

This celebration is one of the most significant for Jews in general. Moreover, it offers the strongest evidence for legitimizing the reinterpretation of Jewish customs with deeper meaning since the NT itself identifies Jesus as the Passover sacrifice (1 Cor. 5:7). The greatest difficulty relates to determining which traditions to include or reinterpret since centuries of tradition have shaped the modern day liturgy and it is near impossible to know for certain how Jews of Jesus’ day celebrated Passover.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View of Passover</th>
<th>Representative</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Passover</td>
<td>Baruch Maoz</td>
<td>Passover celebration today is fully Rabbinic and has no connection to Jesus. The Afikomen (hidden matzah) does not represent Jesus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional</td>
<td>Arnold Fruchtenbaum</td>
<td>Grace supersedes Law. If celebrated, it must be done in light of the New Covenant which requires a Messianic haggadah (order of liturgy).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Passover with Messianic Interpretation</td>
<td>Gershon Nerel</td>
<td>No Rabbinic haggadah allowed even if modified to be Messianic. Focus should be Biblical material alone, focused on Last Supper and celebrated in light of Jesus death and resurrection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daniel Juster</td>
<td>Passover should combine OT and NT elements. Jesus is the Passover lamb (1 Cor 5:7). He took the cup and afikoman at the Last Supper. Jew and Gentile should celebrate together as they did in the NT era.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbinic Passover with Messianic Interpretation</td>
<td>Barney Kasdan</td>
<td>Passover represents Jewish redemption in the past (Egypt), present and future (from sin in Jesus). A Trinitarian interpretation of the matzah tash (a three pocket cloth in which pieces of matzah are placed) is followed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>David Stern</td>
<td>Passover “belongs” to Messianic Jews as much as any other. Thus, one may reinterpret but do so thoughtfully. Jesus himself is our example.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

One will observe from this brief survey several recurring questions in each of the three categories. First, what is the motivation for observance? Is it a desire to be culturally sensitive, to preserve Jewish identity, or is it based on the belief that Torah is still incumbent on Jewish believers in Jesus? Or, perhaps it is a blend of all three? Second, what is the authority on which one bases observance? Is it the Hebrew Bible (OT), Jesus, or Rabbinic Tradition reinterpreted? Regardless of the responses offered to these questions, underlying all of them is the attempt to answer the “problem” of the “modern construct” of Messianic Jewish identity. Some reject it outright, others seek to anchor it exclusively in antiquity, and still others find it acceptable to integrate Jewish thought and practice over the last 2,000 years.

Since my goal is provide the reader the means by which to understand the contours of this movement, it is important to mention that Israeli expressions differ somewhat from Diaspora expressions. In the words of Harvey,

The Diaspora nature of much of the movement emphasizes the religious expression of the Judaism as a means of cultural identification, whereas in the Land of Israel the majority of Israeli Messianic Jews do not need to assert their ‘Jewishness’ in such ‘religious’ ways, and react against the Orthodox influence.39

Thus, context plays a role in how one expresses Jewish identity. Outside of Israel, one will find greater use of outward markers of Jewish identity among Messianic Jews, whereas within Israel one will find a more relaxed posture.

Finally, it is worth noting that while there is diversity in the Messianic Jewish identity, the following rule of thumb should prove helpful, at least at this point in time. That is, there is a minority at both extremes. Only a small number consider themselves “assimilated” (i.e. not expressing Jewish identity) or aligned with Rabbinic tradition. The majority are located somewhere in between, seeking to live and preserve Jewish identity as followers of Jesus regardless of their motivation.40

Conclusion: Messianic Jews and the Future

It is my hope that this survey of the essential contours of the modern Messianic Movement has provided the reader with (1) a basic framework with which to understand the movement, (2) motivation to return to the Jewish roots of the faith, and (3) encouragement to engage in this exciting movement of God among the Jewish people. In conclusion, I highlight several ways that the Messianic Jewish community might be used of God in the near and distant future. In no way
do I imply that these things will happen, but I am imagining very real possibilities, Lord willing.

**The Palestinian Conflict**

This conflict was raised on several occasions at the 2015 International LCJE Conference in Jerusalem and is increasingly on the minds of Messianic Jews, especially those living in Israel. The problem is particularly acute since there are followers of Jesus on both sides of the conflict. Regardless of how faithful a Messianic Jew or a Palestinian Christian feels toward their own people, their unity in Jesus obligates them toward a sympathetic posture toward one another. Israelis and Palestinians are both fiercely committed to their people, identity, and land, but for these believers, their unity in Jesus pushes them beyond this deadlock.

There is nonetheless a sense of hopelessness on both sides since they represent minorities among their own people and doubt that their efforts will be noticed. Yet, what if God uses these believers as a tangible expression of His love, forgiveness, and reconciliation? What would the surrounding world say if these “enemies” could stand hand in hand as brothers and sisters in Jesus? On this topic I recommend the jointly authored book, *Through My Enemy's Eyes: Envisioning Reconciliation in Israel-Palestine*, by Lisa Loden, a Messianic Jew, and Salim J. Munayer, a Palestinian Christian. See also Richard Harvey’s *Towards a Messianic Jewish Theology of Reconciliation: The Strategic Engagement of Messianic Jewish Discourse in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*. Let us also pray that such a witness might come to fruition.

**Jewish-Christian Dialogue**

As Jennifer M. Rosner underscores, the atmosphere and actual efforts underway for Jewish-Christian dialogue are at an unprecedented high. Numerous books and articles have come out in the last few decades urging for a deeper Jewish understanding of the NT and its major figures, many of which are written by non-believing Jewish scholars! In this environment Messianic Jews may serve as a true bridge between Gentile Christianity and unbelieving Jews.

As we have seen, however, there is a vested interest in both sides against this happening because Gentiles Christians may fear a more Jewish Gospel and unbelieving Jews may fear their people being proselytized. As Rosner puts it, “Messianic Judaism categorically blurs the lines that the dialogue has come to depend upon.” The way forward, is not to reject the historical developments that have taken place but to critically evaluate them and recognize that we are not bound by them. Is it not time for the Gentile church to repent of its history of anti-Semitism? And is it not equally time for Jews to realize that they do not have to
become Gentile to follow Jesus? Faith in Jesus the Messiah was originally and legitimately a form of Judaism and there is no reason it should not be as well today.

Restoration of a Jewish Voice in “Christian” Theology?

For the majority of the history of Christianity, our doctrines, creeds, and theology have been shaped by a nearly exclusively Gentile voice. Messianic believers wonder, what would these and Church History look like today if Jewish believers and their voice had not been silenced through the historical developments of the early centuries? Would Supersessionism have sprung up so easily? Has the Gentile Church fully reckoned with the fact that modern Christianity was a form of Judaism in antiquity and that Gentiles are ingrafted? Indeed, the New Testament is largely authored by Jewish believers making sense of the Hebrew Bible (OT) in light of Jesus the Messiah of Israel. What impact should that have on our ecclesiology and self-understanding as Gentile believers?

Relatedly, the Messianic movement raises questions about our language as a Church. Of course, they prefer using Hebrew terms for Jesus (Yeshua), Paul (Sha’ul), Matthew (Mattityahu), etc, which are largely contextually motivated. But what about referring to Jesus as “Christ”? This is, of course, the Greek transliteration of Χριστός (Christos), which was a translation for the Hebrew מashiach (mashiach) meaning “anointed one.” But as it is commonly used, it is an “empty set” akin to a last name. In other words, a Gentile who confesses faith in Jesus Christ is actually saying, “I believe in Jesus the Messiah of Israel.” The heart of rethinking our terminology should not simply be to make it “Jewish friendly” but to express our beliefs as accurately and profoundly as possible.

While the Messianic movement is not advocating a complete overhaul of core doctrines, the community may help us restate them in a richer way that honors their voice and better reflect the origin of our faith. This is specifically true in the areas of Ecclesiology (i.e. the nature of the Church), Christology (i.e. the person, offices, and work of Jesus), and Eschatology (i.e. the “end times”). This rapprochement is dependent upon two things: (1) Messianic Jews must come to a mature articulation of their views on these issues as Richard Harvey urges, and (2) the Gentile Church must be willing to dialogue, listen, and learn. If Messianic Jews and the Gentile Church remain perpetually isolated both will fail to fully achieve the mutual Abrahamic blessing promised to us.
Resources Related to the Messianic Movement

N.B. I do not imply endorsement of a given organization, group, or ministry by its occurrence in this list.

Schools Offering Degrees or Training in Messianic Judaism

- Ariel’s School of Messianic Jewish Studies, NY, USA — www.ariel.org
- Caspari Center for Biblical and Jewish Studies, USA & Israel — caspari.com
- Denver Seminary, CO, USA — www.denverseminary.edu
- HaDavar Messianic Ministries, CA, USA — www.hadavar.org
- LAMCS Yeshiva, USA (Certificate Only) — yeshiva.iames.org
- Israel College of the Bible, Israel (Certificate Only) — www.israelcollege.com
- Jewish Roots Institute, KS, USA — www.jewishrootsinstitute.org
- King’s University, CA, USA — www.tku.edu
- Messianic Jewish Bible Institute, USA & International — mjbi.org
- Messianic Jewish Theological Institute, CA, USA — www.mjti.org
- New School for Jewish Studies, Online (Certificate Only) — www.nsfjs.org
- St. Petersburg Seminary and Yeshiva, FL, USA — www.sptseminary.edu
- Talbot School of Theology, NY, USA — feinbergcenter.com & www.talbot.edu

Academic Journals Focused on Messianic Judaism

- Borough Park Symposium (Online) — www.boroughparksymposium.com
- Journal of the Jesus Movement in its Jewish Setting (Print & Online) — www.jjmjs.org
- Kesher (Online) — www.kesherjournal.com
- Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (Print & Online) — www.lcje.net/Bulletin.html
- Messiah Journal (Print & Online) — ffoz.org/messiah/journal
- Mishkan (Print & Online) — caspari.com/new/en/mishkan
- Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations (Online) — ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/scjr

Messianic Congregations

- Association of Messianic Congregations — www.messianicassociation.org
- First Century Foundations — firstcenturyfoundations.com
- International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues — www.iames.org
- International Messianic Jewish Alliance — www.theimja.org
- Messianic Jewish Alliance of America — http://www.mjaa.org
Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship — www.sbmessianic.net
Union of Messianic Believers — www.messianicbelievers.net
Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations — www.umjc.org

Messianic Literature & Resources for Evangelism
Gospel Research Foundation — www.gospelresearch.org
HaGefen — ha-gefen.org.il
Maoz Web — www.themaozweb.com
Messianab Comes — www.messiah.com.es
Messianic Archive of Jorge Quiñónez — afii.org/jorge.htm
Messianic Jewish Publishers & Resources — messianicjewish.net
One for Israel — www.oneforisrael.org

Ministries
Ariel Ministries — ariel.org
Chosen People Ministries — www.chosenpeople.com
Christian Jew Foundation Ministries — cjfm.org
Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry — www.foi.org
HaDavar Messianic Ministries — www.hadavar.org
Hosting Israeli Travelers — hitinternational.net
Jewish Voice Ministries — www.jewishvoice.org
Jews for Jesus — www.jewsforjesus.org
Life in Messiah — www.lifeinmessiah.org
 Ships of Tarshish — www.tarshish.org.il
Toward Jerusalem Council II — tjcii.org
Word of Messiah — wordofmessiah.org
# Eight Types of Emerging Messianic Judaism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proponents</th>
<th>Jewish Christianity</th>
<th>Hebrew Christianity</th>
<th>Israeli National &amp; Restorationist</th>
<th>NT Halakhah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baruch Maoz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gershon Nerel</td>
<td>David Stern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stan Telchin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Daniel Juster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Tradition                        | Reformed            | Dispensational (Revised) | None: viewed as an advantage | Charismatic / Evangelical         |

| Christology                      | Credal              | Evangelical           | Credal                           | Credal w/Jewish modification     |

| Torah                            | NO - fulfilled by Messiah | NO - Mosaic dispensation ended | YES - valid through Jesus | YES - redefined by Jesus         |

| Jewishness                       | “Assimilated” (i.e. Gentile) | Slight cultural adaption | Israeli, Hebrew speaking | Part of Jewish community         |

| Eschatology                      | Agnostic Amillennialism | “Messianic” (modified Classic) Dispensationalism | Premillennial & realized eschatology | Historic or Restorationist Premillennialism |

| Rabbinic Judaism                 | Anti-rabbinic         | Illustrative & confirming NT | Not used                        | Illustrative & confirming NT     |

| Israel                           | Loyal: based on national / cultural identity | Loyal: based on theology | Loyal: based on politics + theology | Loyal: based on theology        |

| Harvey’s Assessment              | Artificial distinction between ethno-cultural & religious Jewishness | Israel & Church = 2 peoples & this is problematic; hermeneutical methods suspect | Theology is unsystematic & implicit; blends politics & religion | Middle ground between Judaism & Christianity; torah positive; bright future |

---

51 The Asbury Journal 71/1 (2016)
## Eight Types of Emerging Messianic Judaism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Judaism &amp; Messiah</th>
<th>Postmissionary Messianic Judaism</th>
<th>Rabbinic Halakhah in light of NT</th>
<th>Messianic Rabbinic Orthodoxy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Fischer</td>
<td>Mark Kinzer</td>
<td>Joseph Shulam</td>
<td>Elazar Brandt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Schiffman</td>
<td>Rich Nichol</td>
<td>“cut the umbilical cord”</td>
<td>Uri Marcus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariel Berkowitz</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Freedman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defined; rabbinic</td>
<td>Postliberal</td>
<td>Rabbinic Judaism &amp; NT</td>
<td>Rabbinic Orthodoxy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credal w/Jewish modification</td>
<td>Trinity is Hellenistic</td>
<td>Some view him unorthodox</td>
<td>Adoptionist - no trinity/ incarnation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES - informed by Jesus</td>
<td>YES - through it follow Jesus</td>
<td>YES - within Rabbinic tradition</td>
<td>YES - full Torah for all people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of Jewish community</td>
<td>Part of Jewish community</td>
<td>Part of Jewish community</td>
<td>“God, land, people, Torah”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premillennialism</td>
<td>Amillennialism or Jewish Covenantal Theology</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Premillennialism (Marcus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uninspired but halakhic orthopraxy</td>
<td>Inspired</td>
<td>Inspired + Kabbalah</td>
<td>Inspired - controls interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal: based on theology</td>
<td>Loyal: based on politics + theology</td>
<td>Loyal: based on theology</td>
<td>Loyal: All Israel will be saved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May end up as a form of “Messianic Hasidism” or possibly “Orthodox Messianic Jewish”</td>
<td>Theologically creative; departs from the evangelical basis of most of the others</td>
<td>Distances itself from the Gentilisation; midrashic interpretation</td>
<td>Heterodox; adherents will be “Jewish orthodox” or “just Jewish”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

51 Snyder: From Jerusalem to Jerusalem | 103

---

NOT TO BE USED WITHOUT COPYRIGHT PERMISSION
OF ASN BURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
End Notes

* This paper is written in honor of Ken and Sarah Norris who have made this research possible on multiple levels.

1 This true story was recounted by a Jewish believer during the International Lausanne Consultation for Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) held in Jerusalem, August 16-21, 2015.


3 Lest the avoidance of creeds be taken as overly shocking, there are Christian groups which take the same stance, e.g., Church of Christ, but perhaps for different reasons.

4 This statement applies to any group, not just the Messianic Jewish movement.

5 I do not mean to imply that no cooperation currently exists between Jew and Gentile in this regard, only that such engagement is ad hoc and the issue is not widely known across the Church in general.


There are 3 occurrences (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16) and none of which are used by followers of Jesus to describe themselves. The case of 1 Peter is likely a legal charge and the author consistently uses other terminology to refer to his audience. Oddly, the NET liberally use the title “Christian” throughout the NT even when Χριστιανός (Christianos) is not present. It's meaning is simply “followers of (the Jewish) Messiah.” See Craig Keener’s discussion of its use and development as a title (Acts: An Exegetical Commentary 3:1–14:28 [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013], 1,847-50). Stern claims (without evidence) that Gentiles coined the term to describe other Gentiles (Messianic Judaism, 32).

Moishe Rosen labels the danger of making Gentiles second class citizens, “ethnolatry” (Stern, Messianic Judaism, 14).

This is not unlike the “insider movements” around the world wherein believers seek to distance themselves from the Western connotations attached to the title Christian (Timothy C. Tennent, “The Hidden History of Insider Movements” Christianity Today [2013]: 28-9).

Despite the apparent erasure of ethnicity when one is “in Messiah” (Gal 3:28), Paul elsewhere maintains the ethnic distinction, not least in his thesis statement in Romans, “to the Jew especially and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16).


Beatification is the Catholic Church’s official recognition of a person’s entrance to heavenly bliss. Canonization is the official recognition of one’s status as a saint.


Novak, “Edith Stein,” 17, emphasis mine.

See http://tjci.org.

Messianic Judaism Is Not Christianity: A Loving Call to Unity (Grand Rapids: Chosen, 2004).


23 Harvey, Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology, 2, 278.

24 This term refers to ethnically Jewish believers in Jesus who do not express any Jewish distinctive in the observance of their faith, i.e. they live just like Gentile Christians.

25 For the Messianic Jewish community the answer is a clear “no” for a Gentile since the Jerusalem Council cleared that up.

26 Stern, Messianic Judaism, 137.

27 The titles and descriptions for this illustration are adapted from Richard Harvey (Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology, 267-77).

28 The “C” stands for “Christ-centered Communities.”

29 The term refers to ethnically Jewish believers in Jesus who do not express their Jewish distinctive in the observance of their faith, i.e. they live just like Gentile Christians.

30 For the Messianic Jewish community the answer is a clear “no” for a Gentile since the Jerusalem Council cleared that up.

31 This term refers to ethnically Jewish believers in Jesus who do not express any Jewish distinctive in the observance of their faith, i.e. they live just like Gentile Christians.

32 This term refers to ethnically Jewish believers in Jesus who do not express any Jewish distinctive in the observance of their faith, i.e. they live just like Gentile Christians.
“Followers of Jesus,” 106.

Orthodox Judaism holds the entirety of Written Torah (OT) and Oral Torah (Rabbinic teaching) to be authoritative. In Conservative Judaism the Torah is adapted to modern society by the removal of certain elements deemed offensive or outmoded. In Reform Judaism Torah is revised around ethical or cultural norms and is generally not considered absolute.

35 See especially chapters 6 on theory and 7 on practice (140-222).

36 E.g., Stern, Messianic Judaism, 156.

37 Circumcision is the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17:11).


39 Harvey, Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology, 221, emphasis mine.

40 Harvey, Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology, 221.


See the recent article by Jim R. Sibley who questions the evidence from Rom 11:15 which is used in support of Supersessionism (“Has the Church Put Israel on the Shelf? The Evidence from Romans 11:15” JETS 58 [2015]: 571-82.

Granted, “Messiah” is the English transliteration for the Hebrew ישוע (mashiach), but it is not an “empty set” in the same way as “Christ.”

See chapters 5 (Christology) and 8 (Eschatology) in Harvey (Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology, 96-139, 223-261) and chapter 4 (Theology) in Stern (Messianic Judaism, 85-124).

This is one of the goals of his book, Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology.

This table summarizes Richard Harvey’s eight typologies (Mapping Messianic Jewish Theology, 267-77).

Abstract

At the center of pneumatological Luke-Acts discussions is the function and purpose of Holy Spirit Baptism. Central to these debates is the relationship of water baptism, the laying on of hands, and glossolalia to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. This study will explore each of these elements in the Holy Spirit reception accounts of Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19 by considering each element in their historical and literary context before surveying scholarship on the relationship between these elements and Spirit reception. The study concludes by evaluating to what degree any of the elements may appropriately be considered normative.


Thomas Lyons is a Biblical Studies Ph.D. candidate at Asbury Theological Seminary. His research interests include the rhetoric and theology of Luke-Acts, the Kingdom of God, and the hermeneutical methodology of Inductive Bible Study.
Introduction

Much theological ink has been spilled over the last century in pursuit of a biblical understanding of Holy Spirit reception in Luke-Acts, often called the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit.” The central concerns of these conversations frequently revolve around what the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” is, what its significance is for the life of a believer, and how one receives or even knows whether another has received such a baptism. Assertions regarding this latter determination have often focused on the role of various practices or presence of particular phenomena to discern the presence of such a baptism. Three of the most common practices or phenomena associated with Holy Spirit baptism are (1) water baptism, (2) the laying on of hands, and (3) glossolalia.

Despite the fact that each of these practices or phenomenon is variously attested within the accounts of Luke-Acts, differing theological camps variously contest the necessity of any one practice as determinative for being baptized by the Holy Spirit. The purpose of this study is to explore Spirit reception in Luke-Acts through an initial investigation of the primary accounts in Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19. This investigation will proceed in three parts, where each part corresponds in turn to (1) water baptism, (2) the laying on of hands, and (3) glossolalia. In each part, a practice or phenomenon will briefly be considered in their historical and literary context before surveying scholarship on the relationship between an individual practice and Spirit reception. Finally, this paper will conclude by evaluating to what degree any of the elements or sequences may appropriately be considered normative.

Water Baptism

This section will provide a comparison of the role of water baptism in the reception accounts in Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19. Water baptism within the context of these accounts, as well as the context of the book as a whole, will first be considered, along with the historical background for the practice. This section will conclude with a brief discussion of the possible relationships between water baptism and Spirit reception.

Water baptism is present in each of the four reception accounts under examination and appears to be a foundational element in the conversion process. In Acts 2, two distinct groups receive the Holy Spirit (the 120 in 2:4 and the 3000 in 2:41) and baptism is explicitly mentioned with this second group. It is in response to inquiries about how one is to respond to the Gospel proclamation, Peter responds, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts
The explicit mention of water baptism comes quickly afterward to those who welcomed Peter’s message (2:41). In Acts 8, Philip baptizes Simon Magus and the Samaritans in response to belief (8:12-13), although Spirit reception comes later (8:17). Baptism as an act is clearly separated from Spirit reception in this pericope, and this separation serves as the crux of the narrative dilemma. In Acts 10, Paul commands baptism in response to the reception of the Spirit (Acts 10:47-48). It should be observed that implied in Peter’s rhetorical question seems to be an implicit order to baptism preceding Spirit reception. Craig Keener rightly observes from 10:48 that water and Spirit baptism are ontologically separable (Keener 2012:976). In Acts 19, the crux of the issue is that the Ephesian disciples have not yet received (or are not even knowledgeable of) the Spirit and have only received the baptism of John. These disciples are baptized by Paul in the name of Jesus, have hands laid on them, and receive the Spirit (19:5-6).

Throughout these accounts, Luke uses varying expressions for baptism in Jesus’ name: ἐπί (2:38), εἰς (8:16; 19:3, 5) and ἐν (10:48). Some, like F.F. Bruce (Bruce 1951:187), see special significance in the use of εἰς due to particular instances of similar phrasing being used in commercial transactions. Others, like Michel Quesnel (Quesnel 1985: passim.), suggest a division between the water baptisms in Acts performed by Peter (using ἐν or ἐπί), and those associated with Philip and Paul (using εἰς), and attempt to show correspondence between these divisions and developments of baptism in early Semitic and Hellenistic settings. Bruce’s claims are unlikely given the variation present in Luke’s accounts with no apparent preference; Quesnel’s conclusions have been shown to be far from convincing by Reginald Fuller (Fuller 1987:551-553). Despite the numerous attempts at resolving the varying prepositions used, the concern in these passage is most likely for the name of Jesus being used for the baptism, and not the particularity of a preposition.

From our earliest sources, water baptism was an initiatory rite in the early church. The foundations of water baptism are certainly to be found in some combination of Jewish rituals or practices but whatever its primary influence, whether that be from proselyte baptism or even from ritual washing, the degree to which these practices have shaped and influenced the Christian practice is highly debated. Luke clearly understood water baptism as a “vehicle of repentance” (Witherington 2007:58) and John the Baptist modeled this practice paradigmatically in Luke-Acts. While John is the model for baptismal practice, Jesus becomes the model receiver through Spirit reception at baptism (Luke 3:21-22). Baptism is portrayed as having the ability to figuratively wash away sins (Acts 22:16). G. Beasley-Murray rightly

What set earliest Christians apart as a distinct sect within Judaism were not their practice of water baptism, but rather their practice of it “in the name of Jesus” (DeSilva 2000:305). 11 Water baptism in Jesus name was likely used as a line of demarcation between the early church and Judaism, and baptism likely carried with it an affirmation of Jesus’ lordship. 12 Keener rightly notes that “what specifies that a baptism is in Jesus’ name is the recipient’s confession of faith in Jesus” (Keener 2012:984) as they are being baptized, and not some formula spoken by a supervisor over the baptism’s recipient. 13

**Baptism and Spirit Reception**

While this subject has been thoroughly discussed over the years, no clear dependent relationship can be established from these four reception accounts in Acts. The scholarly discussion around the relationship between water baptism and Spirit reception is divided. Representative examples of the various positions will now be considered.

One common understanding of the relationship between water baptism and the Holy Spirit is that water baptism necessarily precedes Spirit reception in a sequential chronological manner, as laid out by Peter in Acts 2:38. Robert Menzies (Menzies 2004: 203-04), for example, suggests 2:38 is a formula where both repentance and baptism are a prerequisite, or qualification, for Spirit reception. 14 The problem with this position is twofold. First, reception cannot be strictly formulaic given that there are known exceptions to this order (Acts 10). Secondly, repentance as a portion of a three-part formula is problematic given that explicit repentance is not mentioned in any of the Spirit reception accounts, including the account in Acts 2! 15 This is not to suggest that repentance is not present, but that it is not explicitly acknowledged in the places one would expect it to be if indeed it were to be formulaic for Luke. Keener rightly speaks against such a conception when he suggests, “Instead of reading his apparently ideal theological paradigm (2:38) into the narrative evidence, Luke allows for a diversity of pneumatic experience (8:12-17; 10:44-48; 19:5-6) and presumably invites his audience to show the same courtesy” (Keener 2012:681).

Another representative position held regarding the relationship between water baptism and Spirit reception is that of G.W.H. Lampe, which collapses water baptism and Spirit reception into a single coterminous event. Lampe (Lampe 1951: xxii) does not see the baptism of the Spirit as a subsequent event, but rather as a
way of describing the meaning of baptism itself. Thus, Lampe treats Acts 2 as paradigmatic and designates all the other reception accounts as exceptional. The problem with this position should be obvious: it ceases to take seriously the diversity of the biblical witness by arbitrarily assigning to a single account preeminence, thus rendering all subsequent accounts ‘exceptional’ while simultaneously rendering the term ‘exceptional’ meaningless. F. Scott Spencer’s study demonstrated that water baptism, even in the name of Jesus, does “not instantaneously or mechanically effect the Spirit’s coming” (Spencer 1992:240).

Finally, a third position allows for water baptism to normally precede Spirit reception without it becoming normative. Ben Witherington, Craig Keener, F.F Bruce and even James D.G. Dunn fall at various points within this position. Witherington (1998:154) suggests that Luke is not trying to establish normative order through 2:38 (esp. given the variations in order later); these are not the point—salvation history is the point. “God,” Witherington says, “can do it however God wants to do it” (Witherington 1998:154). Keener similarly wants to allow for the sequence to be normal, rather than normative, while still making room for exceptions (Keener 2012:985). F.F. Bruce claims,

It is against the whole genius of biblical religion to suppose that the outward rite (baptism) could have any value except insofar as it was accompanied by the work of grace within...the reception of the Spirit is conditional not on baptism in itself but on baptism in Jesus’ name as the expression of repentance. (Bruce 1988:70)

Similarly to Bruce, J.D.G. Dunn disassociates a necessary relationship between water baptism and Spirit reception, and substitutes faith in its stead. Dunn suggests Spirit reception was only secondarily connected with water baptism, since the gift of the Spirit was God’s response to authentic faith. Dunn’s interpretation of the delay of the Spirit in Acts 8 bears witness to this understanding of his (Dunn 1996:107-13). Hence, the reception of the Spirit corresponds with water baptism only when genuine faith is expressed in a water baptism. Max Turner appropriately describes Dunn’s understanding of the gift of the Spirit as the “gift of the matrix of Christian life” (Turner 1981:152) with which reception is primarily concerned with conversion and initiation into a new age; empowerment for service is only a corollary to this primary purpose for Dunn (Dunn 1970: 23-37).
**Baptism Conclusions**

In summary, baptism is clearly present in each of the Spirit reception accounts although the order varies significantly. Baptism may significantly precede reception (Acts 2:4; 8:12-13), may immediately precede or be coterminous with reception (2:41; 19:5-6), or may be done after reception (10:47-48). It may be said that, while Acts 2:38 certainly establishes an expectation for water baptism with conversion and reception of the Spirit, it does not necessarily dictate such an order. Water baptism was done in the name of Jesus, and it served as both an activity of repentance and an initiatory rite into the Christian life: as such, it is closely associated with the reception of the Spirit.

**Laying On of Hands**

Unlike the practice of water baptism, which was present in all four accounts at some point, the practice of laying on of hands is only present in Acts 8:17-19 and 19:6. In the Acts 8 account, prayer preceded Peter and John’s laying of hands, and the Samaritans received the Spirit in response to this action. Luke suggests in 8:18 that it is this practice of laying on of hands that Simon mistakes as the necessary component which triggers Spirit reception. Whereas this practice of laying on of hands is at the crux of the narrative tension of the Acts 8 account, the laying of hands by Paul is simply mentioned as an element of the narrative in the reception of the Spirit by the Ephesian disciples (Acts 19:6). In both of these instances, the Spirit is received after or in response to the laying on of hands by an apostle (Peter and John in Acts 8; Paul in Acts 19). Prayer explicitly precedes the practice in Acts 8, and is not mentioned in the Acts 19 account. Outside of these four reception accounts, the only other similar instance of the practice associated with Spirit reception is when Ananias lays hands upon Paul so that he might be healed and receive the Holy Spirit (9:17). Spirit reception is not narratively detailed in this account, but it can probably be inferred from the context. In the larger context of Luke-Acts, the practice of laying on of hands is used in a variety of ways beyond Spirit reception. The first occurrence of this practice is associated with healing (Luke 4:40), and this is the majority usage throughout Luke-Acts (Luke 4:40; 5:13; 13:13; Acts 9:12, 17; 28:8). Luke also uses the practice for conveying blessings (Luke 18:15) and commissioning individuals for service (Acts 6:6; 13:3), though this latter usage may indeed overlap to some degree with Spirit reception, since essential to Christian mission and ministry for Luke is empowerment (Keener 2012:passim). The witnesses to this practice in first century Christianity exist beyond Luke-Acts and reflect similar usages as well.
Historically, the practice has precedent from multiple sources in the pre-Christian Hebrew Scriptures. Laying on of hands was used for blessing (Gen 48:14ff), consecration (Num 8:10), commissioning (Num 27:18, 23), possibly healing (2 Kgs 4:34), and its results could be wisdom (Deut 34:9). Similar practices are also found in early Judaism. It may be said of this practice that it was firmly integrated into early Christianity from its Judaic origins and, as in Judaism, maintained a variety of functions.

Laying On of Hands and Spirit Reception

Much like baptism, scholarly opinion has widely diverged over the years on the precise relationship between laying on of hands and Spirit reception. A number of these positions will be briefly considered.

In mid 20th century, N. Adler tied the second reception of the Spirit, what he described as the empowering reception rather than the justifying first reception, to the practice of laying on of hands. This second reception he equated with confirmation (Adler 1951:91-101). He delineated the first and second receptions as merely receiving the Spirit in the first reception versus becoming “full” of the Spirit in the second (Adler 1951:91). Rather than understanding the second reception as confirmation, Lampe views laying on of hands as a type of ordination for those in apostolic ministry, and, as such, related only indirectly to Spirit baptism (Lampe 1951:69-77).

Others want to deem the reception accounts in Acts 2 and 10 as ‘exceptional’ and suggest that the accounts in Acts 8 and 19, the accounts with the act of laying on of hands, as representative of ‘usual’ Spirit reception. In a similar manner, Richard Rackham delineates accounts based on the presence of the rite. For Rackham, it is the very absence of laying on of hands that makes Acts 2 and 10 extraordinary since the conveyance of the Spirit takes place in the absence of such a rite (Rackham 1964:116-17).

In the circumstances above, these various positions represent a desire to dictate arbitrary classifications, such as ‘exceptional’, or anachronistic ecclesial concerns, such as confirmation or ordination, as the hermeneutic lenses for interpreting both event and action. The prioritization of particular elements and pericopes in these various approaches risks silencing the diverse witness of these four accounts. The presence or absence of an element in these accounts, such as the laying on of hands, may have as much to do with the sources Luke is utilizing as with any particular theological or ecclesial concern of his.

A non-deterministic conceptual symbolic understanding of laying on of hands and the intimate relationship it has with prayer is probably more appropriate
in these contexts. J.E.L. Oulton suggests that the laying on of hands is a symbolic representation of what an individual is praying for: “The human symbolic act answering to the Heavenly act prayed for” (Oulton 1954:236-240). Similarly, Hull (1967:109) closely intertwines the functional relationship of prayer and laying on of hands by citing Augustine’s rhetorical question “What else is the laying on of hands but prayer over a man?” (De Bapt. iii.16). While Rudolph Gonzalez probably goes too far associating laying of hands with the tongues of fire at Pentecost (González 1999:154-155), what may be said with certainty is that there is a close relationship between laying on of hands and prayer.

**Laying On of Hands Conclusions**

This rite is certainly present in some of the Spirit reception accounts (Acts 8 and 19), while not present in others (Acts 2 and 10). The practice was not out of place in the early Church, given its roots in Judaism and intimately connected with prayer at some level. While Luke does link it to reception in Acts 8 and Acts 19, he clearly conceives of the practice in much broader terms than only Spirit reception, given his flexibility of usages. Given these observations, not too much weight should be accorded its presence (or absence) in the various accounts.

**Glossolalia**

The presence of glossolalia is identifiable in three of the four reception accounts (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6). In Acts 2, these ἑτέραις γλώσσαις (“other tongues”) come in response to being filled with the Holy Spirit (2:4), and are probably foreign languages previously unknown by the speakers (as implied by the amazement and questions in 2:6-12). Tongues similarly come in response to receiving the Spirit in both Acts 10 and 19, although it is not clear whether foreign languages are in view in these accounts. The response of tongues in Acts 10 is associated with worship (10:46), while glossolalia in Acts 19 is associated with prophecy (19:6). Witherington rightly suggests that the “fact (and evidential value)” (Witherington 1998:572n46) of tongues and prophecy in 19:6 are what Luke is concerned about rather than the content of these manifestations. Such an observation may equally be applied to Acts 10 (regarding the tongues and worship).

These instances of glossolalia serve as evidence of Spirit reception, which for Luke is intimately tied to empowerment for mission (Acts 1:8). Tongues is particularly appropriate as evidence, since little else better represents empowerment to cross cultural barriers than the ability to speak languages one has not yet learned through the Spirit’s inspiration. Craig Keener is right to acknowledge that tongues
serves as an evidence of baptism of the Spirit based on its intrinsic relationship to the essential purpose of baptism by the Spirit: namely, prophetic empowerment for cross-cultural mission (Keener 2012:830). While proponents such as Dunn want to suggest that tongues is implicitly present in Acts 8 (Dunn 1975:188), Keener is rightly skeptical of the implicit inclusion of tongues in 8:17, given how anxious Luke would be to report something that is such an obvious symbol of prophetic empowerment (Keener 2012: 828). Its absence in Samaria is just as likely due to its absence in Luke’s sources rather than a necessary presence or absence in history.

Beyond Luke’s usage of tongues, the only other first century witness to the practice is found in Paul’s letters (1 Cor 12:10, 28, 30; 13:1, 8; 14:2-6, 13-14, 18-23, 26-27, 39) and its presence is only in response to Corinthian abuse of the practice. Some argue for a distinct difference between Lukan and Pauline tongues, but the number of correspondences between the two reported phenomena make such a claim implausible. Beyond the first century, claims continue throughout the early Church Fathers from figures such as Irenaeus (Her. 5.6.1; Euseb. H.E. 5.7.6), Tertullian (Marc 5.8), Novatian (De Trinitate 2.9), and Ambrose in as late as the fourth century (The Holy Spirit 2.150).

Various backgrounds have been suggested for understanding the phenomenon of tongues. Leisegang suggested the background of tongues was derived from γλῶττα βακχεῖα of Greek prophetism (Leisegang 1922: 118f). Despite such suggestions by Leisegang and others, most parallels in Greek paganism are weak with the best parallels coming from the magical papyri (Williams 1975: 16-32), but even these are mostly third century or later. Both Spirit-filled praise and ecstatic experience were present in early and Hellenistic Judaism but in no way were they a central element in worship. Rather than being a derivative or adopted practice, it seems glossolalia was quite a distinctive aspect of the early Christian movement, particularly when it manifested in known foreign languages previously unknown to the speaker. As such, Gunkel appropriately suggests tongues were both the most striking and the most characteristic gift of the early church (Gunkel 1979: 31-33).

**Glossolalia and Spirit Reception**

Since the rise of Pentecostalism at the turn of the 20th century, the association between glossolalia and Spirit reception has been under heavy debate. While tongues as ‘initial physical evidence’ later became the predominant view, some early Pentecostal advocates including Agnes Ozman, F.F. Bosworth, Minnie Abrams, and possibly even William Seymour, denied tongues as “necessary
evidence of the seminal experience” (Keener 2012: 826) as described in Acts. Charles Parham would, from the beginnings of the movement, champion the understanding of tongues as ‘initial evidence’ and this became the predominant view within Pentecostal circles (Jacobsen 2003: 48-49). Many classic Pentecostals and later Pentecostal scholars like Robert Menzies and Roger Stronstad would go on to defend tongues as the definitive manifestation one should expect (Menzies 2004:255) and “the sign of being baptized in the Holy Spirit” (Stonstad 2010:188).

While these scholars are certainly observing a significant element of Spirit reception in Luke-Acts, such a strong position is simply not warranted from the textual evidence. If one holds such a position, glossolalia’s presence must consequently be read into the Acts 8 account despite Luke’s silence on this subject. Unfortunately, this is not what the text recounts and, if this was Luke’s intent as Dunn has claimed (Dunn 1975:189), why would Luke make it implicit here where all the rest of the occurrences are explicit? More likely, as Keener has noted (Keener 2013:1529), is that Luke would want to include tongues at every opportunity allowed by his sources given his symbolic use of tongues as empowerment for cross-cultural mission. Similarly, Max Turner, in critiquing Gunkel, rightly notes that, if glossolalia were such an essential element of the Spirit’s work, then one would expect it to have manifested in Jesus’ ministry at some point (Turner 1981:133).

The flaw of such a position is not the recognition of glossolalia as a significant element in most Spirit reception accounts, since such an observation is certainly based in the evidence of its presence in 75% of these accounts. Instead, the flaw is in suggesting that it is a necessary element in every Spirit reception. Glossolalia is certainly an important element for Luke. C.K. Barrett rightly observes, “Speech is in Acts the characteristic mark of the Spirit’s presence, sometimes in glossolalia (2.4; 10.46; 19.6), sometimes in prophecy (2.17, 18; 11.27; 13.1-3; 21.(4), (9), 10, 11), sometimes in proclamation (e.g., 4.31)” (Barrett 1998:lxxxiv). But even to associate empowered speech with Spirit reception in no way requires everyone to manifest such a phenomena. Keener is correct to nuance these manifestations: “tongues speech evidences the experience of the baptism in the Spirit (i.e. reveals its purpose and function), not the individual recipients of this baptism; it thus need not occur on every occasion to maintain its symbolic function” (Keener 2012:827). The essential thrust of these accounts is the reception of the Spirit, not the various phenomena that may or may not manifest.

Glossolalia Conclusion

Glossolalia is present in a majority of the reception accounts in Acts (2:4; 10:46; 19:6) and, where mentioned, is a result of Spirit reception. Different versions
of *glossolalia* may be present in the various accounts with both foreign languages and ecstatic/angelic speech as possibilities. A similar phenomenon appears in the Pauline letters as well as throughout the Church Fathers. While some have argued for a variety of backgrounds for this phenomenon, it appears to be a distinctive characteristic of the early Christian church. In early Pentecostalism, views on the relationship between *glossolalia* and Spirit reception were varied, but it was eventually prioritized as the definitive sign of Spirit baptism for the individual. While the claims of this perspective are understandable, the evidence for such a position is lacking. Rather than the definitive mark of Spirit reception, it would be better understood as a normal, or even regular (but not necessarily mandatory), sign of Spirit reception and empowerment.

**Conclusion**

Throughout this study, the various reception accounts in Acts 2, 8, 10 and 19 have been examined through the investigation of three elements: water baptism, laying on of hands, and *glossolalia*. A strong diversity in accounts was demonstrated with each of the elements, and the relationship of baptism, laying on of hands, and *glossolalia* to Spirit reception was examined.

Rather than something like a ‘normative’ order, or ‘paradigmatic’ account, or ‘essential element’, we instead have a diversity of witnesses that need to each be respected. While there may be a ‘normal’ order or ‘regular’ inclusion of an element, none of it is necessarily deterministic or even, dare I say, normative. The diversity of the witnesses speaks to something legitimate: a diversity of experience. This diversity need not be minimized.

Yet, even in the face of diversity, there is much in common with these accounts. Each of these accounts is corporate, and all received the Spirit. Each account demonstrated the word of God moving unimpeded into new people groups and the commissioning of native people groups for empowered ministry. The order (with baptism), manner (by laying on of hands), or result (in tongues) are not the point of the narrative; they are a product of the narrative focus—a Spirit reception that results in empowerment for mission. F. Büchsel, in discussing tongues and prophecy, notes that these signs of the Spirit must not be mistaken for the Spirit’s essence. To make such a mistake he likens to mistaking “mere froth of the Spirit for the flood” (Büchsel 1926:262). The same may be said with all of these elements, lest we hinder the movement of the Holy Spirit by pronouncing the Spirit’s activity as illegitimate in the absence of any one of our own pet theological priorities. As Gunkel once noted, “Wo Geist Gottes, da Reich Gottes” (Gunkel
Let us pursue God’s Kingdom and let His Spirit blow as He will, even, at times, in spite of our biased expectations and theological presuppositions.

End Notes

1 These four passages have been selected because they are generally agreed to represent the primary accounts of “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” in Acts. These four accounts represent the most explicit accounts of Holy Spirit reception in Luke-Acts, where a confluence of reception language (λαμβάνω, πίμπλημι, δίδωμι, ἐκχέω, χρίω, ἐπιπίπτω, and ἔρχομαι) describes this Holy Spirit baptism. The convergence of these verbal ideas come together in these four pericopes in such a way not found elsewhere in Luke-Acts. While this subject is too robust to treat in detail here, it is worth noting that the subject of these verbs often dictates what verbal action is being used and this shows a remarkable consistency in the use of the metaphoric language for Spirit Reception activity across the accounts. When the subject is people (particularly groups of people in these accounts), they receive (λαμβάνω) the Spirit and are filled (passive πίμπλημι) by the Spirit. If God the Father is acting, he is either giving (δίδωμι) or pouring out (ἐκχέω) the Spirit, or anointing (χρίω) Jesus with it. Finally if the Holy Spirit is acting, he is either falling (ἐπιπίπτω) or coming upon people (ἔρχομαι). The correspondence of a subject to specific verbal actions in these contexts is quite striking. As such, this study has focused on the four corporate Spirit baptism events. Omitted from this study is Jesus’ own water baptism, where Holy Spirit reception seems to be implied (Luke 3:21–4:1), as well as Paul’s water baptism where Holy Spirit reception is promised but never explicitly stated (Acts 9:17–19). Finally, a case could be made for including the accounts of Acts 4 (4:8, 31) and Acts 13 (13:9, 52), although these (at least Acts 4:8 and 13:9) seem to parallel the individual fillings of John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), Elizabeth (Luke 1:41), and Zechariah (Luke 1:67) instead of the corporate outpourings of Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19. The account of Acts 4:31 is certainly corporate and warrants an investigation, especially given the seeming implication of this account is that individuals may receive multiple subsequent fillings, but such a study will have to wait until a later date. It was excluded from this investigation because of the absence of the various elements in that account.

2 Interestingly, it should be observed that there is not an explicit record of the water baptism of the disciples and/or the 120, yet the Spirit is clearly poured out on all (πᾶς, νῦν) of them in 2:4. One could surely assume they received water baptism at some point during their time with Jesus (or even at the hands of John the Baptist), but any such conclusion is speculation in the absence of explicit textual evidence. Consequently, there would then be a significant delay between these individual’s baptism and their reception of the Spirit. Given the uniqueness of Pentecost as the first corporate Spirit reception event recorded (depending how one handles John 20:22 of course), such a delay ought not to be considered normal (especially in light of the need for Jesus’ ascension) but this delay (or even absence of water baptism) is often curiously not considered when scholars discuss the relationship between Spirit reception and water baptism.

3 Though it should be observed that explicit mention of repentance and Spirit reception is missing in 2:41. For those espousing a rigid formula from 2:38, the absence of these two elements in 2:41 is problematic. It can certainly be
assumed that both repentance and Spirit reception are present, particularly in light of the “welcoming” of Peter’s message and the love-filled life of the believers in 2:42-47, but an explicit mention of either of these elements is clearly missing from this account.


5 These two positions are not an exhaustive treatment of the various ways these prepositions are treated but rather representative examples of how they are sometimes treated. For example, a third way not mentioned above is Lars Hartman’s suggestion that, beyond the standard use of εἰς in non-Lucan material (Matt 28:19; 1 Cor 1:13), Luke is attempting to make an explicit textual link to LXX Joel 2:32 with his use of ἐπί, in 2:38. While Hartman could be correct that Luke is intentionally making such a connection, such a connection does not necessarily run counter to Luke’s variability of style as Hartman suggests. Luke may have rightly seen the overlap of the semantic domains of these prepositions and chosen to vary his preposition for both stylistic reasons (without losing fundamental meaning) and to make the linguistic connection to Joel. See also Lars Hartman, *Into the Name of Lord Jesus: Baptism in the Early Church* (SNTIW; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 37-44.


10 Both Paul’s conception of baptism as participation in Christ’s death and resurrection (Rom 6) as well as baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and
Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19) are noticeably absent from Luke’s conception. For a more complete discussion, see Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, 93-122.


14 Youngmo Cho also argues for a similar position in *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul: An Attempt to Reconcile These Concepts* (PBMon; Waynesboro: Paternoster, 2005), 140-50.

15 While repentance is certainly present implicitly in these conversion accounts and in the act of water baptism (see above), it is difficult to accept a case for a *formulaic* understanding if an element of the formula is rarely mentioned. Repentance is mentioned after 2:38 (11:18, 13:24; 14:15; 17:30; 20:21; 26:18) but surprisingly it is not ever directly used of the actions of the converts in reference to the process of conversion leading to reception of the Spirit. The closest Luke comes to describe conversion with repentance in these Spirit reception accounts are in 11:18 and even then, it is on the lips of circumcised believers used in reference to the Gentile conversion after the matter has been settled. As Keener has noted of the Samaritan Spirit reception, “if the Samaritans’ conversion is deemed inauthentic because Luke does not employ the term ‘repentance,’” very few converts appear anywhere in Acts” in Keener, *Acts*, 2:1518. Rather than use this term “repentance” exclusively, Luke appears to use other language to reflect repentance, such as the acceptance or welcoming of the Word of God (Acts 2:41; 8:14; 11:1).


18 As Keener has succinctly argued regarding subsequence in general, “In fact, one could argue for some subsequence even in most cases of the first mention of people receiving the Spirit; in 2:4, 8:16-17, 9:17, and (by at least a few minutes) 19:6, receiving the Spirit followed faith, being absolutely simultaneous with it only in 10:44…To argue that 2:4 was merely an exception could make sense, if this were all one needed to argue; by contrast, to argue that up to 80 percent of the initial reception passages are exceptional renders the word “exceptional” meaningless,” from *Acts*, 2:1524. See also Craig S. Keener, *Gift and Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 162.

19 For a similar position, see Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 139.

20 See also James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament Teaching on the Gift of the Spirit in Relation to Pentecostalism Today* (SBT; London: SCM, 1970), 55-72. Interestingly, Witherington holds a position similar to Dunn’s when he acknowledges clearly something wrong in Acts 8, that
the Samaritan faith was not in the Lord but in Philip, and Simon “from first to last is unconverted.” See Witherington, *Troubled Waters*, 67.

21 For more on this see, Dunn, *Baptism*, passim.


23 It is worthwhile noting that the other two accounts in Acts 2 and 10 are unmediated sovereign acts of God rather than Spirit reception through human co-participation with God. As such, its absence in these accounts should be unsurprising.


25 It is associated elsewhere with healing (e.g., Mark 5:23; 6:5; 7:32; 8:23; 16:18) and blessing/commissioning (e.g., Mark 10:13-16; 1 Tim 4:14); though the context of some usages is ambiguous (e.g., Heb 6:2; 1 Tim 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6) and may refer to Spirit reception. For surveys, see Robert F. O’Toole, “Hands, Laying On Of, New Testament,” ABD 3:48-49; also John E. Toews, “Rethinking the Meaning of Ordination: Towards a Biblical Theology of Leadership Affirmation,” *CGR* 22 (2004): 5-25.

26 It could also arguably be used for the transference of the people of God’s sins to the scapegoat (Lev 16:21). Nothing comparable to this usage is found in the New Testament although someone may be able to mount a defense for an analogous usage with the strikingly similar phrase (e.g. Luke 21:12) in the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus (who theologically may be operating as scapegoat, i.e. Hebrews 9:11-10:17).


28 For a good summary of various positions, see François Bovon, *Luke the Theologian* (2nd ed.; Waco: Baylor University, 2006), 261-270.

29 This interpretation emerges from his treatment of the accounts in Acts 8, 10, and 19 as exceptional. This presence of hand laying for him only affirms a dimension of ordination present in these accounts that is not present in Acts 2, which this interpretation itself only reinforces his division of paradigmatic (Acts 2) versus exceptional (Acts 8, 10, and 19).


Rudolph Gonzalez equates the hands of the apostles in the rite with the tongues of fire at Pentecost but such a conclusion is problematic in the absence of either presence at the Gentile Pentecost (Acts 10) or an explicit acknowledgement by Luke. Additionally, the broad range of usage beyond Spirit reception for such a rite also inevitably speaks against such an interpretation. See Rudolph González, “Laying-on of Hands in Luke and Acts: Theology, Ritual, and Interpretation,” (PhD diss., Baylor University, 1999), 154-55.

The element of prayer in these reception accounts is a very real one as prayer seems to precede a significant number of these accounts (Acts 1:14; 8:15; 10:2) as well as in other Spirit reception contexts in Luke-Acts (Luke 11:13 [implicitly]; Acts 9:11). A wider examination of prayer in relationship to Spirit reception is certainly warranted but beyond the scope of this study.

This investigation will only be summative due to the expansive secondary literature on the subject. Keener notes that this subject had more than a thousand sources in 1985. See Keener, *Acts*, 1:806; also Watson E. Mills, *Glossolalia: Bibliography* (SBEC, New York: Edwin Mellen, 1985).

There are a number of positions on even this point. For a brief summary of the various positions, see Keener, *Acts*, 1:821-23.

Witherington suggests that there were probably differences between the tongues in Acts 2 (foreign languages) and Acts 10 (ecstatic speech). He is silent on whether which he thinks is operative in Acts 19 though he does point to the expansion of this passage in the Western text (itp, vgms, and Ephraem): “other tongues and they themselves knew them, which they also interpreted for themselves; and certain also prophesied.” See Witherington, *Acts*, 572n46; Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: UBS, 1971), 470.


Leisegang cited the following original sources for his conclusions: Aristophanes, *Ranae*, 357; Diodorus 4:66; Plutarch *De Pythiae Oraculis* 406.

For a summary of these various positions, see Keener, *Acts*, 1: 807-09.


On this Menzies suggests one “should expect manifest tongues, and this manifestation of tongues is a uniquely demonstrative sign (evidence) that one has received the gift” (Menzies, Empowered, 255).

For example, see Dunn, Jesus and Spirit, 188.

Works Cited

Adler, Nikolaus

Barrett, C. K.

Beasley-Murray, G.R.

Bruce, F.F.


Büschel, F.

DeSilva, David A.
Dunn, James D. G.


Fuller, Reginald H.

Gunkel, H.


Hull, J.H.E

Jacobsen, Douglas

Keener, Craig


Lampe, G. W. H.

Leisegang, Hans.
1922  *Pneuma Hagion: Der Ursprung des Geistesbegriffs der synoptischen Evangelien aus der griechischen Mystik.* Leipzig: Hinrichs.

Menzies, Robert P.


Globalization and its Effects on the Expansion of the Church: Doing and Being Church Among Immigrant in the USA

Abstract

At any given time, three percent of the world’s population is on the move. These migrants travel across regions and continents due to various push and pull factors, and do so with their systems of belief. With approximately 106 million of the 232 million global migrants being Christian, churches in the twenty-first century recognize that the church continues to expand not as it crosses new frontiers to new lands, but as it crosses personal boundaries to include all people. As the number of Western Christians decline, so will their influence in global missions. Consequently, it will become necessary for people living in diaspora to be in Christian ministry to, through, and beyond the diaspora. This paper discusses the need to create Kingdom communities among immigrants in the United States of America (USA) by being intentional about understanding immigrants so as to include them in an existing congregation, or by planting new congregations with, for, and by immigrants. It also seeks to identify the type of church or community that might be successful in helping immigrants to connect in meaningful ways to God and God’s people.

Keywords: Immigration, Christian Immigrants, Religious Observance, Church Expansion, Theology of Immigration

Sheryl Marks-Williams, an ordained minister in the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, and is a doctoral candidate in Intercultural Studies (Evangelism) at Asbury Theological Seminary.
Introduction

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” As humankind has borne witness to this Truth they have sought to make it known, not only because of their experience with the True and Living God, but also because they have been commanded to do so. In the Christian Scriptures, all four gospel writers record the mandate given by Jesus Christ to those who follow Him, to make all people disciples of Him, commonly referred to as the Great Commission (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:45-47, Acts 1:6-8; John 20:21).

For centuries, Christians have taken this call to duty seriously, giving all that they are and all that they have, to the process of travelling to distant lands, entering cultures, and sharing the gospel for the task of making disciples of Jesus Christ. The fact that in the year 2015 Christians comprise the largest sector of the world’s religious adherents, and have contributed in substantial ways to liberal democracy throughout the world, is a testimony to the hard work that they have done (Woodberry 2012:245). Devout Christians have always sought to be faithful to their understandings of the Gospel in carrying out their mission—making converts, proselytes, and/or disciples (Walls 2004: 5)—and expanding the church, even though some of their methods turned out to be an embarrassment to the Faith (Bosch 2011: 374).

This paper is an attempt to show that the Church continues to expand, not as it crosses new frontiers to new lands but as it crosses personal boundaries to include all people. It discusses how to create Kingdom communities among immigrants in the United States of America (U.S.) whether by being intentional about including immigrants in an existing congregation, or by planting new congregations with, for, and by immigrants. It also seeks to identify the type of church or community that might be successful in helping immigrants to connect in meaningful ways to God and God’s people. First a context is set for why churches should reach out to immigrants in a theology of immigration and of church planting.

A Brief Theology of Immigration

All human beings are created in the image and likeness of God and as such are of sacred worth. This is a central truth that emerges throughout the scriptures (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1-3; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jam. 3:9). Defining all human beings in terms of the *imago Dei*, provides a more humane approach to the discussion about the human boundaries in which people live (Groody 2012:301), as it sets the
conversation within the framework of the mystery of human life interconnected with the mystery of God. Migrant people, created in the imago Dei, who live in the tension of the pull to development and the push from suffering, are not social and political problems. Rather they are human beings deserving of just treatment like any other person. As God has entrusted all humanity with God’s creation, how we live into that trust within differing human boundaries is the task at hand.

That we are from different places, and that people are on the move, is neither a mistake nor a deviation from God’s plan for humankind. Christopher Wright sets the context well when he states:

God created nations as part of the diverse plan of creation as the Apostle Paul reminds us in Acts 17:26 “From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live.” The inhabitants of the new creation are not portrayed as a homogenized mass or as a single global culture. Rather they will display the continuing glorious diversity of the human race through history: People of every tribe and language and people and nation will bring their wealth and their praises into the city of God (Rev. 7:9; 21:24-26). The image we might prefer for the Bible’s portrait of the nations is not a melting pot (in which all differences are blended together into a single alloy) but a salad bowl (in which all ingredients preserve their distinctive color, texture, and taste). The new creation will preserve the rich diversity of the original creation, but purged of the sin-laden effects of the Fall. (Wright 2006:456)

As borders are more porous, people move from everywhere to everywhere taking their cultures, worldviews, and faith with them. They now exist in a state of liminality with the constant balancing acts of not being fully present in any place. It is in this state, that many immigrants become more open to faith communities, particularly those which are helpful with the adjustments to life in a new place (McMahan 2011:6-8). It is here that the Bible speaks loudly about the Christian response to the immigrant.

Christians are to show hospitality to the strangers in our midst by not only doing for the other, but also being with the other (Campese 2012:29), and living in such a way that their lives call attention to the God whom they serve. Integral to the hospitality shown by Christian hosts, is the consciousness that God is at work in the lives of people, whether they concur or not. As a result, hosts should also be receptive to hearing how God has been working in the lives of males and females wherever their natal land might be. Christians from everywhere
need to share with other Christians everywhere how they are coming to know God within their contexts. Goheen calls this “the attractive life of a contrast people” (2011:40-42). When strangers come to our midst, they should be treated the way God intended all human life to be lived. That is, with an orientation toward God's redemptive goal, and against the idolatry that pollutes and cripples human life.

In this ‘contrasting’ way of life, rich and poor will have the opportunity to thrive, as each person will be protected and be given the opportunity to provide for himself or herself and family. This way of being was to be molded into the very essence of how God's people lived when Yahweh specifically forbid the permanent sale of land (Lev. 25:23-24). This enabled the Lord, the landowner, to govern the tenants. Other laws made further provision for social and economic justice: gleaning laws meant a part of the harvest was left for the poor (Leviticus 19:9); tithing laws provided for the Levites and the poor (Deut. 26:12); and wage laws govern timely pay for workers (Deut. 24:14). Thus, the law demands justice as it provides the environment in which all are cared for, and no one can take advantage of the other by gaining an unfair edge. However, the law extends also to mercy and the benevolent care of the weak and vulnerable: “There shall be no poor among you” (Deut. 15:4). The responsibility of each Israelite to care for the oppressed, the hungry, prisoners, the blind, the bowed down, foreigners, the fatherless, and widows is predicated on God's special concern for those at risk of being exploited (Psa. 146).

In extrapolating this for life today when people do own land permanently, and cultural and personal life is no longer centered around the temple, Christians are still called to mind the well being of others, regardless of the structures in which they find themselves. They are to become advocates for the welfare of humankind and particularly for the defenseless, and speak out against systems that further exploit and oppress the vulnerable and weak. In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus speaks of the Great Judgment when “all the nations” (verse 32) will be gathered to give an account of how they handled what had been entrusted to them. In welcoming the stranger and showing hospitality there was the great reward of a life well lived. I posit that this reward does not begin when one dies, it begins in the act of being welcoming.

Showing wholehearted hospitality to strangers and welcoming them as brothers and sisters, emanates the character of Christ. This calls for very intentional Christian living, as there is a great deal of humility that goes with helping others while preserving their dignity. Kevin Vanhoozer points out “though the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, humility is its continuation (Vanhoozer 2006:124). If Christians are to make disciples of Jesus Christ, helping them to come to a fuller
relationship with Christ regardless of where they are on the journey, then Christians must communicate in ways that do not contradict the essence of the message of the Gospel. The words of Paul to the Philippians (chapter 2:3-4) seem most apropos, “do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.” Therefore whatever is done to welcome the immigrant, should not be done with any selfish or ulterior motive.

In the sense of the Christian living the cruciform life, each Christian asserting the vertical dimension, should remember that he or she belongs to Christ and is also an alien in this world. As Andrew Walls puts it, we are pilgrims on this journey, and none of us really belongs to the things of this world (Walls 1996:54). Taking the horizontal dimension, each Christian is called to love and care for one another. So in a sense there should never be an immigrant who is a victim of xenophobia, since God shows no partiality in giving love to the native as well as to the newcomer. God loves the stranger and blesses them, as readers are reminded in Deuteronomy 10:17-19, and Isaiah 19:24-25.

All people, and especially immigrants, need to know of the hope of a redeemed life where they will not be enslaved to the gods of the day, but rather experience the freedom which comes with taking the talents they have been given to earn money, and use it for the glory of God (Mat. 25:14-30). As people move across national borders in search of a better life (Pohl 2003:3), do they know that God would want them to behave in ways that improve the common good, and not just the good of their own families?

With all that should be done to show hospitality to the stranger, does God expect anything of the immigrant? Jeremiah delivered the word from the Lord to the exiles in a foreign land, in chapter 29 verses 4-7 and it serves well today. They were instructed to “build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”

Immigrants are to live in the new land without fear and with the mindset that they belong there. They are to put down roots and integrate with the people, and work together with the locals for the common good of the people and place where they reside. They are to also share their stories of the work of God in their lives. There is no mention of any conditions under which they should withdraw
from this directive. Since the laws of Israel also provided for the outsider, it seems as long as they did not try to usurp Yahweh’s authority, they were more than welcome (Goheen 2011:42). Paul iterates in Ephesians 2:19, “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. Integration, cohesion, and working for the common good while maintaining one’s identity in Christ is what God would expect of the immigrant today.

A Brief Theology of Church Planting

The church is a creation of the Spirit of God as evidenced by the scriptures in the Book of Acts (Cole 2005:10). As such there is only one apostolic church with one Founder and Head, Jesus Christ (Lawson 1986:143). Therefore it is a universal, corporate organism where its members function as the Body of Christ. It is to be attuned to the work of God in the lives of all human beings no matter where they are located, bearing in mind that human diversity is not an afterthought of God, but part of God’s created order for the world. To belong to the church is to belong to all others who are, ever were, or ever will be in the church (1Cor. 10:17).

As Jesus instituted the church as a means of carrying on His work in the world, the church remains universal in its mission. Hence, the church is glocal in its nature, in that it is as much global as it is local, in its essence, theologizing, and missional calling (Van Engen 2006: 157), and as such they are caring, teaching, nurturing communities, intent on making Christ’s name and power known. Church planting is “that ministry which through evangelism and discipleship establishes reproducing kingdom communities of believers in Jesus Christ, who are committed to fulfilling biblical purposes under local spiritual leaders” (Ott and Wilson 2010: 157). This is as fluid as the work of Paul recorded in the New Testament. As he referred to his work in 1Corinthians 3:6-7 as planting churches, so it continues to be replicated throughout history.

The fact the Lord builds the church and that we have become a church which spans continents, centuries, and the grave, and extends to heaven itself, means that we are not involved in church creation when we plant churches (McPhee 2014). Church planting is about enlisting, equipping and encouraging local, visible communities of the Lord’s one universal church. It is an organism, and as such it will exhibit movement dynamics not only inside itself but also beyond itself; so it will naturally be involved in multiplication (Keller 2012: 355).
In the work of sharing the Gospel across new frontiers there was a shift from emphasis on church-centered mission to mission-centered church (Bosch 2011: 379). Consequently, church expansion became rooted in a renewed understanding of the missio Dei that the Triune God is both a sending and a sent God, mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. Therefore it is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church (Bosch: 398-402). The church is then only partaker is its expansion. The call to fulfill the Great Commission is done with the cognition that it is The Triune God who has the ultimate responsibility for the outcome for the purpose of God’s glory. Accordingly, no church planting should be done from a position of power but rather out of obedience to God with love for God’s people everywhere. In the age of globalization and urbanization, where one fifth of the world’s population is on the move (UN Secretary General 2014), the church continues to expand, not as it crosses new frontiers to new lands, but as it crosses personal boundaries to include all people wherever they are located.

Under the Spirit’s direction, the church in every place has the two-fold task of building up the Body of Christ (edification) and proclaiming the gospel (evangelization), both in the service of the missio Dei. Each church’s specific call (ministry vision) is discerned (revealed) by the Spirit as the church seeks God’s direction. Since the body has been birthed by God, its members are to be submitted to God in every activity, dedicated to God’s purpose (McPhee 2014). So since God creates the church and all people, and diversity is not an afterthought, how then should the church treat those who do not yet belong? Is the church not also given the task of helping those who do not yet know Christ to come into a loving relationship with Him?

A Brief Overview of General Immigration to the USA

Borders are now more porous than ever. With cheaper and faster transportation to almost everywhere in the world, global telecommunications, and the World Wide Web, there is greater ease of movement of the world’s peoples. The International Organization for Migration estimates that more than 214 million people are migrating around the world, this means that three out of every 100 people around the world are living away from their homelands. This includes approximately 37 million migrants who are forcibly uprooted and made to flee to seek safety, known as refugees. Of this 37 million, 11 million refugees flee outside their countries, and 16 million are internally displaced. Most remarkable and not included in the previous numbers, are the approximately 12 million persons who
are classified as stateless, that is, they have no place in this world to call home (International Organization for Migration 2015).

So vast and fluid are the numbers of people moving to and from every region of the world that statisticians differ on the actual numbers. According to the United Nations Secretary General:

Globally, there were 232 million international migrants in 2013, with the largest numbers residing in Europe (72 million) and Asia (71 million). While international migration between continents receives significant attention, most international migrants move over smaller distances. Whereas Northern America and Oceania draw most of their international migrants from other regions, the majority of migrants in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean reside in the region in which they were born.

While the proportion of international migrants in the world’s population has remained relatively constant at about 3 percent for the past two decades, the number of international migrants continued to grow by 10.8 million between 2010 and 2013. The largest gains were in Asia and Europe, with an increase of over 3 million in each region over that period. In that same time period, the international migrant stock in Northern America grew primarily as a result of migration from Central America, from East and South-East Asia and from the Caribbean. In South America, much of the increase in the number of international migrants was fueled by migrants born in other countries of South America. In Oceania, the increase in migrant stock was driven primarily by migration from Northern Europe and from East and South-East Asia (UN Secretary General 2014: 2-4).

The United Nations defines international migrants as persons who stay outside their usual country of residence for at least one year. The United States broadens its definition of immigrants as persons who did not have U.S. citizenship at birth. This population includes naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees and asylees, persons on temporary visas such as students and certain types of employees, or persons who have no authorization to stay and legally work in U.S. society (Zong and Batalova 2015). There are immigrants in the U.S. from over 180 different countries and territories (United States Department of Homeland Security 2014: 17-20). The top 10 groups are listed in the chart below.
### Top 10 Largest Immigrant Groups in 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage of total US Immigrant Population</th>
<th>Language Skills</th>
<th>Education/Job Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>Limited English proficiency</td>
<td>Lower educational attainment/ service occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Fluent with English</td>
<td>Highly educated and highly skilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Limited English proficiency</td>
<td>Highly educated and skilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Limited English proficiency</td>
<td>Highly educated and skilled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Limited English proficiency</td>
<td>Less educated/ service occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Very limited English proficiency</td>
<td>Lower educational attainment/ service occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>Very limited English proficiency</td>
<td>Lower educational attainment/ office, sales occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Limited English proficiency</td>
<td>Highly educated/ professional skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Limited English proficiency</td>
<td>Lower educational attainment/ service occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Very limited English proficiency</td>
<td>Lower educational attainment/ service occupations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2013, approximately 41.3 million immigrants lived in the United States, an all-time high for a nation historically built on immigration. The United States remains a popular destination attracting about 20 percent of the world's international migrants, even as it represents less than 5 percent of the global population. Immigrants accounted for 13 percent of the total 316 million U.S. residents; adding the U.S.-born children (of all ages) of immigrants means that approximately 80 million people, or one-quarter of the overall U.S. population, is either of the first or second generation (Migration Policy Institute 2015).
The Trend of Religious Observance among Immigrants

Around the world, Christians comprise almost half of the world’s 214 million migrants with approximately 106 million residing for greater than a year outside the country of their birth. Muslims make up the second largest with 60 million or 27%, Hindus at nearly 11 million with 5% and Buddhists with 7 million at 3%. There are more than 3.6 million Jewish migrants living around the world with nearly 2%. Adherents of all other faiths—including Sikhs, Jains, Taoists, Chinese folk religions, African traditional religions and many smaller groups—collectively account for an estimated 9 million migrants at 4% (Pew Research Center’s Religion and Public Life Project 2015).

Christianity is the most prevalent religion among immigrants to the U.S. constituting 61% of all legal permanent residents in 2012 (Womald 2013). This number represents a decrease over previous years, a fate also shared with Buddhists at 6%. On the other hand, the percentages of Muslims and Hindus have increased to 10% and 7% respectively. The number of religiously unaffiliated (atheist, agnostic, or nothing in particular) has remained stable at 14%. The demographics demonstrate the full spectrum of people on the E-0 to E-3 evangelism scale, all located within a typical metropolitan U.S. neighborhood (Winter et al 1999: 64).

Transcultural sharing poses different challenges between diverse groups and single minority populations. Diversity is a word that is used loosely as an indicator of growing minority populations. However the true measurement of diversity is the probability that two, randomly-selected people living in the same community will not be of the same race. Therefore, places that have a high single-minority population have a correspondingly low level of diversity. Places in which the population is evenly divided between several racial groups are considered the most diverse (Broward County Planning Division). Planting churches among these groups are very different endeavors, but it is not an impossible task.

Recognizing this challenge, the framework for the field of Diaspora Missiology was introduced by Enoch Wan, emphasizing the threefold ministry ‘to’, ‘through’, and ‘beyond’ people in diaspora (Lausanne Movement 2010). This is commendable as an intentional move to tend to the spiritual needs of people who live outside of all that is familiar to them, ministering with an understanding that all people already have systems of belief. As they look to find strength in their belief systems in order to deal with all the push and pull factors which led to their move in the first place (Connor 2014: 77), many have brought their unique expressions of faith and have much to teach natives about living with profound Christian faith (Herppich 2012: 199). Just as with any other form of ministry, connections are engendered by listening, and thereby fostering transcultural relationships.
Wan purports some reasons why diaspora missions is of increasing importance (Wan 2011: 13-14). He noted that as the decline in Western Christianity persists, so will personnel and financial resources, which in turn decreases the impact of Western Christians on global missions. Consequently, diaspora people have been and will increasingly be, the primary vehicle of missions in the Twenty-first Century. Additionally, being on the move, people in transition are more receptive to spiritual matters such as spiritual conversations and involvement in global missions. Rather than assume a defeated posture, the Church should actively engage in tasks to: impart a missional sense to believers who are on the move; equip and mobilize diaspora Christians; provide pastoral care for family members of the diaspora who stay behind in the home country; partner with related organizations in building networks for outreach to the diaspora; and nurture the spiritual growth of the diaspora for outreach ministry in host countries and beyond.

The organizational model of religion in the U.S. is uniquely positioned to assist immigrants in finding jobs, advancing their careers, or simply helping with their cultural adjustments, by accessing the easily attained information on immigrants to the U.S. (Connor 2014: 73) and developing ministries accordingly. Churches can be conduits of hope both spiritually and physically. Immigrants, who attended worship regardless of religious adherence, were on the whole less likely to be depressed or have poor mental health compared with immigrants who do not. By contrast, involvement in ethnic associations or sports leagues was not associated with the same lower incidence of depression-like symptoms. This indicates that religious attendance seems to have a unique impact on the mental health of immigrants (Connor 2014: 78).

Massey and Espinoza in an analysis of the New Immigrant Survey examined the religious beliefs and practices of new legal immigrants to the United States (Massey and Espinoza 2011: 1386-1387). They found that overall, Christian immigrants are more Catholic, more Orthodox, and less Protestant than American Christians, while those who were Protestant we more likely to be evangelical. Additionally the detailed analysis of reported church attendance at places of origin and in the United States suggest that immigration is a disruptive event that alienates immigrants from religious practice rather than “theologizing” them. Furthermore, those who join congregations in the United States were more observant both before and after emigration, were more educated, had more cumulative experience in the United States, and were more likely to have children present in the household and be homeowners and therefore yield biased representations of all adherents to any faith.
Research supports that practicing religious faith and belonging to a worshipping congregation is beneficial to migrants, particularly if they are minorities (Reid-Salmon 2008: 108). On one hand, religious identity can shape immigrant economic success, by offering social capital, networking for employment, and a safe space for newcomers to learn how people behave in the local culture (Wan and Casey 2014: 52 and Connor 2014: 77). Additionally, as their religious practices change to mimic more of the culture around them, there is a potential bridge for immigrant integration. For example, Hindus in India do not have education programs for their children, nor are they particularly keen on weekly worship attendance. However, when they practice their faith in the U.S. they incorporate the practice which is parallel to the popular Protestant worship in their new locality. In this way, these Hindus can join in the conversations at work around worship attendance.

As Connor says, “a faith that moves with migrants can move all the way around the world. But that faith never remains quite the same after the move”(2014: 67). In the world of a migrant where almost everything changes, parents are generally eager hold at least one thing constant and that is to instill their religious values and traditions in their children (Connor 2014: 96). A good marker of whether an immigrant’s faith is transferred is the measure of religious change from the immigrant generation to the second generation. Religious switching among immigrants is uncommon (Connor 2014: 67), even though the practice may be different; the identity usually remains the same. However over time the trend is for immigrants to adapt their religious practices to become more like the general public around them (Connor 2014: 118).

On the contrary, among adult children of immigrants religious switching is more common, with 25% of children raised Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist no longer belonging to the same group, and among those with no religion 40% have switched (Connor 2014: 98). The most common directions of switch in the United States are either toward no religious affiliation, or Protestant Christianity. Religious observation is fluid, with faith becoming deeper for some immigrant children while less important for others (Connor: 119).

**Challenges of Immigrants with the Nature of Current Church Congregations, and How to do Church with them**

As churches in the twenty-first century recognize their calling to practice the Great Commission, they inherently own the fact that in a globalized world the church expands, not by crossing into new frontiers, but by crossing personal boundaries to include all people. Since immigrants move with their faith and their
varieties of expressions of it, that scenario is no different from the varieties found in local congregations and large denominations. Expressing Christian hospitality will look differently among the varieties of peoples who are our neighbors. How does the church allow immigrant newcomers to cross into its boundaries? How will the church love immigrants enough for them to allow the church to cross into their personal boundaries? What will being the church look like in the face of people with starkly differing worldviews living among each other? How does the church respond to people who do not equate material wealth with personhood? What do churches think about the Christian message they espouse to immigrants, when even in the face of multiethnic congregations, they insist on being monocultural rather than multicultural? Though newcomers desire to worship with existing congregations, they often find it difficult. The onslaught of images and innuendos of who they should be send clear messages that who they are is not good enough. Echoes of ‘if you don’t like it go back to your country’, often greet these people who are simply trying to sing the Lord’s song in a strange land.

Consequently, migrants constantly negotiate their identities in their new homelands. Publicly, immigrants must play the role assigned to them by their employer and follow the general cultural norms, or risk constant friction. Privately, people can be themselves. Therefore immigrants learn to use an identity according to the social situation (Wan and Casey 2014: 62). With formal pleasantries being exchanged, the fact that immigrants are just playing along might be missed. They might be mistaken for someone who has integrated into the church; all the while they are struggling to understand the messages being sent. This can lead to deep misunderstandings and can cause conflict to build.

How could the church best be intentional in showing hospitality to immigrants, so they too can come to a fuller knowledge of God, and grow more into the persons God has created them to be? How can the church help those who are already Christian to express their faith in the context of an existing worshipping community? Will the Jerusalem Council have to decide again that they do not have to be circumcised in order to join the flock (Acts 15:1-21)? Or will the church be flexible enough to allow people to pursue faith in different styles in their midst? Immigrants are not simply passive recipients of a Christianity passed down to them, many have a vibrant faith of their own. If they have experienced the faithfulness and mercy of God in their times of transition, then any form of Christianity which does not allow for full expressions of the God they know will be less than adequate (Herppich 2012: 202).

With greater awareness, there can be greater accommodation of “the other”. What is sure is that doing church in the U.S. as it has always been done will
continue to yield the current results: declining participation in all Christian churches, including Evangelicals and Catholics (Pew Research Center’s Religion and Public Life Project 2015: America’s Changing Religious Landscape). If Christians are not moved by love for immigrants, they could be moved by self-preservation of their churches/denominations. According to Reggie McNeal, when the gathered church is too focused on programs, it leaves people who cannot conform to its rhythms behind (2011: 28). The economic situations of immigrants often leave them with work schedules that coincide with regularly scheduled congregational activities. He suggests adapting the style of missional communities, in which the rhythm flows with the lives of the people who gather, according to their missional affinity. Rather than a weekly cycle, these communities may choose to have a monthly cycle, and the agenda varies according to the people present. There is no obligation to go through any prescribed set of activities, as people are the program (McNeal 2011:29). In these settings, immigrants will be able to express their stories within the context of a caring community. It is there also, in the context of a loving environment, hermeneutical differences that could be sorted through.

Furthermore, reaching immigrants will require more than a cursory understanding of them. It would be necessary to find representatives from that people group and learn as much as one can about them through ethnographic research. Getting involved in their lives and cultural activities, through participant observation, is also another winsome way to learn more about the people with whom we intend to do ministry (Wan and Casey 2014: 63-65). The church planter must understand how the newcomers view life, how they identify themselves, and how they express their culture in their diaspora setting. There are also basic questionnaires to assist with the process of verifying their levels of orality, and also of assessing their worldviews. Gathering this information in a time of mutual sharing would also help the immigrant learn how the locals learn and think, and how they see the world. This would communicate mutual respect and go a long way in helping them feel a sense of belonging. For ownership of any ministry with immigrants, the church planter must develop indigenous leaders, and contextualize the ministry, recognizing that both natives and immigrants are already influencing each other beyond the church walls, and each has much to offer the other.

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity (Psalm 133:1). The diversity in the kingdom of God is an opportunity for personal and collective growth as members of the Body of Christ. As globalization shrinks national borders, and people continue to move in search of a better life, Christians have increasing opportunities to give and receive that with which they have been blessed. Showing genuine hospitality to people, meeting them where they are both
physically, and spiritually, and humbly taking on the posture of learning from them, is what a kingdom community would look like.

Works Cited

Bosch, David Jacobus

Cole, Neil

Connor, Phillip Carey

Herppich, Birgit

International Organization for Migration

Keller, Timothy J.

Lausanne Committee

Lawson, John

McNeal, Reggie

McPhee, Arthur
Migration Policy Institute

Ott, Craig and Gene Wilson

Pew Research Center

Pohl, Christine D.

Reid-Salmon, Delroy A.

UN Secretary General

United States Department of Homeland Security

Van Engen, Charles E.

Vanhoozer, Kevin J.

Walls, Andrew F.
Wan, Enoch Yee-nock

Wan, Enoch Yee-nock and Anthony Casey

Winter, Ralph D., Steven C. Hawthorne, Darrell R. Dorr, D. Bruce Graham, and Bruce A. Koch, eds.

Woodberry, Robert, D.

Wormald, Benjamin

Zong, Jie and Jeanne Batalova
William Price Payne

_Folk Religion and the Pentecostalism Surge in Latin America_

Abstract

Latino Pentecostalism and the Roman Catholic Charismatic Movement have experienced massive numerical growth since becoming viable options for the masses in the late 1960s. Contextualization theory suggests that they have experienced exponential growth because they have become indigenous faith systems that mesh with Hispanic cultures and give folk practitioners functionally equivalent alternatives to the syncretistic practices associated with popular religion. Specifically, as a native religion that engages all aspects of the Latino worldview, Latino Pentecostalism operates at the level of a popular religion without being inherently syncretistic. In this regard, it can be described as “folk Christianity.”

Keywords: Latino Pentecostalism, Folk Religion, Roman Catholic Charismatic Movement, Syncretism, Latin America

Introduction

Why have the Pentecostals and Catholic Charismatics sustained rapid numerical growth in Latin America in recent decades? ¹ Doubtless, many factors have contributed to the exponential growth.² Amidst the cluster of nuanced explanations, contextualization theory suggests that Pentecostalism and the Roman Catholic Charismatic Movement have experienced exponential growth because they have become indigenous faith systems that easily mesh with Hispanic cultures and give folk practitioners functionally equivalent alternatives to the syncretistic³ practices associated with Latino popular religion.

Religiosity Indicators Associated with Folk Religion and the Mitigation of High Religion

Even though an overwhelming percentage of Hispanics identify with the Christian tradition and more than 50 percent self-identify as Charismatic or Pentecostal, a large proportion of the non-Protestant population still holds to beliefs and practices that are commonly associated with folk religion; that is, seeking help from folk healers with special powers (e.g., a curandero, herbalista, bruja, or espiritista), participating in spiritual cleansing services that use incense or herbs, and making offerings to spiritual beings other than God (Pew 2014b: 4-3 and 2014a: 110-116). One could add pilgrimages to sacred sites, use of empowered rituals, prayers to spiritual intermediaries, participation in religious processions that feature syncretistic practices, use of blessed objects, and wearing special clothing that symbolizes devotion to specific saints.

These external markers point to a worldview that takes the spirit world seriously and a felt need to have some control over it.⁴ John Lynch identifies the above practices and the accompanying beliefs with popular Catholicism in Latin America. He argues that they help the people make the abstract more concrete by redefining their everyday encounters with the supernatural in terms of the natural environment in which they live (2012: 172).

A popular Latino blogger who investigates folk phenomenon has suggested that the religious soul of Latin America is more spiritistic than Roman Catholic (Vasquez 2011). By spiritistic, he means spiritually oriented. Spiritually oriented should not be confused with the word “spiritual.” For example, it is common for a religiously unaffiliated American to say, “I am spiritual; not religious.” Latinos tend to be religiously spiritual. Most have an innate awareness of the spiritual dynamics of life. Due to the frequency of folk practices and the undergirding belief system associated with them, the Pew Report opines that Hispanics live their everyday lives with a strong sense of the spirit world (2014a:...
This aspect of the Hispanic experience sharply contrasts with the rationalistic or natural worldview that dominates American popular culture.

The Pew Report (2014a: 54) also reveals that popular religion is an enduring feature of Hispanic culture. This extends to the Latino diaspora. For example, it shows that American Hispanics from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Dominican Republic, and El Salvador practice folk religion with a similar frequency as those in their native lands. Because of their liminal existence, one would expect that new Hispanic immigrants to the United States would be more prone than established ones to engage in folk religious practices. Likewise, since time and distance separate established Hispanics from their native lands, lands in which folk religion is sewn into the fabric of the culture; one might assume that the incidence of folk practices would diminish to the extent that American Hispanics have assimilated into the dominant culture in the United States. However, the Pew report does not support either assumption. Rather, it shows that second and third generation American Hispanics practiced folk religion with the same intensity as recent immigrants. From this one could theorize that Hispanic immigrants resist assimilation into the public culture of America and/or that Hispanic culture helps to insulate Latinos from the aspects of the public culture that de-emphasize their native spirituality.

When religiosity indicators are teased out by nation, the research shows that Latin American nations have similar religious dynamics (Pew 2014b:40-50). Doubtlessly, the religious dynamics of each region have been shaped by a similar set of factors. The ubiquitous nature of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America, the pervasive incidence of folk religion, a holistic worldview, a surging Pentecostalism, a cultural heritage that points back to the Iberian Peninsula, a similar experience with colonialism, and a popular mass media that transcends national boundaries are shared contextual factors that have helped to forge the socio-religious characteristics of Latin American nations.

Even still, Latin America is not culturally monolithic. In fact, it is an area of burgeoning religious diversity. For example, the Pentecostal surge has affected all of Latin America to some extent. To a lesser extent, the no-religious-preference group is also growing throughout Latin America. Since 1970, the unaffiliated category has grown from one to eight percent. Roman Catholicism has declined in proportion to the growth of Protestantism and the non-affiliated category. In most cases, the countries that have experienced the strongest Protestant growth have also showed the largest growth with the unaffiliated category. This suggests a correlation between the diminishing social strength of Roman Catholicism and the growth of alternative traditions. In other words, as the Roman Catholic Church’s hold on society lessens, Pentecostalism and the no-
religious-preference categories will become increasingly viable options for growing segments of the population. Still, this paper does not suggest that the expanding incidence of Latino Pentecostalism mitigates the social influence of the Roman Catholic Church. True, the recent numerical surge has given Protestants a higher social standing and more political influence. Recent elections in Brazil show this. Rather, this paper asserts that Latino Pentecostalism has grown fastest in places where the social influence of the dominant tradition has been lessened.

Furthermore, this paper acknowledges that secularism is a socio-political force that diminishes the social strength of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. The advance of secularism has allowed for the flourishing of religious diversity in places where it did not exist in past years. At the same time, it has lessened the social influence of official religion in every location where it has dominated. For that reason, Latino Protestants should not adopt a growth strategy that seeks to disestablish the Roman Catholicism by pushing for increased levels of secularism. Yes, disestablishment will diminish the socio-political influence of Catholicism. However, when secularism displaces the Roman Catholic Church from the core culture, Protestants will not be able to move to the core culture that is vacated by Catholicism. In the end, ideological secularism will function as the new “state” religion and Protestantism will remain on the outside.

Uruguay offers a perfect example of this. Since it enacted separation of church and state laws in 1861, the practice and influence of Roman Catholicism has greatly diminished. Today, only 42 percent of the population aligns with the Roman Catholic Church. Fifteen percent aligns with some form of Protestantism. A full 37 percent has no religious preference. Of that 37 percent, ten percent are strong atheists and three percent are weak atheists. Only 28 percent of Uruguayans avow that religion is important and a meager 13 percent attend church services, many of those are Protestant. In various ways, the ideological, social, religious, and political climate in Uruguay has become hostile to the public influence of organized religion. Today, Uruguay outwardly appears to be a non-religious island in a sea of Latin American religiosity (Pew 2014b: 14 and 17-18).

Despite the sustained progress of secularism and alternative faith systems in Latin America, the Roman Catholic Church still dominates the cultural landscape in the vast majority of locations. As has been shown, a large percentage of those who align with the Roman Catholic tradition also engage in folk practices. Insiders would argue that one cannot separate “formal Catholicism” from “informal Catholicism” because the latter has been woven into the former.

The distinction between Latino Roman Catholicism and popular Catholicism is porous and not exact. In fact, it varies depending on the geographic
and social locations of the participants. For this reason, even though one should acknowledge and describe the universal social phenomenon of Latino folk Catholicism, one should note that all religion is local religion even when the various local manifestations are tied to a larger tradition and share many of the same details. For example, many Latin American communities own the Catholic faith by having their own sacred places, particular saints, unique traditions, and distinct Virgin shrines (Lynch 2012: 171).

In many places, the flavor and intensity of the folk practices goes beyond the pale of inculturation. Virginia Garrard-Burnett, an eminent historian with an emphasis on Latin American studies, has studied folk Catholicism in Guatemala and other places. She refers to the creolization of native Latino faiths with Roman Catholicism as a “new system of belief, indeed a new Christianity, that is neither fully European nor fully indigenous, but is rather an inextricable mixture of the two; a system that is altogether different from the lingering pre-Hispanic beliefs, carefully hidden from religious authorities, that centuries of Christian contact never fully snuffed out. . . . [They] include elements of animism and the worship of sacred geography. . . . [They] run parallel to Catholicism but do not necessarily compete with it” (2008: 75).

In order to appreciate the particulars of the resulting amalgamation, one must make allowance for varying host cultures. Specifically, folk Catholicism in the Caribbean (Santería) and Brazil (Candomblé) is more closely tied to western African indigenous religions than the folk Catholicism in the areas of Central and northern South America that was largely influenced by various native peoples.

Because of the domination of European immigrants on the demographics of the Cone region in southern Latin America, the minimal influence of indigenous peoples, and the growing influence of secularism, religiosity indicators related to formal religion are much lower in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay (Pew 2014b: 41-45). However, inhabitants of the Cone region engage in folk religion at the same rate as people from other parts of Latin America. For instance, approximately, 50 percent believe in the evil eye and seek to protect themselves from it. Even in secular Uruguay, 30 percent engage in regular practices associated with folk religion (Pew 2014b: 57-58). For example, throngs of Uruguayan devotees fill the streets for many miles during the peregrination and feast of the miracle working Saint Cono. He is a patron of good luck for gamblers and those who want material blessings.

This points to the pervasive influence of folk religion and illustrates why demographers should not measure religion merely in terms of high religion categories. Across Latin America, Hispanics show an openness to folk religion even when they do not practice a high religion. That is why the popular appeal of folk
religion is not diminished when the church loses social strength. A functional theory of culture would argue that folk religion endures because it satisfies essential social, psychological, or religious needs; needs that are not being directly satisfied by high religion. If this is true, official Roman Catholicism needs to be supplemented by folk Catholicism in Latin America in order to relate to the “spiritistic” soul of Latinos and meet needs related to everyday spirituality.

A Lesson from a Roman Catholic Priest in Peru

For ten weeks in the summer of 2007, I worked with a Roman Catholic priest in Ancón, Peru. On weekends he ministered to a large population of displaced people on the outskirts of Lima. His church was situated toward the top of a large outcropping of rock. The squatters who made the mountain their home came from rural areas with the hope of finding a job in Lima. Despite the fact that they were dispossessed of material belongings, they held tightly to their popular religion.

Curiously, even though the priest did not practice popular religion as such, happily he accommodated it by blessing ritual items and by encouraging the native spirituality. Since he was a devout priest with whom I had developed a positive rapport, I asked him why he did not lead the people away from folk religion and into a more pure form of Roman Catholicism.

He contended that all Christianity was inherently syncretistic and that “pure” Catholicism did not exist. Whenever the apostolic faith interacts with people who live in a particular culture, it accommodates the culture of the people. In fact, he said that Roman Catholicism has blended with and embraced the native spirituality of diverse populations. Furthermore, European Catholicism had already mixed itself with the native religions of Europe long before the Spanish brought their version of it to the Americas.

Emphatically, he stated that European Catholicism did not fit the spiritual context of the majority population in Latin America and that it needed to be modified before the common people could embrace it as their own faith. He opined that as long as the people acknowledged Christ, honored the Virgin, and participated in the sacramental community, their popular piety was not a problem. To the contrary, it met felt needs, helped them satisfy spiritual impulses, and it enabled them to own the church by adapting it to their worldview context.

Justo González’ emphasizes many of the same points when he reflects on the encounter of Roman Catholicism and the indigenous faiths in Latin America.
Unavoidably, many of [the early converts in Latin America] came to identify some of the saints of the church with their own gods and brought to their worship and piety some of the practices they had learned from their ancestors. At first some of the [church leaders] objected to such practices . . . . But eventually the ecclesiastical leadership became reconciled with much of the popular belief and practice, arguing that these were means of the evangelization . . . By the late twentieth century many had become convinced that most popular religion does not contradict the Catholic faith but is actually an expression of it. (2008: 6-7)

**Inculturation: The Pope’s Apostolic Exhortation to the Americas**

To help me better understand what he was saying, the priest gave me a print copy of Pope John Paul II’s *Apostolic Exhortation to the Church in the Americas* (1999). Under the category of “popular piety,” the Pope substantially echoes the priest’s comments and González’ historical perspective. The Pope states that folk practices are an indication of the inculturation of the Catholic faith. Moreover, they are a means by which the faithful may encounter the living Christ even if the practices are not intricately connected to the doctrines of the church. Additionally, the Pope notes that the Synod Fathers have stressed the urgency of discovering in the manifestations of popular religiosity true spiritual values in order to enrich them with elements of genuine Catholic doctrine.

Ultimately, under the category of “Problem with the Sects,” the Pope avers that the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America should make the most of the evangelizing possibilities of popular religiosity (Paul 1999:73). Such an endeavor will stave off secularism and a surging Pentecostal movement that is siphoning away large numbers of Roman Catholic faithful. The new emphasis is required because the official church has focused too exclusively on meeting physical needs and has neglected the deeper spiritual needs that make the faithful vulnerable to the proselytizing activities of the sects and new religious movements. The last comment was directed at liberationist priests who wanted to focus the church on social reform issues and political activism.

In sum, the Peruvian priest interpreted Pope John Paul II’s message in a way that allowed him to facilitate folk practices. Like the Pope, he did not want his parishioners to turn to other faith systems in order to meet spiritual needs that official Roman Catholicism did not sufficiently engage. Additionally, he believed that the folk practices were compatible with the Roman Catholic faith and that they could be a means by which the people could encounter God. Furthermore, he maintained that syncretism was a necessary accommodation to the pre-Christian worldview that permeated parts of Latin America. Obviously, this priest did not
speak for all priests. However, his example and the teaching of the Pope show how the Roman Catholic Church’s leadership has attempted to work in tandem with folk religion.

**Approaching Popular Religiosity: an Example from Costa Rica**

For seven weeks in 2015, I lived with a large family in a small house in Costa Rica. During this time I interviewed Pentecostals, Roman Catholics, and folk practitioners about their spirituality. Some of the conversations were intensely personal and very emotional. Underneath the veneer of everyday life, I discovered spiritually aware people who were very articulate about their experiences with God and the supernatural. I also observed an entrenched religiosity that was buoyed by a generalized openness to folk religion. Based on my interview data and observations, I will describe the Latino religiosity that I encountered.

The father of the home in which I lived practiced Pentecostalism. He left the Roman Catholic Church in 2008 because he needed spiritual discipline and spiritual power to change his life. Before becoming a Pentecostal, he drank 32 bottles of beer every day. His brothers, sister, and mother all became ardent Pentecostals at the same time. They read the bible, pray often, listen to praise music, attend mid-week prayer services, desire spiritual empowerment, embrace aspects of the prosperity gospel, and tithe. Home conversations often revolved around religious themes. Their Pentecostal faith influences all aspects of their lives to include their social interactions with non-Pentecostals.

The mother of the home where I lived staunchly held to her Roman Catholic faith. She respected the Pentecostal church and fully supported her husband’s participation in it. She also listened to praise music and loved to pepper me with questions about God, the bible, and spiritual gifts. She even experienced the strong presence of God when she requested prayer for healing. However, she held to her folk Catholicism because she feared that something bad would happen to the family if she became Pentecostal.

The stores in the town sold a mixture of indigenous and Roman Catholic religious items. The items included herbs for traditional healing, blessed trinkets for good luck, objects to protect people from the evil eye, material to ward off malignant spirits, various saint statues, and a vast assortment of Virgin Mary bric-a-brac. Many items invoked the power of the seven archangels. Saint paraphernalia to include small statues usually had a dual meaning that the people understood. Locals referred to the items collectively as *brujería* (witchery and magic). The various shops that sold the accouterments did a brisk business.
The people with whom I spoke distinguished between folk healers, shamans, and witches. They knew of imagined witches but they did not know their names. Supposedly, they congregated on a local mountain. They were more common in past times. They said that people did not openly visit a witch in daylight hours. Witches were chaotic and untrustworthy. They could cause harm to people.17

On the other hand, the people held the folk healers in high regard. The curanderos protected and/or healed people from the effects of witchcraft, spells, evil spirits, and disease.18 They used a combination of herbs, divination, channeling, prayers, ritual items, and spells to manipulate the supernatural in order to help people who had spiritual, physical, financial, emotional, or mental problems. In short, they maintained an equilibrium between the spiritual and natural worlds.

People eagerly recounted anecdotal stories that extolled the spiritual prowess of curanderos. One curandero told a woman that she would encounter two snakes on the path down from the mountain but neither would hurt her. It happened just like he foretold. A Roman Catholic immigrant from Peru told me that a folk healer caused a little rodent to crawl over her body. Then, he killed it, dissected it, and divined her problem.19 Afterward, he performed a ritual to fix her problem. The folk healer made the right diagnosis and cured her. One retired folk healer told me that the spirits would talk to her so that she could tell people what they needed to do. She was good at diagnosing illnesses and identifying malignant spirits.

Many of the people who attended the local Roman Catholic Church openly boasted that they also visited the local healers, bought merchandise from the stores that sold brujería, and used rituals associated with the pre-Christian native religion. In fact, they told me that members of the local evangelical/Pentecostal churches also used the curanderos when no one was watching even though they publically disavowed them. This was a point of sharp contention because many Pentecostal leaders preached against the Catholic Church.

I should note that Roman Catholic Charismatics were not opposed to folk Catholicism. Additionally, they distinguished themselves from Pentecostals by virtue of their devotion to Mary and the saints. Even though they love to worship Jesus and made good use of the spiritual gifts, they also spoke of Marian visions and prophecies. Most used saint paraphernalia. In interviews they spoke about visions, dreams, demons, angels, dead black hens, invisible dogs, and spirit guides. Some claimed supernatural abilities. Repeatedly, they invoked the memory of Padre Pío de Pietrelcina. He had the stigmata, manifested extraordinary gifts, and suffered greatly.20 In a continuum between native religions and the missionary churches, Catholic Charismatics would be center-left.
The Flaw of the Excluded Middle

Anthropologist Paul Hiebert (1982) coined the term “excluded middle.” In short, he shows that the traditional worldview of modern Western Christianity divides reality between high religion and the natural world. High religion is the domain of the institutional church. It focuses on professional clergy, right doctrine, ethics, worship services, sacraments, church buildings, and the like. Clergy maintain the tradition and encourage conformity. They perform rites of passage, offer comfort, give encouragement, dispense sage advice, and provide pastoral services. Although they talk about the spiritual world, most of what they do focuses on the natural world.

Even though the typical Western Christian acknowledges God via prayer and other spiritual activities, most do not live with a God consciousness (i.e., spiritual orientation) that invades every aspect of their daily lives. This leads to a dualistic existence in which the average western Christian spends the vast majority of his or her life living as a practical atheist. In fact, the mainline churches of the West do not deal with issues associated with demonization, inner healing, curses, misfortune, or the evil eye. Furthermore, they do not have an operating category for the everyday supernatural to include angels, demons, ancestors, and witchcraft.

Instead, the dominant forces of science, reason, and the worldview of naturalism mitigate an emphasis on everyday supernaturalism. For example, when one gets sick, the person will go to a medical clinic. Clergy will comfort the sick and offer prayers for emotional and spiritual wellbeing instead of providing a direct spiritual intervention. Indeed, the medical care providers are the healers of the body and the clergy are the caretakers of the soul. In light of this body/spirit dualism, few
specialists have the training or standing to integrate holistic healing. Furthermore, the “professionals” look upon those who attempt to implement holistic therapies that integrate body and spirit with suspicion.

On the other hand, folk religionists in Latin America focus on the area between high religion and the natural world. They address the “excluded middle” in practical ways. Typically, the religious specialists belong to the dominant faith but are not recognized as clergy or medical professionals. They are folk healers with spiritual powers, secret knowledge, and great wisdom. They interact with personal spiritual beings and impersonal spiritual forces that have power over human affairs.

![Figure 2: Continuum between High Religion and the Natural World](image)

**Conquest, Imposition, and Evangelism**

Before the arrival of the European powers, the indigenous peoples of Latin America operated under an animistic worldview. They blended high religion, the middle zone, and the natural world into a seamless way of life. Religious specialists treated the body and the soul. They also served as mediators between the natural and the spiritual. They could divine causes for misfortune and could lead the people in rituals for wellbeing. Everyday spirituality attempted to maintain a harmonious relationship with the spirit world and often consisted of worshiping lesser spirits. Usually, the high god or the great creator was distant and irrelevant to everyday life. There was no separation between the sacred and the profane, (i.e., a natural/supernatural dualism). Everything was integrated.

When the European conquerors arrived, they established Roman Catholicism and required the people to convert to it. Partly this was due to the *reconquista* mindset that had seized the religious imagination of the Iberian Peninsula after the Moors were finally expelled in 1492. In the aftermath, Spain believed that
it had a divine mandate to evangelize the pagans and to eradicate false religions through conquest. Additionally, Franciscans believed that the millennium was at hand and wanted to convert the world in preparation for the coming of Christ. Others were inspired by a “noble savage” mentality. Since the native peoples were unencumbered by the heresies, corruptions, and sins of Europe, they could be fashioned into a pure church (Lynch 2012: 13-15).

The evangelistic mandate, eschatological vision, and desire to create a pure church gave baptism a new urgency. In 1529, a Franciscan missionary wrote “I and the brother who was with me baptized in this province of Mexico upwards of 200,000 persons – so many in fact that I cannot give an accurate estimate of the number. Often we baptize in a single day 14,000 people” (Vidmar, 2005: 244). By 1533, the sixty or so Franciscans who were in Mexico claimed to have baptized 1.2 million Indians. By 1536, another 3.8 million had been baptized (González 2008: 50-52).

Unfortunately, the friars did not fully evangelize the new converts by making them Christ disciples or by wholly engaging their worldview with the gospel before they baptized them. In fact, most were “annexed” into the church instead of converted to Christ. When one considers the size of the mission field, the sense of urgency, and the limited numbers of friars, one will realize that it was next to impossible to disciple millions of newly baptized people. Regardless, because of the lack of discipleship training, some converts maintained dual religious systems in which they moved between Roman Catholicism and the native faiths without attempting to integrate the two. In most cases, Roman Catholicism and the native faiths were syncretized. In so doing, the people maintained native spiritual categories in the guise of Roman Catholic symbols like the Virgin Mary and the saints.

John MacKay’s *The Other Spanish Christ* (1933) explores the place of the resultant Jesus in popular Latino Catholicism. Even though he wrote 80 years ago, much of what he said still resonates. Under the category of “The Creole Christ,” he argues that devotion to Jesus focuses primarily on his birth and his death (i.e., incarnation and atonement or baby Jesus and suffering Savior). In both instances, Christ is weak and easily patronized. The life and teaching of the virile Jesus are largely ignored. In fact, when it comes to dealing with the daily needs of life, people tend to go through the Virgin Mary and the Saints because they are more accessible than Jesus.

MacKay offers an interesting discussion on material images of Christ (statues, pictures, and the like) that are attributed spiritual power and used like fetishes. The material objects are adored and cherished in the same way as images of the Virgin and Saints because they have practical value in terms of popular religion.
categories. In this way, the material objects serve as a buffer between the individual and the living Christ.

For example, during the festival of *El Señor de Los Milagros* in Lima, throngs of people perambulate behind a painting of Jesus. The painting has a mysterious origin and has healing powers. Those desiring to be healed make vows to it and wear a purplish robe for upwards to two years as a sign of devotion. Ironically, those who follow behind it in possession often pray to the Virgin Mary, the Saints, and to the painting itself. The resurrected Christ who walked with the disciples on the Emmaus Road or touched the sick with his loving hands remains a distant and largely clouded God (1933: 113-117).

It should be noted that Mary apparitions appealed to the native religions and enabled the early Catholic mission in Latin America to have great evangelistic success (Paul 1999: para 11). In fact, most Latin American countries have their own Virgin visitation stories and shrines that date to the early time of evangelization. Often, Mary provided a religious and cultural bridge between the European colonizers and the native peoples. The bridge allowed for the mixing of Roman Catholicism with local traditions. The apparitions and subsequent blending are a main reason why the Christian faith was accepted and modified by the native peoples. Marian visions still occur with great frequency throughout Latin America.

Philip Jenkins, a historian of religion, explores the relationship between the emergence of folk Catholicism and the successful evangelization of Latin America. Despite the fact that some missionary orders heroically advocated on behalf of the native peoples, he argues that the Roman Catholic mission strategy to the Americas established churches that largely disregarded the indigenous culture. This led to religious blending. Surprisingly, the resultant syncretism enabled long-term success. By the time that the church adapted the liturgy and the sacraments to the native context via inculturation, the native peoples had already created their own religious synthesis that focused on syncretistic devotion to saints and the Virgin Mary. Such activities did not require official clergy and allowed the people to connect Catholicism to their native faith systems. Through this unintentional blending, the Roman Catholic Church’s accommodation to the culture of the people ensured its establishment throughout Latin America (Jenkins, 2011: 38-39).
Santería and Latino Folk Catholicism

Anthropologist Jacob Loewen served in Latin America for 30 years as a missionary and bible translator. Like the Peruvian priest, he observed that the Latino populations with which he worked syncretized the Christian faith to their context in the same way that European Christians had syncretized the faith to the Greco-Roman religious context before it was exported to the New World. In reference to folk Catholicism, he states that in Latin America many local specialized deities of the pre-Christian era were saved from oblivion by being rebaptized with the name of a Catholic saint (1986: 9). This is especially obvious in areas where Latinos practices Santería (e.g., Cuba and Miami, Florida).

Santería is a Latino syncretistic folk religion that blends Spanish Catholicism with West African religion instead of the indigenous religions of Central and South America. In many ways, it is very similar to other forms of Hispanic folk Catholicism. For example, one could easily substitute Afro-Caribbean for Native Peoples in figure 3 without changing anything else on the illustration. Granted, Santería differs in terms of the specifics. However, it shares a common worldview, employs parallel rituals, and has a similar pattern of integrating the Holy Mother and the saints into a native cosmology. When the example of Santería is compared to the other instances of Latino folk Catholicism, one will begin to discern the blurred contours of a pervasive Latin American folk spirituality.

While working as the pastor for a large Cuban refugee camp in Panama from 1994-1995, I observed Santería on a daily basis. For example, after celebrating a Christmas Eve service, a band took the stage and sang songs in a language that I did not understand. When I inquired, the people told me that it was Yoruba. For 450 years, specialists within the Cuban society had maintained the language...
and religion of their African ancestors. Likewise, many of the same people who attended Mass also employed the services of the shamanistic priest. On many occasions, the *santeros* attempted to sacrifice chickens in the camp. The practiced was banned for sanitary reasons. Additionally, I observed men who dressed up like San Lázaro on December 17. San Lázaro is a poor trickster god and a Roman Catholic saint. He is one of the many gods/saints in the popular religion of Cuba.

In Cuba proper, *Santeros* flock (and crawl) to the Roman Catholic Basilica of el Cobre in order to pay homage to the Lady of Charity (Virgin Mary) who is also believed to be the African goddess, Oshún. The image of the Black Virgin is a national treasure. Three poor people found it floating in the sea after the Virgin Mary miraculously saved them from a violent storm. Many believe that it was a divine gift to the Cuban people. As such, practitioners of Santería and Roman Catholic priests encourage devotion to it. In 1998, Pope John Paul II crowned the Lady of Charity as the Patroness of Cuba and personally venerated it. Pope Frances recently enshrined a Lady of Charity statue in the Vatican garden.

In a recent article about the Pope’s 2015 pastoral visit to Cuba, a high ranking leader of Cuban Santería says that Santería and Roman Catholicism need each other. The leader attends Mass regularly, partakes of the Sacrament, and considers herself to be a good Catholic. She contends, “Catholicism is present in all manifestations of Santería. In the end, they have the same purpose” (VOA News, 2015). Sixty percent of Cubans are baptized Catholic. An equal amount practices Santería in Cuba. About 33 percent of Catholic Cubans are Charismatic (Pew 2014a: 109).

Santería is also popular with the Cuban diaspora in Florida. While working with a Cuban newspaper in Florida from 1978-1981, I observed Santería altars and folk practices with established immigrants in the USA. Santería has staying power with the immigrants and their descendants because it resonates with the Cuban worldview, captures the essence of the Cuban personality, and has been integrated into the Cuban society. In this regard, it is similar to other manifestations of Latino folk Catholicism.

**The Priority to Contextualization**

Of course, religious syncretism and dual religious systems are not unique to the Roman Catholic tradition. In fact, whenever Christianity is forced on a population or is adopted as a foreign faith, folk religion in the form of syncretism emerges. That is why it is absolutely essential that missionaries avoid the temptation to use positions of power, economic influence, or other non-spiritual incentives
to achieve quick results. This also points to a more important theological fact. Non-Christian peoples have to be evangelized in ways that engage their existing worldview categories to include those areas that deal with the spirit world.

Additionally, when the missionaries make the faith accessible through evangelism, church planting, leadership training, and translating the gospel message into the language and culture of the people, they must realize that they cannot contextualize the faith. Those being evangelized have to do that. For that reason, the people must be the leaders in their own evangelization. Simply stated, transplanted Christianity and forced conversions lead to compromised Christianity.

Anthropologist Charles Kraft argues that folk religion is the biggest problem in the global Church. Speaking of Roman Catholic, Protestant, and non-aligned traditions, he says that believers continue to go to the shamans and diviners because the Christian faith they received fails to deal with the excluded middle. For Kraft, the solution to folk Christianity, dual religious systems, and an encroaching secularism is “Christianity with power” (2015). In fact; Latino Pentecostalism is Christianity with power (Payne 2013: 87-106).

In a brilliantly written piece, Kraft argues that syncretistic Catholicism has many parallels to the Pentecostal worldview and practice. After defining and describing animism and its practices, he affirms a Christus Victor theology that avows the reality of the spirit world and spiritual warfare. He contends that Pentecostalism distinguishes itself and its practices from animistic folk religion because it focuses exclusively on Jesus as the one who delivers the faithful from bondage to the spirit world. An emphasis on the spirit world is not problematic as long as the emphasis remains Christocentric and biblically founded. The greater danger is for Christians to embrace a naturalistic theology that causes them to ignore the spirit realm (Kraft 2015: 116-131).

New Trends in Religious Demographics in Latin America

This leads to my penultimate point. In Latin America, folk Catholicism is an indigenous faith that has been thoroughly contextualized by the Hispanic peoples. It is owned by them and it is expressed in terms of their cultural categories. Because of this, it answers all the questions that a religion should answer as it orients the people to the natural and spiritual realms. In fact, it is embedded in the core culture. From that perspective it functions as an ordering device for the society.

Up until 1909, when the Methodist Episcopal Church mission in Valparaiso Chile experienced a spontaneous Pentecostal revival with supernatural manifestations and the releasing of sign gifts, folk Catholicism had no Christian rivals in Latin America. However, since the Pentecostal seed was planted in Chile,
the Spirit of Pentecost has popped up all across Latin America. Most notably, since 1970, it has been dramatically manifested in the Catholic Charismatic Movement.38

According to Edward Cleary’s, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism in Latin America* (2011), the Charismatic Movement is the dominant force in Latin American Catholicism. Over 60 percent (45 million) of Roman Catholics in Brazil identify as Charismatic (Chesnut 2013). In Panama, over 70 percent of Roman Catholics call themselves Charismatic. In the USA, 52 percent of Hispanic Catholics claim to be Charismatic. Thirty-one percent of them say they have received a direct revelation from God. Seventy-one percent say that the worship services that they attend include people displaying signs of excitement and enthusiasm, such as clapping or jumping. Fifty-nine percent of churchgoing charismatic Catholics say their services include speaking in tongues, prophesying, or praying for deliverance or healing (Pew 2014a: 97).

Even though there are more Charismatic Catholics than Pentecostals in Latin America, Latino Pentecostalism is also surging. In the 1960s, 90 percent of Latin America’s population was Roman Catholic. Today, only 69 percent of adults identify as Catholic. The membership of the Roman Catholic Church continues to decline as growing numbers of Latinos affiliate with Pentecostal style churches (Pew 2014b: 14). The Center for the Study of Global Christianity echoes this fact. It states that Latino renewalists39 have grown from 12.8 million in 1970 to 181.3 million in 2010 and are expected to grow to 203.0 million by 2020 (2013: 54).

The trend to Pentecostalism is most striking in Central America. In Honduras there are more self-identified Protestants than Roman Catholics! Additionally, the vast majority of Protestants is Pentecostal (70 percent) or attends churches that feature Pentecostal style worship services.40

When one combines the numbers of Latinos who have become Protestant or Charismatic, it is clear that folk Catholicism is losing its grip on the region.41 This represents a major religious demographic sea change of massive proportions. The statistical data requires an explanation.

**Pentecostalism and the Rebirth of Christianity in Latin America**

I suggest that Pentecostalism and the Catholic Charismatic Movement have grown large because they function as an indigenous religion that allows practitioners to engage all aspects of the Latino culture to include its worldview and its aesthetic heart. Pentecostalism gives believers a close and personal relationship with God in worship and connects them to a charismatic body of believers through which the spiritual gifts operate. By means of the spiritual gifts and personal worship experiences, the church enables the believers to engage Hiebert’s “excluded middle.”
In a satisfactory and alluring way, Pentecostalism appeals to the temperament, soul, and life orientation of the Latino populations.

The Pew Research Center came to a similar conclusion. “Pentecostalism’s compatibility with indigenous religions enhanced its appeal among Latin Americans. By emphasizing personal contact with the divine through faith healing, speaking in tongues and prophesying, Pentecostalism attracts those who share an affinity with indigenous religions that traditionally incorporate beliefs and practices associated with direct communication with the ‘spirit world’” (2014b: 26).

The Roman Catholic Charismatic Movement in Latin America has discovered Kraft’s Christianity with Power. However, it continues to hold to many practices that are associated with folk Catholicism (see figure 1). For this reason, it has a strong appeal to Hispanic Catholics who want Pentecost but do not want to abandon the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand, Latino Pentecostals reject folk Catholicism without rejecting the dominant worldview that undergirds it. In some ways, Latino Pentecostalism is a protest movement against the dominant tradition and its blending with the indigenous faiths. Like folk Catholicism, Latino Pentecostalism answers cultural needs and has adapted to cultural forms. In one sense, it has allowed Latinos to reclaim a native cultural identity while reasserting their right to do theology independent from dominant ecclesial structures. Because of this, it serves as a force for Christian renewal throughout Latin America.42

In sum, Latino Pentecostalism is growing because it is fully Christian, has spiritual power, connects practitioners to God in a personal way, delivers people from sin, frees people from spiritual bondages, provides an alternative community, speaks the language of the culture, lessens the gap between the clergy and the laity, and functions as an indigenous religion.
Conclusion

Today, there are three forms of indigenous Christianity in Latin America; folk Catholicism, the Catholic Charismatic Movement, and Latino Pentecostalism. Folk Catholicism is syncretistic. Pentecostalism may seem syncretistic to the western outsider because it is a native religion that engages all aspects of the Latino worldview. In this regard, it functions at the level of a popular religion and could be described as “folk Christianity.” Ultimately, it is a renewal movement that has the potential to evangelize the unchurched masses and liberate Latino Christianity from syncretistic practices associated with popular religiosity. If the current trends continue, this generation will witness the rebirthing of Christianity in Latin America.

End Notes

1 According to a recent Pew report 46 percent of American Latino Catholics attend churches that evidence Charismatic practices such as speaking in tongues, praying for miracles, and receiving prophesies. Forty percent of Catholics throughout Latin America associate with the Charismatic Movement. Hispanic Charismatic Catholics encourage spiritual gifts, enjoy spiritually charged worship that emphasizes the personal experience of God, often receive direct revelations from God, and have witnessed or participated in a deliverance service. In Panama, Brazil, Honduras, Dominican Republic and El Salvador, more than 50 percent of Catholics self-identify with the Charismatic movement. (Pew 2014b: 15-16 and 64-68).
Pentecostal churches also have enjoyed strong growth in the same countries ranging from 41 to 23 percent of the population (Pew 2014b: 14). Some have referred to the Pentecostal boom in Latin America. Today, 19 percent of the total population identifies as Protestant. The vast majority does not attend historic Protestant denominations. Seventy-five percent of them claim to be Pentecostal. Regardless of the name on the church or the individual self-identification of the participants, almost all Latino Protestants could be described as charismatic or Pentecostal (Pew 2014b: 7-8, and 15-16).


3 Many social scientists reject the use of the term “syncretism” because it has negative connotations and assumes that two systems of religion are being blended. In its place, they use “religious creolization.” The latter phrase assumes that a new system of belief has been formed. It is an independent category and not a mere blending of two dominant systems. Jesuits since the time of the Rites Controversy have struggled with the issue of syncretism. Many have argued that the term confuses the larger issue. They prefer to use the term “inculturation” and assume that syncretism may be a necessary accommodation to the cultural context. See Peter Schineller, S.J., “Inculturation and Syncretism: What is the Real Issue?” (1992: 50-54). This paper employs the term syncretism because it is the word that evangelical missiology uses to describe the blending of faith systems when practitioners maintain an official relationship to Christianity.

4 Gailyn Van Rheenen has a helpful article that describes and contrasts the worldviews of animism, secularism and theism (1993: 169-171). From my experience, I would contend that most Latinos operate under an eclectic worldview that blends elements of animism, secularism and theism. In fact, one could graph Latino worldview orientations in terms of the emphases each gives to the three main categories.

5 For example, most Hispanics prefer to self-identify by country of origin. Also, more people in South America speak Portuguese than Spanish. Additionally, over 15 million speak indigenous languages in Central and South America. One could argue that the term “Latin America” as employed by North Americans represents an artificial construct that minimizes cultural diversity and assumes a homogeneity that does not exist. The term was coined by the French in the mid-nineteenth century in tandem with a colonialistic agenda. This paper will not explore the massive literature on this topic. However, it will note that the phrase is a popular way for Hispanic leaders and intellectuals to describe their common identity. “La Raza Hispánica” (the Spanish race) is a possible synonym that has been employed by politicians and those in the Latino diaspora to describe a common Latino social existence.

6 While teaching on this topic at the Biblical Seminary in Medellin, Colombia in 2015, many students wanted to encourage the growth of secularism
because they had personal grievances against the established religion. In Colombia and other places in Latin America, Roman Catholicism has used its favored status as the state church to minimize and persecute Protestants. However, I argued that secularism is not the friend of Protestantism and that it is a double-edged sword that would ultimately hurt the cause of Christ.


8 The Amerindians were largely exterminated from the area. However, DNA studies show that they still compose 17 percent of the regional gene pool, mainly in Chile. Argentina is 87 European white. It has received large numbers of immigrants from Italy and Germany. Even Pope Francis from Argentina is the son of Italian immigrants. Uruguay is 88 percent European and 92 percent urban. Chile is 52 percent white and 43 percent mestizo (Berglee 2013, section 6.4).


10 An excellent text on the blending of Christianity with the native religions in Europe is Stephen Benko’s The Virgin Goddess: Studies in the Pagan and Christian Roots of Mariology (2003). Ondina and Justo González opine, “In Latin America, as elsewhere, people have always received and interpreted Christianity within the framework of their own world view – much as in northern European lands” (2008: 6). Even though the masses were baptized, “ancestral customs and beliefs survived and were combined with the faith taught by the church. Ancient gods were identified with the Virgin and the saints, and ancient forms of worship were now directed toward these specific saints” (2008: 6-7).

11 Much has been written on the topic on contextualization as it relates to the missionary task. Other terms include indigenization, accommodation, inculturation, enculturation, and translatability of the gospel. Timothy Tennent offers a helpful review of the terms and their history in Invitation to World Missions (2010, 323-353). Aylward Shorter, Toward a Theology of Inculturation (1994) describes the various terms and offers a history of the concept. Under, “Mission as Contextualization,” David Bosch also explores the terms and their development. See Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission (2011, 420-432). I recommend Paul Hiebert’s work on critical contextualization and beyond contextualization in Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues (1994, 75-106). He distinguishes between good contextualization and problematic syncretism. Serious students should read the many articles on contextualization in Ralph Winters’ and Steven Hawthorne’s Perspectives on World Christian Movement (2008). The following statement represents a global evangelical perspective (Lausanne Covenant 2015, http://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant). “The development of strategies for world evangelization calls for imaginative pioneering methods. Under God, the result will be the rise of churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture. Because men and women are God’s creatures, some of their culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because they are fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic. The gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture. Missions have all too frequently exported with the
gospel an alien culture and churches have sometimes been in bondage to culture rather than to Scripture. Christ’s evangelists must humbly seek to empty themselves of all but their personal authenticity in order to become the servants of others, and churches must seek to transform and enrich culture, all for the glory of God.”

12 In the Roman Catholic Church, popular piety is a technical term that refers to the various forms of prayer and worship that are inspired by their culture rather than by the official liturgy (Paul 1999, “Popular Piety,” paragraph 16).

13 Robert Schreiter, C.PPS, an eminent Roman Catholic scholar and missiologist, carefully dissects issues associated with folk Catholicism and syncretism in Constructing Local Theologies (1993, 122-159). According to Robert Schreiter, “Syncretism and dual religious systems are problems for only certain members of the church. . . . Many Christians are able to live with syncretism or dual religious systems without any real difficulty” (1985: 151). Steven Bevans, SVD, also explores these issues in Models of Contextual Theology, especially under his discussion of the synthetic model (2002, 88-102). A classic Roman Catholic text on this topic is Louis Luzbetak’s The Church and Cultures: New Perspectives in Missiological Anthropology (1989, 292-373).

14 Every morning, I spoke to pensioners who gathered in the market area of Santa Ana. During the day, I spoke to teachers, administrators, groundskeepers, guards, and adult students at a school that I attended. In the evenings, I returned to the market area. I also spoke to people in San Jose and tourist areas. I recorded data from 86 conversations.

15 Donald McGavran (1990:139-142) observed the same phenomenon in India. He referred to it as a people movement.

16 Also, the legalistic teaching on tithing greatly annoyed her. Often she reminded me that the Roman Catholic Church received an offering and did not require people to pay a tithe. I heard a similar critique from a host of other people. Curiously, one nominal Catholic that I interviewed desperately desired to attend an evangelical church. He asked me to pray for God to bless his business because he could not afford to pay the tithe.

17 In Witchcraft and Welfare: Spiritual Capital and the Business of Magic in Modern Puerto Rico, Raquel Romberg (2003) describes the life of a bruja. She is portrayed as part magician, part priestess, and part social worker. She helps people by channeling the benevolent forces of her spirit guides.

18 For a very insightful understanding of curandero, see the following interview with curandero Charles Garcia at http://bearmedicineherbals.com/doc.html.

19 This video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IF-SWx31380) shows a folk healer using an egg to discern if a person suffers from the evil eye. A variety of random people speak about the practice. Many sound like testimonials in favor of folk healing. In America, 40 percent of Latinos believe in the evil eye (Pew 2014a: 110-116). The percentage is much higher in parts of Latin America. In a separate video a woman tells people how to determine if they have been victimized by the evil eye. First, pour water into a bowl. Afterward, with your index finger, drip three drops of cooking oil in the water. If the drops expand, you have a positive
result. To fix the problem, throw the water in the toilet and recite the Hail Mary three times. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBpNNs_MP0s.

20 His gifts included the ability to see peoples’ conscience during confession, to cure the sick with prayer, to be in two places at the same time, to give off a holy odor like a fragrant flower, and to cry when reciting the Rosary.

21 At a recent missiology conference, I watched a prominent American Missiologist who teaches anthropology arguing with a host of global missiologists. He contended that witch is an abusive social category that wrongly stigmatizes vulnerable woman. The global missiologists contended that they had encountered real witches with great spiritual powers. The American missiologist did not accept this.

22 For example, the 1513 Requerimiento was read to native people in the area of modern Mexico. It demanded that they accept Spanish rule and allow the missionaries to preach to them to the end that they convert to Christianity. Those who did not submit and convert would be forced to obey both the church and the state under threat of war and slavery (González 2008: 47).

23 It should be acknowledge that Dominicans, Augustinians, and Jesuits did attempt to train the converts and eradicate pagan practices before baptizing them. They also tended to advocate for the welfare of the indigenous peoples and the Caribbean slaves. In time, the cultural war was abandoned and the native spirituality was no longer challenged (González 2008: 50-54).

24 As time went on and more friars arrived, the missionaries attempted to teach the entire catechism to include complex theological dogma to include who God was, the Virgin Mary, the immortality of the soul, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the mortal sins, and the works of mercy. A similar process simultaneously occurred in Asia. However, the long-term effectiveness of the training was minimized by the contradictory behavior of the Europeans, a striking lack of missionaries, and by the inability to dislodge the native religions.

25 “Appearances could often deceive, and just when the friars thought they had a breakthrough and achieved outward conformity they discovered that ‘at night the Indians continued to meet and call upon the devil and celebrate his feasts with many and diverse ancient rites.’ The going was hard, a struggle against the inherent strength of Indian religion” (Lynch 2012: 13).

26 “The common people feel more at their ease and more confident of success, if they present their pleas to the Santos Menores [lesser saints], the quality of whose life was less different than their own. The ordinary worshipper is a practical polytheist whose pantheon is presided over by Our Lady. She alone has never lost her crown. The Virgin is the real divinity of popular religion. The Trinity crowns her and the saints lead up to her” (MacKay 1933: 112-113).

27 MacKay concludes “The Creole Christ” section with these words: “Hitherto the true lordship of Christ has not been acknowledged in South American [folk Catholicism]. He has been known as the Lord of the Sepulchre [sic] and the Lord of Good Harvests, as the archetype of the wounded lover and the material pledge of immortality; He has been known, too, as the possessor of a magic name.
But he remains to be known as Jesus, the Savior from sin and the Lord of all Life” (1933:117). Fortunately, that has been challenged by a budding Protestantism and the Catholic Charismatic Movement that has rediscovered a personal Jesus without neglecting the Virgin Mary.

28 “How can we fail to emphasize the role which belongs to the Virgin Mary in relation to the pilgrim Church in America journeying towards its encounter with the Lord? Indeed, the Most Blessed Virgin ‘is linked in a special way to the birth of the Church in the history of the peoples of America; through Mary they came to encounter the Lord.’ Throughout the continent, from the time of the first evangelization, the presence of the Mother of God has been strongly felt, thanks to the efforts of the missionaries. In their preaching, the Gospel was proclaimed by presenting the Virgin Mary as its highest realization. From the beginning — invoked as Our Lady of Guadalupe — Mary, by her motherly and merciful figure, was a great sign of the closeness of the Father and of Jesus Christ, with whom she invites us to enter into communion.’ The appearance of Mary to the native Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac in 1531 had a decisive effect on evangelization. This influence goes beyond the boundaries of Mexico, spreading to the whole continent. America, which historically has been and is a melting pot of peoples, has recognized ‘in the mestiza face of the Virgin of Tepeyac, in Blessed Mary of Guadalupe, a great example of perfectly inculturated evangelization.’ Therefore, not only in Central and South, but also in North America as well, the Virgin of Guadalupe is venerated as Queen of all America” (Paul 1999: paragraph 11).


30 One woman with whom I spoke in Costa Rica described a Marian visitation that was witnessed by thousands of people in 1996. According to her, the visitation was preceded by prophetic messages. On the first Tuesday of every month, the faithful traveled to Sara Piqui in Costa Rica to witness the appearance in the sky. On one occasion, the Virgin stopped the sun. Gold glitter often manifested on the people. Marian Apparitions of the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries contains a chronological list of Mary apparitions from 1900-2011 http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/aprtable.html.


33 See El Noticiero at http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99026940/.

34 The following chart shows how the Yoruba gods and the Roman Catholic saints have been combined in Santería. The chart also shows the attributes of each god/saint.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orisha or Yoruba God</th>
<th>Roman Catholic Saint</th>
<th>Ascribed Attribute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agayu</td>
<td>San Cristóbal</td>
<td>Fatherhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babaluaye</td>
<td>San Lázaro</td>
<td>Sickness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleggua</td>
<td>San Antonio de Padua</td>
<td>Removing spells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibeji</td>
<td>San Cosme y San Damián</td>
<td>Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inle</td>
<td>San Rafael</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obatalá</td>
<td>Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes</td>
<td>Clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orgún</td>
<td>San Pedro</td>
<td>Iron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olokún</td>
<td>Nuestra Señora de la Regla</td>
<td>Profundity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orula</td>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>Wisdom and fate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osanyin</td>
<td>San José</td>
<td>Herbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oshosi</td>
<td>San Norberto</td>
<td>Hunting and Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oshún</td>
<td>Nuestra Señora de la Caridad</td>
<td>Erotic Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oya</td>
<td>Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shangó</td>
<td>Santa Bárbara</td>
<td>Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemayá</td>
<td>Nuestra Señora de Regla</td>
<td>Motherhood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ¿La santería es un ritual católico? (Is Santería a Catholic Ritual?) http://www.mscperu.org/biblioteca/esoterismo/santeria.htm

35 “It is unfortunate that Christians all over the world are practicing a Christianity devoid of the ability to deal with the spirit world. They are practicing the powerless Christianity the missionaries brought them. . . . Thus, largely because of deficiencies in the worldviews of the missionaries who helped them come to faith but rendered their faith powerless, the Christianity practiced in much of the world is animistic.” Charles Kraft, The Evangelical’s Guide to Spiritual Warfare (2015: 50-51).

36 William Payne, “Discerning an Integral Latino Pentecostal Theology of Liberation” (2013: 87-106). In particular, see the sections on “Characteristics of Latino Pentecostalism” (92-94) and “The Exodus Story (94-96) which shows how the Latino Pentecostal hermeneutic is applied to a text.

For a country-by-country statistical analysis of Latino Pentecostalism, see Cliff Holland’s “The Latin American Socio-Religious Studies Program / Programa Latinoamericano de Estudios Sociorreligiosos” (PROLADES) at http://prolades.com/.

“Renewalist practices — such as receiving divine healings or direct revelations, witnessing the devil or evil spirits being driven out of a person, or speaking or praying in tongues — are particularly common among Pentecostal Protestants. Roughly two-thirds of Latino Pentecostals say they have received a divine healing of an illness or injury (64%) or a direct revelation from God (64%). About six-in-ten say they have witnessed an exorcism (59%) and about half say they have spoken or prayed in tongues (49%)” (Pew 2014a: 95).

Cliff Holland, the director of the Latin American Socio-Religious Studies Program told me that 75 percent of Latino Pentecostals do not speak in tongues. That percentage also includes Pentecostal pastors. He suggested that one becomes Pentecostal in Latin America when one attends a Pentecostal church. While preaching in various Pentecostal Holiness churches in Costa Rica, I asked the people in the various congregations if they had been baptized with the Holy Spirit or spoke in tongues. Most responded in the negative. Additionally, many of the Pentecostal students at the Biblical Seminary of Colombia in Medellin also affirmed that they did not speak in tongues. Other non-Pentecostal students quietly affirmed that they did speak in tongues. The actual distinction between a person who self-identifies as Pentecostal and one who attends a non-Pentecostal church may be minimal.

Ninety-five percent of Latino Roman Catholic Charismatics have a high view of the Virgin and still pray to her. However, they no longer need to supplement their Christianity with the other attributes of folk religion. Plus, they have rediscovered a personal Jesus and strongly affirm the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

“Nativistic movements like Latino Pentecostalism seek to reclaim a cultural identity that has been lost or denied. They begin to blossom in the final stages of colonialism. Oftentimes, they restate the faith in such a way as to bring it into line with cultural ideals. In the restating of the faith, the believers separate themselves from the ‘landlords’ and take responsibility for their own religion” (Schreiter 1993: 13).

Works Cited

Benko, Stephen

Berglee, Royal

Bevans, Steven SVD
Bosch, David

Center for the Study of Global Christianity

Chesnut, Andrew

Cleary, Edward

Escobar, Samuel

Garrard-Burnett, Virginia

González, Ondina E. and Justo L. González

Herskovitz, Melvin

Hiebert, Paul


Hoover, Willis Collins and Mario G. Hoover
2000 History of the Pentecostal Revival in Chile. Santiago, Chile: Imprenta Eben-Ezer.
Jenkins, Philip  
2011  

Kraft, Charles  
2015  

Lafaye, Jacques  
1976  

Lausanne Movement  
2015  
“Evangelism and Culture.” *The Lausanne Covenant*. Available at http://www.lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant.

Loewen, Jacob  
1986  

Luzbetak, Louis  
1989  

Lynch, John  
2012  

McGavran, Donald A.  
1990  

MacKay, John  
1933  

Madsen, William  
1957  

O’Connor, Mary  
1989  

Paul, John II  
1999  
Payne, William


Pew Research Center


Romberg, Raquel

Schineller, Peter S.J.

Schreiter, Robert C.PP.S

Sepúlveda, Juan


Shorter, Aylward

Tennent, Timothy
2010 *Invitation to World Missions.* Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications.

Van Rheenen, Gailyn
Vasquez, Arturo  

Vidmar, John OP  

Voice of America News  

Wilson, E. A.  

Winters, Ralph and Steven Hawthorne  
From the Archives: Christian Endeavor: Badges, Conventions, and Youth Ministry

The recent donation of Christian Endeavor material to the B.L. Fisher Library Special Collections and Archives of Asbury Theological Seminary came with a large number of envelopes and boxes filled with ribbons, pins, medals, and all kinds of assorted badges from across the U.S. and even the world.1 As we began the process of sorting these items and trying to think through the preservation and importance of these materials, we began to get interested in these odd pieces of ephemera. After Dr. Francis Clark founded the Young People’s Societies of Christian Endeavor in 1881, they rapidly began to grow and expand by holding meetings at the local, state, and national level. At first the groups were rather small, but outside interest in this new youth movement led to many visitors coming to their meetings. At their fourth conference in Old Orchard, Maine in 1885, they decided to try something different,

Announcement was made by the chair that badges had been prepared for the delegates, who were requested to provide themselves with the same that they might be distinguished from others in attendance, not delegates. The badges consisted of a piece of white satin ribbon, with the legend “Christian Endeavor, Delegate,” printed thereon in red letters. Similar badges were provided for visitors.2

So, the first Christian Endeavor badge was created to distinguish voting members from visitors during a convention.
The Oldest International Convention Badge in the Collection is a Ribbon from the 8th Convention Held in Philadelphia in 1889.

Soon, however, the leadership of the Christian Endeavor began to realize the potential for forging a strong group identity through the use of badges. First, they had to develop a common symbol, which they found in an “E” being surrounded by a “C”. This logo was developed by Rev. Howard B. Grose in 1887, and has been defined as, “The C. embraces the E. The Endeavor is all within the Christ…” So the emblem became a theological statement as well, that all of our work should occur within the mission of Christ. Soon the combined C.E. of Christian Endeavor was added to the many badges being produced. By 1890 at the ninth International Convention, the number of visitors became rather unwieldy
and the convention report notes, “Admission was gained on presentation of the
convention badge.” So these badges now came to serve an additional function of
entrance passes to important events at the convention.

![Image]

Copy of Notes for the Christian Endeavor Logo Designed by Rev. Howard
B. Grose in 1887

As youth are prone to do, it became popular to collect and wear the
various badges to show solidarity with the group and the purposes represented by
Christian Endeavor. Members desired to be recognized as part of the organization.
One manual suggested receiving new members by saying,

It is the custom of our society to give each new member a
Christian Endeavor pin, in the hope that it will serve as
an earnest (token?) of our brotherly affection, and as a
constant reminder of the covenant you have just repeated
with us. We ask that you show your Christian Endeavor
colors faithfully, and we pray that this little emblem may
come to mean as much in your lives as it means in ours.
Some badges were quite elaborate, such as this badge from the 18th International Christian Endeavor Convention held in Detroit, Michigan in 1899. The Christian Endeavor logo fans out to display popular tourist sites in the city.

As a result, items with the CE emblem proliferated, including tie clips, sweater clasps, rings, bracelets, and all kinds of items. Another manual encouraged the collection of these items,

Celluloid buttons are cheap and they can be used as rewards for Junior work well done. When a Junior has earned so many buttons, he may exchange them for a Christian Endeavor pin. Every Junior should be encouraged to wear the Christian
Endeavor monogram in some form or other, on a button or a pin. Make this a point of some of the contests the society carries out.7

So, contests were designed for spiritual growth, which included using pins and badges for incentives for things like scripture memorization.

![Drawing of Christian Endeavor Badges from Foreign Countries](image)

Finally, these contests expanded to create friendly contests between local societies to encourage the growth of new societies and new members. At the ninth International Convention in St. Louis, some enterprising Christian Endeavorer brought a banner constructed by sewing hundreds of ribbons together from different societies. The convention report from the following year notes,

> At St. Louis, last year, a badge banner, made up, as it was, of badges from hundreds of societies, was displayed amidst much enthusiasm. Acting upon the suggestions made by a delegate, it was decided to place that banner for one year in the custody of the State, Territory, or Province that should show the greatest proportionate increase in its number of local societies during the year just closing.9

These badge banners were given out as awards to the societies that had grown the most until about 1898, when the society started using banners sent by foreign nations to serve this purpose.
Badge from the 28th International Christian Endeavor Convention in New York City.
Notice the metal date is 1917 for the originally planned convention, which was postponed due to World War I, so the added ribbon contains the dates for the 1921 convention after the war.

Throughout its long history, the badges of Christian Endeavor have been a constant, but even then, these badges have changed form and function over the years. From 1885-1891 the earliest forms of badges seem to be simple ribbons that could be pinned to a person's clothing. These were inexpensive and useful. From 1892-1921 we see the development of very elaborate badges, many modeled after military medals with elaborate metal pin bars, ribbons and suspended metal elements. This period of time coincides with the Spanish-American War and World War I, both wars in which Christian Endeavor groups were involved. The imperialistic aims of the United States encouraged strong patriotism, and the parallels with the Christian Endeavor army moving across the globe on a mission for Christ is clear.
to see. From 1923-1937, during the period of the Great Depression, the badges become cheaper versions of the military-type of medals, often using paper, plastic, or celluloid instead of metal. At this time individual nametags begin to appear, demonstrating a growing desire for less group identity and more individualism. From 1939-1993 the individual nametag becomes the dominant form of badge, moving from more elaborate metal nametags to modern paper nametags in plastic sleeves.

Badges often contained images and slogans representative of the host state, such as the corn and slogan, “The Harvest Time is Here” for the 29th International Convention held in Des Moines, Iowa in 1923.
In today’s world the symbolic value of material culture items, such as Christian Endeavor badges is often overlooked. Group identity, rallying around a common mission, fostering spiritual growth and friendly competition for the good of the group are all important reasons for taking a little bit of time to reflect on this often overlooked ephemera within archives and special collections. It helps provide a window into the past to see how Christian ministry to youth developed and flourished in previous generations.

Local State Convention Badge from Nicholasville, Kentucky for 1909

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.

End Notes

1 All 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.

2 Fourth Annual Conference of the Young People’s Societies of Christian Endeavor Convention, 1885, page 6.


4 Minutes of the Ninth Annual International Christian Endeavor Convention, Boston, MA: The United Society of Christian Endeavor, 1890:5.


8 Drawing taken from “Two Decades of Christian Endeavor,” by Amos R. Wells. The American Monthly Review of Reviews, 23(2): 185-190, February 1901. This image is in the public domain and came from page 190 of the article.

Aaron Perry

*Special Book Review Essay*

**Who’s Afraid of Relativism?: Community, Contingency, and Creaturehood**
James K.A. Smith
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic
2014, 186 pp. softcover, $19.99

**Fieldwork in Theology: Exploring the Social Context of God’s Work in the World**
Christian Scharen
Grand Rapids: Baker Academic
2015, 117 pp. softcover, $19.99

**From Nature to Creation: A Christian Vision for Understanding and Loving Our World**
Norman Wirzba
Grand Rapids: Baker Academic
2015, 162 pp. softcover, $19.99

Well, the journey from Paris to Jerusalem continues as The Church and Postmodern Culture series has recently added *Who’s Afraid of Relativism?, Fieldwork in Theology*, and *From Nature to Creation*. The series, now with ten books, was conceived to take postmodern philosophy and apply it to the life of the church. It was offered as “French lessons for the church” (from the series introduction). So, the driving question for the overall series at this point is both simple and fair: Has the church learned French (postmodern philosophy)? Of course, one does not just learn a language simply to say one has learned a language. The true measure of learning
a language is whether or not one may converse thoughtfully in different places, whether one’s travel is eased and enriched by proficiency in a new language. So, have readers been able to learn French and then make the journey from Paris to Jerusalem (or from Binghamton, New York to Brockville, Ontario—my two cities of ministry since the series appeared)? Have readers been able to speak French—even in local clubs? Or, to put it another way, is there something different in the church on Sunday and through the church Monday to Saturday as a result of the series? It would be unfair to tackle these questions before exploring the most recent contributions, so let’s examine them in turn.

Who’s Afraid of Relativism?

Christians should be relativists. That is the ambitious thesis of James K.A. Smith’s essay, Who’s Afraid of Relativism?. The work, necessarily limited to maintain a certain amount of readability, aims to offer a more robust version of relativism that stands up under the attacks of those who would declare the concept a nonstarter in Christian thought. As such it is more descriptive than thorough. While Smith anticipates certain critiques, he does not always answer them as fully as the unconvinced reader might require.

Smith initiated the series by examining the “unholy trinity” of Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault (11), and he continues it by accessing and unpacking a new trio: Wittgenstein, Rorty, and Brandom. Smith examines relativism from the perspective of pragmatism. Pragmatism is a philosophy of contingency and community. Our selves, and hence our knowledge, depends. Smith argues that this kind of relativism is in line with the Christian doctrine of creation. Human beings are creatures and this impacts our accounts of knowledge and truth (36). Smith unpacks Wittgenstein, Rorty, and Brandom in successive chapters before offering these insights for theological work in a postliberal age.

The essay is a rejection of the correspondence theory of knowledge and the representationalist account of language, where words refer to things. Wittgenstein, of course, notes that language is more than reference; that language does things and that what language does is beholden to the community in which it is used. Words do more than refer. They are part of a way of life and can only be understood in these contextual language-games. Words are used well because users know how to use them, even if the user does not know all the rules of the game. This is the undoing of (one sort of) realist world because the reference model is undone in that the “connection between words and the world is contingent” (52). Instead, language has meaning by virtue of the agreement between users of the language. The possibility of this agreement precedes meaning—“the web of
meaning” we inherit “is the product of social construction” (53). Smith does not believe this falls into nihilism—where there is no meaning, but instead affirms that there are rules to the language game that can be articulated and that must be followed and that meaning is tied to the language game and never escapes a context.

Smith believes that language games ought not to be foreign to Christian thinking connecting the concept with Augustine’s distinctions between things/signs and between use/enjoyment. Because things and signs can overlap in the same subject, communities determine when things are things, when they are signs; communities also teach what is to be used and what is to be enjoyed. The proper understanding and use of the concepts is tied to a language game. Here Smith’s argument runs into trouble. Smith writes, “The use/enjoyment distinction is not ‘objective’ in the sense that it can be just ‘read off’ the world before us. The very distinction between use and enjoyment…is relative to a story, the story revealed in the Scripture proclaimed in the gospel, and handed down to us in the body of Christ” (71). It seems that this distinction is relative to this theological story in that other stories might disagree about what is to be used and what is to be enjoyed. It could even be observed that the categories ‘use’ and ‘enjoy,’ not just what goes into these buckets but the categories themselves, are arbitrary to this theological story. Thus far, there seems little to challenge. Yet Smith’s conclusion is a little more interesting: “Even when we take the distinction [between use/enjoyment] to be true, receiving this as the ‘true story of the whole world,’ we are always already dependent upon this social context of reception and proclamation, this community of practice that teaches us how to mean the world as a gift” (71-72, italics in original). Of course one claims truth from a point of view. Yet if the word true is to have any sense, it must not be limited to the story itself. The claim to truth is not that one has no point of view, but that one’s point of view enables them to see accurately—better than others. The story, the point of view, either helps its inhabitant/observer to see the world rightly or it doesn’t. The world is seen from a point of view but the world is not limited to the perspective taken. When Smith says that the story reveals it does not necessarily mean that what is revealed is relative to the story. That a story/linguistic community is the means of relation (communication) does not mean that what is related/communicated is only true relative to the community. Communities can see outside themselves; they simply cannot see from outside themselves. The means of communication does not necessarily change the nature of what is communicated. Yet, this seems to be the big conclusion drawn from Smith’s engagement with Wittgenstein.

The implications of this conclusion are then teased out as Smith considers Rorty. Most scrutinized is Rorty’s claim that “truth is what your peers will
let you get away with saying” (73). Rorty’s point is to break us from the Cartesian paradigm of inside/outside, where the desire is to match what is inside the brain (thought) to what is outside the brain (object). While Locke followed Descartes, obsessing with how the mind actually makes this connection, Kant does away with the inside/outside paradigm saying that everything is in the mind. The mind is what makes the object what it is—the mind constitutes the object. Against this paradigm, Rorty says that knowledge is cultural rather than individual. It is more about the give and take of a culture’s conversation that the individual’s “confrontation” with the outside world. Rorty does not believe this means there is no “ontological weight” to things. Rejecting the correspondence theory of truth is not to reject that things are independent of theories (87). But isn’t this just what is at stake—that some things are real and true regardless of their being contextualized? Truth is the category appropriate to a culture’s story inasmuch as the story lines up (corresponds?) with what is real. Its truth is relative not to the story itself, but to reality being related by the story.

Smith might object that there is no foundation outside the game created by the community telling its story, in which case it seems to me that the notion of truth is lost as a possible adjudicator between the stories of two or more cultures. Smith objects to the notion of adjudication, presumably, because it might rely on a universal language or foundation. There is worry that making a decision between truth claims might pretend the adjudicator occupies a space outside the world. After all, one cannot escape the “community of practice that is the locus of meaning [because it] is always already embedded in the world” (94). Objective truth is critiqued because it seems to remove the knower from reality. To be embedded in the world means that our encounter with truth is not against it, but within it.

Smith says that Rorty’s pragmatism embraces our creaturely dependence. Rorty’s belief that valuations are relative to (dependent upon) communities and their social practices does not mean Rorty is a nihilist (98). Instead, Smith argues that such dependence is a mark of being a creature: “Our dependence on the divine is inextricably bound up with our dependence on other human beings. This is why we are not merely dependent but also social” (99). Yet, is human interdependence really “inextricably bound up” with divine dependence? Can humans breathe life into other humans without first being sustained by the Creator? Is it not true that the dependence of the entire creation on the Creator is a categorically different kind of dependence than its internal interdependence? Does the Creator’s communication to a community through a story not have subsequent implications for the nature of knowledge—found within that story, of course, but with implications for all other narratives and communities of practices?
One gets the impression that there is room for proper evaluation between narratives when Smith says that Rorty not a skeptic. “There are good and bad construals, better and worse accounts. But ‘good’ and ‘better’ accounts are not so because they have managed to mirror reality and escape the contingent, social conditions of knowing. No, good and better accounts are those that better enable us to cope with the obduracy of things…” (100). What does it mean for an account to truly enable one to “cope with the obduracy of things” except that it mirrors reality? A map helps to keep me from bumping into trees, poles, and ditches inasmuch as it keeps me on the road.

Smith believes that that Christian faith becomes the revelation that breaks into the world that allows the believer to move and live well. Revelation does not pull us out of the world, but comes to us, kenotically (110). “Everything we know and confess as Christians is relative to this (contingent, historical) revelation, and our reception of this as revelation is dependent upon our inculcation in the community of social practice that is the church. There is now no revelation outside the church because there is no meaning that is not ‘use’” (112, italics in original). Once again, is this really true? Adam, Noah, and Abraham all have divine encounters outside an established “discursive community of practice.” Jesus encounters God’s voice without the community’s affirmation. Is there a community involved in that none of these men are completely isolated (with the possible exception of Adam)? Of course. Is there revelation outside the church? Indeed. Does the Holy Spirit bear witness outside the church with a person? Did the Lord Jesus encounter Saul within the church? These counterexamples are meant to show that a philosophy of pragmatism cannot be developed outside a theological context. If one’s discursive community of practice is the church, then revelation is the starting point rather than what subsequently needs to be shoehorned into a philosophy. It is theology that illumines the philosophy of pragmatism, not vice versa. Everything is relative to the story of God, to the claims of theology as they are faithful to the revelation of God. That, it seems to me, is what people mean when they claim something as absolute truth.

Smith’s final two chapters look to take the re-orientation offered by Wittgenstein and Rorty and make them applicable through the philosophy of Robert Brandom in the context of Christian doctrine. Smith wants to maintain a place for the truth of doctrine without forsaking the pragmatism previously argued. So, Smith accesses Brandom’s categories of implicit and explicit: Christian doctrine is making explicit (knowing that) of the Christian faith what is implicit (the know how) in it. Smith points to the cultural-linguistic paradigm of George Lindbeck as a test case. Since doctrine is cultural-linguistic, it means that there is no lone knower,
no isolated individual capable of “processing facts and claims against ‘reality’”
(171). Clearly, Smith is in favor of the Christian community and sees it as necessary.
Yet, Smith’s claims seem to soften toward the end:

[P]ragmatism’s appreciation of the contingent, communal conditions of knowledge does not undercut the ability to make universal claims, nor does it preclude the possibility of asserting universal norms. It only means that it is impossible to see or grasp such norms from ‘nowhere’ or from an ‘absolute’ standpoint…. Instead of undercutting the uniqueness of Christianity, then, this pragmatist account actually heightens it: to see and understand and grasp those ‘universal’ features of God’s creation requires the unique capacities bequeathed to us by the community of practice that is the body of Christ. Christian revelation in not less important in this picture, but more. (173)

So, communities can make universal truth claims. One wonders all the fuss, then. Consider the question: Which came first: The truth claim or the community? If the community came first, then it seems there is a time when the truth claim was not universal, and, therefore, is not truly universal. If the truth claim came first, then the entire pragmatist project is lost because things are not purely contingent and communities are not the source of meaning. They are the context in which truth is discovered and revealed. One does not need to stand outside a community to make such a claim. One only needs to see that this binary logic is true to all communities.

Fieldwork in Theology

Let’s move on to the next installment. Fieldwork in Theology by Christian Scharen is written with five big ideas that are related clearly in a way that forms the book’s progression: The world matters; research is self-reflective; bodies are our context for research; understanding comes through embodied practices; Christians can immerse bodily for research. Scharen begins with a passionate plea for the church and for individual Christians to “wake up” from the slumber of Christendom. “Suffering, healing, reconciling, and doing justice” call our best attention and participation with the Spirit (5); the same Spirit who makes our wakefulness possible and calls our obedience. Only when Christians are awake can we understand “the complexity of this beautiful and broken world” (5). And what it will take to understand is fieldwork in theology: the “careful, disciplined craft of inquiry…[that] seeks both to claim knowledge of divine action and to discern an appropriate human response” (5). What fieldwork in theology looks like is the subject of the book.
Fieldwork in theology begins with an emptying—a “dispossession,” to use Rowan Williams’ phrase—that takes its cues from the incarnation. To understand, the Christian must also live in the field—the social context of an actual life—and develop a *habitus*—a set of practices that form the mode of being in the field. Both of these are concepts from Bourdieu that can only be applied when there is a break from commonsense interpretation and a break within the researcher personally, so that the researcher and method of research are being under investigation, as well. Scharen nicely performs this reflexive task with a cursive (by necessity, as the book is a tidy 114 pages) academic and biographic contextualization of Pierre Bourdieu and short windows into Scharen’s own personality and method through examples of research projects and illustrations using contemporary music. This reflexive task is necessary because of sin: we cannot be hubristic in our understanding, as though we have not been affected by sin. Instead, we must enter another’s story, much as God has done in the incarnation, and understand within the lived context of the other.

Entering the context of another is an embodied experience. “Our bodies…are our very means for relating to and living meaningfully in the world” (51). We understand as we encounter. Here Scharen has a nod to the phenomenology—“a way to pause and notice how it is that one has a world” (53)—and illustrates with the game of soccer. The soccer field is not an object for study, but the plane on which the game is played and the field that forms certain rules and actions. Consider the incarnation as methodological mandate: Jesus did not understand the human field by distant observation, but through entering the field. Yet, Jesus’ life is what makes our Christian research possible in that Jesus did not succumb to the wrong “rules” of the game, but performed God’s love, God’s mercy, and God’s life without pause, which opens the possibility for our self-giving love—our wakefulness. “We have no other language for the unity of God but this story of risk lived in Jesus. We…cannot say what God is in God’s essence save what we can say by the narrative of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection” (84). Yet while our previous failures must cause humility, still the Spirit’s power enables humble action.

This sanctified immersion removes the privileged vantage point of the observer but makes possible “practical mastery” of the other’s practices (75). In this line of thinking, the reader is given new reflections for the practice of repentance—a kind of changing within one’s field and of one’s improper *habitus* that is Christocentric. There is no repentance with the turn to Christ; instead there is only bondage in one’s inherited context. Freedom outside the structure of the field for the benefit of the field is strictly a theological possibility. Yet the reader is not permitted to become too abstract. No, life is always lived—and done so Christianly in the concrete practices of the church. These concrete practices by
flesh and blood people are theologically revealing, exposing the actual beliefs of a community, whether coherent or not.

Finally, the urging of Scharen is not just for the reader to learn about fieldwork in theology, but to become a theologian in fieldwork: Explore the world; immerse in the contexts being studied; develop a *habitus* in the world but without forgetting that all of this began as a *dispossession* in light of the incarnation and by the power of the Spirit. As Bourdieu’s student Wacquant said of the methodology he developed in light of *field* and *habitus*: “Go ahead, go native, but come back a sociologist!” (100), so might Scharen say: “Go ahead, go native, but come back a Christian!” In fact, Scharen might say that the only way to go is not to go native, but to *go as a Christian*: learn within and as the body of Christ. “Sometimes, in witnessing a life in the self-forgetting of this exercise in understanding, ‘the most important thing is to silently wait.’ Here, in the holy moment of deep silence, listening to another find words for the experience of his or her life…the whole practice of research is subsumed by our participation in listening as God does, the God who bends near to hear our cries” (114).

Scharen has exemplified the best of the *Church and Postmodern Culture* series by expressing difficult thinkers in accessible and practical ways. The book exemplifies its own value by being remarkably self-aware. Scharen writes with crystal clarity, but refuses to write as though the concepts are obvious and reminds the reader that the concepts are not simple. The presentation is clear and compelling but the reader knows that undertaking fieldwork in theology will be a challenging task.

Perhaps the challenge of fieldwork in theology is illustrated by Scharen’s critique of Hauerwas and Willimon’s *Resident Aliens*. Scharen reads Hauerwas and Willimon as developing a community whose home is elsewhere, which facilitates an identity and action plan that is “over against the world” (8). Scharen reads this mandate as developing a community aside from the communities of the world, where Christian formation and discipleship themselves are witnesses to the world. Now, this read of Hauerwas and Willimon is possible, though in the forms of life, which this theology developed in me, and my fellow seminarians where the book was required reading, I rarely encountered such a sectarian expression. I often experienced quite the opposite of what Scharen feared. And I certainly did not encounter communities that sought a “disembodied home elsewhere” (13). Perhaps Hauerwas and Willimon are doing what Scharen advises in research methodology: they are taking sin seriously. For Scharen, sin-inspired skepticism suggests the researcher enter the other’s context and to remain self-reflexive in critique while performing analysis. For Hauerwas and Willimon, sin chastens the efforts of the
believer that she or he may make the world more just. As Hauerwas says, “[The] first task of the church is not to make the world more just but to make the world the world.”

**From Nature to Creation**

Living rightly in the world requires a rigorous theological vision. Christians have thought too narrowly about this kind of life, perhaps defaulting to relational, political, economic, even psychological life. Norman Wirzba’s slender volume is a passionate call to expand the Christian vision to include the whole world. *From Nature to Creation* is not just a title, but the movement Wirzba seeks for readers to become people who can “nurture and heal and celebrate the gifts of God” (1). Put most clearly, Wirza says that “is a contradiction to profess belief in God the Creator and then live in ways that degrade and destroy God’s creation” (25). If the world is simply *nature*, then harmful activity follows; if it is *creation*, then human beings are placed within it and have responsibilities to it. Wirzba unfolds the move from nature to creation, fleshing out the vision of Christian creaturely living, through five big ideas.

First, to live rightly requires that we narrate and name the world rightly. Naming and narrating well involves proper understanding of what something is and where it comes from (and where it is going). Matter is not amoral and so things cannot be categorized simply for economic value (or other subjective values). For example, animals are not meat machines; plants are not pharmaceutical resources; human beings are not (simply) consumers. This wrong naming is a result of deficient theology. Wirzba notes that on the heels of Nietzsche’s death of God there was the death of everything else (6). Without a creator to guide the naming and narrating of creation, human beings filled the void, becoming “creators of worlds of their own imagining” (15) and subsequent (ab)users of this world. It became more important to know and use the world than to love it, and so poisoned water, eroded soils, detonated mountains, cleared forests, melting glaciers, animal and plant extinction, and expendable laborers resulted (13). No longer servants and priests, but now engineers and technicians (16), human beings lost the vision that the world is “God’s love made visible, fragrant, tactile, audible, and delectable” (21). Yet Jesus re-narrates the world—including the “who, where, and how of human life” (24)—by recapitulation. He is the true human being and by his redemption of creation, Christians may live in the world differently because Christians live in a different world.

Second, the best understanding of living wrongly in the world is through the lens of idolatry. When the good gift of creation is made into an idol, then it
ceases being creation and becomes nature. Wirzba traces two meanings of nature, each with harmful consequences. “Nature” can be the internal principle or power or process “whereby a thing is what it is” or “by which it achieves its end” (33). It can also mean wildness—the world that exists without human interference (35). These options may leave people inattentive of nature, abusive toward nature, or willing to dominate and manipulate its power for human gain.

Wirzba grounds this errant approach to the world in nominalism—the belief that a thing is what it is as a result of the name given to it. This view primarily understands the creative act of God as an act of power, deemphasizing wisdom or purpose in the things God made (41). Since God hasn’t given a purpose, humans can make their own purpose for the world and its contents. Whereas the earlier vision of humanity was to contemplate the world and to belong “harmoniously” within it, “‘subject to’ order and purposes beyond [the subject’s] own devising…now the purpose of life [is] to give expression to oneself in one’s actions in the world” (45). Wirzba challenges this shift of modernity because it sets human beings over against nature. Rather than believing there is a valueless access to the world, waiting to be named by our values, Wirzba argues that humans should see themselves as part of the objective world and because humans are part of the world, humans must be careful of the desire to know the world (52-53). Overemphasized and divorced from loving the world, the pretension to knowledge removes the world’s alterity. Rather than being part of the world, humans make the world subject to their desires. In this inequality, with the world ordered to the subject’s desires, the world becomes unlovable.

This phenomenon of using but not loving the world shows the full duplicity of idolatry. Wirzba leans on Jean-Luc Marion to describe idolatry, who argues that idols are not self-made, but made by idolaters. The idol does not cause the lusting gaze, but “the gaze makes the idol” (51). In the context of the death of God, nature becomes the source of life, subject to the human’s desires: Simultaneously, nature is degraded and idolized by wrong perception.

All is not lost, however, because, third, human beings can learn, through practice and transformation, to perceive the world as God’s creation and good gift. “To know imaginatively is to try to see the world with the love by which God sees and sustains the world” (4). Yet how important is the word try? Can this vision be accomplished? As Wirzba asks, “Is a nonidolatrous form of perception possible?” (69). Is it possible to live outside the utilitarian, frenzied, transient, disconnected form of life that not only shapes how we perceive but also what technology and media allow us to perceive? To fix this errant, surface-level gaze, to sense and to see the love of God in ever deeper ways (72), Wirzba suggests icons. Because divine
energy (as distinct from God’s essence) is found in all of creation, icons allow the observer to practice seeing beneath the surface, to become enabled to see the beauty of God’s creation as the love of God made tactile. In this practice, human desire may be transformed and trained—purified and cleansed—to seek the wellbeing of the other (92).

Fourth, in this transformation, human beings are connected with the rest of creation, becoming ever increasingly aware of their dependence on the life and death of other creatures to survive. This mutual interdependence of creation requires love. Wirzba wants human beings not just to have “information about the world” but “capacities that will help us [to] love the world” (3). To develop these capacities requires a proper theological anthropology. Wirzba thus argues for a human being to be understood not primarily as a subject but as a creature. This anthropology not only reminds the human being of her physicality and subsequent dependence on land and other creatures for life, but it also shapes the metaphysical framework of a truly theological ecology: human beings are part of the good creation of God, interdependent on each other, and ultimately dependent on God. Wirzba utilizes the helpful description of non-competitive transcendence. That is, the interdependence creatures have on each other is of a different kind that the creation’s complete dependence on God.

Finally, Wirzba argues that practicing creatureliness will lead human beings to maintain a posture of thanksgiving. Contra Derrida, Wirzba not only believes that gifts are possible, but that gifts are necessary because they create and maintain relationships of mutual thanksgiving marked by ceremony and beauty. Good gifts do not restrain freedom, create obligation, harm the other, or place the other in debt, but they do connect people (140-41; 150). Ironically to the postmodern ear, to seek the phenomenon of a pure gift—a gift that does not create ongoing context—“is to desire the death of relationship, which is necessarily also the death of life!” (149). Further, gifts undermine the role of money, which creates a world of simple exchange, where “one does not need to say sorry or thank you” (141). When we realize that all of life is gift, we will live in a posture of thanksgiving, holding carefully the gifts received and holding open-handedly the gifts that we pass on. Once again, such a life of thanksgiving among creatures is not in competition with God. Instead, the life of creaturely thanksgiving naturally flows to the praise of God, the Creator (156).

Now that the work has been summarized, let us examine From Nature to Creation critically. Wirzba desires not only to help his readers name and narrate the world rightly, but, presumably, to do so himself. Thus, at places where the world is described incongruently with the world readily seen by this reader, at least, then
questions need to be raised. An example: Wirzba leans on Jeffrey Bishop’s “The Anticipatory Corpse: Medicine, Power, and the Care of the Dying” in a description of the narrow anthropology in today’s medicine and medical education, describing Bishop’s thought as follows: “[T]oday’s doctors are being trained to bracket and ignore the messiness of the lives of patients who eat, work, and live in families and communities because these ‘external factors’ unnecessarily complicate the neat analysis of individual bodies described as physiological machines” (15). I have experienced the care of a handful of doctors through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood in various locations through two countries. This does not describe my experience. Does it accurately describe the world of western medicine or is it a caricature?

Wirzba may also miss true narration of the world. It has been said that in the Old Testament, land is so prominent that it is almost a character. Almost. At times the land seems a character itself in *From Nature to Creation*. For example, Wirzba, quoting Wendell Berry, writes “[R]e-enter the woods. For only there can man encounter the silence and darkness of his own absence. Only in this silence and darkness can he recover the sense of the world’s longevity, of its ability to thrive without him, of his inferiority to it and his dependence on it…. That is, he must re-enter the silence and darkness and be born again” (106). This, simply, is not the vision of Eden, where humanity is given the vision of a world thriving because of the order and structure provided by God, yet from where humanity is to bring order and form to the rest of the world. The world does not thrive, in the Edenic vision, without humanity. Without humanity extending the work of God throughout creation, the forest is chaotic, its silence and darkness is the absence of humanity, but it is not a sign of flourishing, but of humanity’s failure to live the role of God’s image on earth. What a thriving forest looks like, sadly, we can hardly imagine. Put another way, humans are not born again within the forest, but for the forest. The forest does not thrive without humanity; it thrives with proper humanity.

This does not negate the value the forest may hold to show humanity a world marked by human absence. That world will not be marked by human failure and so may present a unique vision of such a world. But neither will it be marked by human flourishing, which is the pinnacle of the creation narrative with humans in God’s image.

Wirzba’s compelling vision, then, would be improved by accessing the priestly role given to Adam. Adam’s responsibility to cultivate and keep the creation (Gen. 2:15) can also be understood as “serving and guarding,” which are the priest’s roles (Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 1 Chron. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14).² Wirzba’s own advocacy of the practice of gardening challenges the idea of the forest producing true
humans. In the forest, in a sense, nothing thrive because there is no true mutual relationship, but only adaptation and survival. Creation longs for the revealing of God’s sons and daughters not only because without redemption, humans contribute to the world’s brokenness, but because through redemption humans are the means of its flourishing.

These encouragements are offered to strengthen Wirzba’s presentation and extend, hopefully, his perception of the world. Readers want to perceive the world more deeply, more truly because of Wirzba’s work, and Wirzba offers simple practices that may help: eating, gardening, sharing. We eat with intention because “food is God’s love made delectable” (124). We garden because we can better perceive the dependence we have on land. We visit farms to see where food comes from (127). All of this is meant to ground thanksgiving in the beautiful, ceremonial daily life of God interacting with God and God’s creatures.

Conclusion

Let me finish with a few observations and subsequent recommendations. First, of the 39 endorsements on the back covers, 34 are from individuals explicitly connected with a college, divinity or graduate school, university or seminary. There are no back cover endorsements from people explicitly connected with a church. This discrepancy is especially key when the series aims to be speaking to the church. That academics have endorsed the work is not inappropriate, but engaging intentionally with current or recent pastors would have been more appropriate. After all, if the goal was to influence the church, why not seek the endorsement of the most influential churches? Endorsements from Brian McLaren (Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?) and Marva Dawn (Liturgy as a Way of Life) are examples of people attempting to live at the intersection of church and academy, but perhaps Rick Warren, Bill Hybels, or Andy Stanley would have served the purpose, as well; perhaps pastors who write a little more academically, like Tim Keller; perhaps people who have served closely with (or even in) the church like Brenda Psalter McNeil, Nancy Beach, Francis Chan, or Sally Morgenthaler. There is no need to belabor the point, which remains, simply, writing for the church requires interacting with people who lead and shape actual local churches. To influence the church will require the series to write with an audience in mind that listens to a different set of endorsements.

A second observation: The series is made up entirely of male authors. I offer this not as a critique, but simply as an observation. It is possible (even likely) that female authors were invited but have declined. It is also possible that female authors are slated for future contributions. However, the observation is necessary in a series that intends deconstruction as a category and practice for Christian thinking.
So, with ten volumes, has the church learned French from the Church and Postmodern Culture series? Are churches different on Sunday? Are communities different through the church’s ministry Monday-Saturday? Perhaps. To use Smith’s phrase, it depends. To answer the question depends on what “learning French” really means. Does it mean to become fluent in the language of Continental postmodern philosophy? Or does it mean to become fluent in categories impacting the church? If the former, then no; if the latter, then perhaps. The series has widened its focus as it has progressed—something that has been beneficial to the readers, but makes it difficult to evaluate the series on its initial commitment. Perhaps we could say that the series began to teach its readers French, but has taken liberties to stray from the language itself, pointing out how French is related to other languages along the way.

When I was in high school, I looked forward to my favorite classes with anticipation. Often the best classes were the ones that provided some freedom for student led discussion and analysis. The best classes allowed students to think about and speak to the contemporary events in the context of the lesson. Likewise, I look forward to every installment in this series, believing that each lesson will help me to address and consider current events from a different angle. Baker Academic and James K.A. Smith are to be commended for the series. I hope they keep teaching.

End Notes


John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity
Geordan Hammond
Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press
2014, 256 pp. cloth, $90.00
ISBN: 978-0198701606

Reviewed by Howard A. Snyder

In light of Geordan Hammond’s extensively researched and fully documented John Wesley in America, Wesley scholars will have to rethink their assessment of “the second rise of Methodism”—John Wesley’s nearly twenty-one months in Georgia, 1736–1737. Wesley went to America intent on “restoring the primitive church in a primitive environment” (154). This is Hammond’s core thesis, stated more fully at the outset, then elaborated throughout the book.

Hammond begins with “John Wesley’s Conception and Practice of Primitive Christianity” (Chapter 1). The four ensuing chapters deal with “Primitive Christianity on the Simmonds” (an important chapter), Wesley’s interactions with both Moravians and Lutheran Pietists, his ministry in Georgia, and finally the opposition Wesley encountered. The story is familiar; what is new is the way Hammond shows how consistently the quest for primitive Christianity was Wesley’s constant focus. Hammond elucidates Wesley’s Lutheran (not just Moravian) contacts on the Simmonds and in Georgia, something that has largely been overlooked.

The book shows how the various aspects of Wesley’s ministry in America—his liturgical exactness, his intended mission to the Indians, the much misunderstood Sophia Hopkey story—are all clarified when seen through the lens of Wesley’s passion for primitive Christianity as he then understood it. It was in the furnace of Georgia that Wesley began rethinking what “restoring the primitive church” actually meant. He pushed his highest of High Church ideals to the
breaking point, then gradually reversed direction, moving toward a deeper, fuller, more transformative understanding and experience of true Christianity. By 1749 Wesley realized he had earlier pushed his “High Church zeal” to the point of violating Christian love (102).

Hammond clarifies Wesley’s early High Church trajectory, especially the influence of the Nonjurors, and highlights Wesley’s pastoral successes as well as failures. Wesley accomplished much more—for instance in developing prototypes of the later class meeting—than has generally been recognized.

In several pages toward the end of the book, Hammond examines “The Sophia [Hopkey] Williamson Controversy in Context” (171–77) and “Wesley’s Advocacy for the Poor and Oppressed” (178–89). Quoting Alan Hayes, Hammond notes that Wesley’s “relatively liberated attitude toward women in the church was far more a factor in the opposition [Wesley encountered] than has generally been recognized” (173). Hammond concludes more generally, “Wesley was interested in encouraging people whose lives gave evidence of integrated faith and practice regardless of their gender. His advocacy for the poor and oppressed was conceived of as a manner of acting in imitation of Christ and the primitive church in defense of the marginalized. In an unstable frontier environment it had the predictable result of causing public conflicts” (189).

In terms of what Wesley called the three rises of Methodism (Oxford, Georgia, England after Aldersgate), Hammond documents that Georgia was much a success as a failure. The Georgia mission has often been deemed a failure perhaps due to interpreters’ tendency to focus on individual experience rather social Christianity and ecclesiology. Most interpreters have highlighted Wesley’s personal faith journey to the neglect of his central aim of reinstituting the early church. That Wesley went to Georgia to “save his own soul” is just half the truth; he said he went also to learn the true meaning of the gospel by preaching to the Indians. Georgia was a laboratory, not a fiasco.

At issue here: Is “primitive Christianity” the same as New Testament Christianity? Is third or fourth century Christianity still “primitive”? If normative early Christianity extends into the third or fourth centuries, then that determines issues of authority, structure, and liturgy in ways that are not the case if primitive Christianity refers to New Testament Christianity only.

Hammond concludes that Wesley “continued to believe that primitive Christianity provided a normative model to be restored. Wesley had no doubt that the doctrine, discipline, and practice of the primitive church was embodied by the Methodist movement. For Wesley, Methodism was the restoration of primitive Christianity. Though the people called Methodists were not without their faults,
their basic pattern was that of the primitive church” (201–02). The brilliance of Wesley’s leadership was that he discerned how to do this at the level of foundational New Testament principles rather than trying to reinstitute “proper” liturgical practice that developed in subsequent centuries, and in typical both-and fashion, he did this within the framework of the Church of England, seeking both to renew Anglicanism and to preserve its richness.

Missiologically, here is perhaps the main takeaway. Wesley carried his High Church zeal as far as circumstances permitted. His experience in Georgia and then in the wake of Aldersgate brought him to the realization, the dynamic balance that fueled his life and movement for the next fifty years. Since the question of the early church as normative model is a perennial one, Wesley’s trajectory on the issue is still instructive.

Geordan Hammond is an American scholar affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene. This book is his prize-winning 2008 University of Manchester doctoral thesis in revised form. He is Senior Lecturer in Church History and Wesley Studies at Nazarene Theological College, Manchester, and for the past several years has served as Director of the Manchester Wesley Research Centre and currently continues as Co-Director while preparing a critical edition of the 3,000-plus letters of George Whitefield.

Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: 15:1—23:35 (vol. 3 of 4)
Craig S. Keener
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic
2014, 1200 pp., cloth, $69.99
ISBN: 978-0801048388

Reviewed by Timothy J. Christian


The primary and unique focus of this volume (and series) is the Greco-Roman (and secondarily Jewish) backgrounds of Acts, namely, its social-historical and rhetorical contexts. While its focus is not upon grammatical, literary, and
theological aspects of Acts (like most commentaries), Keener nonetheless does not spurn these approaches but uses them intermittently where appropriate. Keener, thus, has spotted this hole in Acts research, and generously filled it with his contribution of expertise in Greco-Roman (and Jewish) backgrounds. His citation and comparison of Acts with Greco-Roman (and Jewish) ancient sources is exhaustive. Given the terrain of Acts and Keener’s expertise, there is no other NT book better suited for him to comment upon from this vantage point, having pertinent information on every location, philosophy, ethnic group, etc. mentioned in Acts. One might easily mistake Keener for a senior scholar of Classics, competent in Greco-Roman literature, history, rhetoric, and philosophy. Periodically, Keener digresses with excurses on important background information. Some of the most enlightening are on the “we” narratives (2363-74), demons and spirit possession (2429-56), pythoness spirits (2422-29), and suicide in antiquity (2498-2507). Many of the Greco-Roman (and Jewish) comparative references are new and fresh discoveries and not simply rehashing other commentators’ citations, though much more so with his social-historical insights than his rhetorical ones, which although solid, depend more upon rhetorical handbooks and secondary literature than on ancient speeches. Occasionally, he provides examples from say Cicero’s or Demosthenes’ speeches, but that is not the norm. To further demonstrate, of the 18 excurses, only one is on rhetoric (The Defense Speeches of Acts 22-26, especially 22:2-21; 3195-3200) with the rest on social-history. Nevertheless, this volume (and series) will inspire a cornucopia of new research and dissertations, but even more so will inspire scholars of all perspectives to go to the Greco-Roman primary sources themselves.

Not only does Keener cite an innumerable amount of ancient primary sources (232 pages worth of index on CD), he has also amassed an Everest of secondary literature (297 pages of works cited). He is notably respectful and fair towards scholars he disagrees with; for example, with Stanley Porter concerning the “we” narratives, he says, “Porter…is a thorough scholar with whom I do not disagree lightly, but his arguments for a source separate from the author here seem open to question” (2358).

One oddity about this commentary is that Keener does not provide a translation of Acts, which is standard for commentaries. Another peculiarity is that his subject index on CD is only 4 pages, whereas his other indices are all over 200 pages. Regardless of these inconsequential criticisms, I highly recommend this third volume for scholars and academic students of Acts as it is highly technical, and not so much for laity. It is the new norm and landmark in Acts scholarship and cannot be overlooked or avoided.
The Book of Psalms, NICOT
Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans
2014, 1080 pp., cloth, $60.00
ISBN: 978-0802824936

Reviewed by Brian Shockey

Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner’s (DJT) recent single volume commentary The Book of Psalms is a treasure trove of research and study presented in a clear and concise manner. While some may inevitably complain that certain elements do not receive sufficient treatment, DJT have done a commendable job of addressing the form, language, and interpretation of each Psalm while also pointing the reader to additional literature on topics of continued debate.

The commentary begins with a short introduction to the corpus as a whole, which covers expected topics such as text, authorship, history of interpretation, poetic structure, and theology. DJT have chosen to use the BHS as a base text for the commentary and address significant text critical issues in the footnotes to the translation of each psalm. A classification system is also introduced, including common categories such as: prayers for help, psalms of trust, hymns of praise, songs of thanksgiving, instructional psalms, royal psalms, and liturgies. In practice, DJT often use more specific subcategories to describe each psalm and guide their comments. While DJT rightly note their intent to use these categories only as “a way into the interpretation and understanding of a psalm” (21), the concise nature of the commentary limits them from thoroughly exploring multiple classifications.

The core of the commentary is divided into five sections in keeping with the traditional fivefold division of the Psalms. DJT clearly value the canonical shape of the psalter, and discuss it in the introduction, the beginning of each major section, and in their discussion of many individual psalms. Each psalm is treated individually by one of the authors. Jacobsen covers 39 psalms (Psalm 9/10 is handled as a single unit) in the first and fourth books of the Psalter. Tanner writes on 56 psalms in books one, two, three, and four. deClaissé-Walford handles 54 psalms in books two and five.

The comments on the individual psalms vary in length and detail throughout. Surprisingly the length of the psalm itself has little impact on the length of the treatment, which instead seems governed by authorial style and interest as well as the particular issues present. While each author provides a sufficient
discussion of the text, they display different stylistic tendencies and interests which unfortunately leave the commentary somewhat unbalanced. Jacobson’s sections are generally longer and include a reflection with application for the modern reader. Tanner’s sections usually offer more text critical details. deClaissé-Walford is the most concise of the three, focusing primarily on the content of each psalm itself. The lack of a consistent method presents a problem for the reader who, depending on their own needs, will likely prefer the approach of one author at the expense of the other two.

In spite of this imbalance, the high quality of the material as a whole will leave most readers pleased with this volume. The commentary is well written, accessible, and offers the reader an excellent, comprehensive treatment of the Psalter.

Knowledge and Christian Belief
Alvin Plantinga
Grand Rapids, MI, Wm. B. Eerdmans
2015, 144 pp., paper, $16.00
ISBN: 978-0802872043

Reviewed by Jeremy B. Griffin

Alvin Plantinga the John A. O’Brien Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame offers in his book a shorter version of his magnum opus Warranted Christian Belief (WCB). He removed some of the difficult and tedious sections in WCB and has made this present book more accessible to new students of philosophy. He writes with wit, exceptional clarity, and demonstrates a high level of scholarship in the development of his arguments. The goal of the book is to look at the sensibleness or the rationality of the Christian belief and to determine if there is warrant for the Christian belief. The book is a long argument moving towards the conclusion that Christian belief, despite many detractors, does have warrant.

As for the contents of the book, chapter one looks at the question of whether or not there even is belief in God. Chapter two is about de facto and de jure objections to the faith. The de facto objection is that a belief is just false. The de jure objection, which is often aimed at Christianity, is that anyone who espouses the Christian belief is irrational. I found the author’s engagement and rebuttal of these two objections to be exceptionally perceptive. Chapter three looks at the essence
warrant and then chapters four, five, and six look at the witness of the Holy Spirit and the *sensus divinitatis, which* lead to further warrant for Christian faith. Chapter seven covers the objection to the Christian belief based on religious experience. Chapters eight, nine and ten deal with defeaters to the Christian faith. The defeaters are historical biblical criticism, pluralism, and evil, respectively.

Overall I found the book engaging, and I was impressed with the author’s humility, yet his ability to clearly argue his perspective. I found myself encouraged in the faith as I finished the book. I believe the author successfully argued for a warrant in the Christian faith, and has a masterful grasp on the objections to Christianity. I was surprised that there was no discussion in the book on postmodernity and how postmodernity can be an argument against Christianity. The author does discuss pluralism, yet I would have found it helpful to have something devoted to arguments surrounding postmodernity and the Christian faith. I suggest that this book could be used in an introductory course to philosophy or a text in an apologetics course.

**Early Christianity In Contexts: An Exploration Across Cultures and Continents**  
William Tabbernee, ed.  
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic  
2014, 602 pp., cloth, $42.99  
ISBN: 978-0-8010-3126-7

Reviewed by Moe Moe Nyunt

When the second millennium was approaching the end, Andrew Walls, a prominent missiologist and historian, realized that there were some problems in mission studies. He saw the failure of theological and historical studies that need to reflect the changes in Christianity at the present time. He uses the term “old-fashioned missions” for “the studies of the activities of Western missionaries” and “of the movement that produced them.” He states, “the global transformation of Christianity requires the complete rethinking of the church history syllabus” (Andrew Walls, “Structural Problems in Mission Studies” *IBMR*, 15:4 (October 1991): 146). Consequently, today scholars such as Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, have retraced the history of Christianity and realized that, since in the beginning, Christianity has belonged to different parts of the World.

In the same way, in this work a group of eighteen scholars, whose academic disciplines are in ancient history, classics, Christian art and worship,
archaeology, patristics, and historical theology, look into early Christianity and pre-Christianity from different contextual and regional perspectives. They investigate the traditions, literary texts, and archaeological data that are found in each region. The book is presented in ten regional chapters and arranged in chronological order of the spread of Christianity from the first century to the ninth century. Each chapter investigates politics, economic, culture, social patterns, archeology, arts, symbols, religious thought forms, and practice in each geographic region.

The first three chapters explore present-day western Asia, such as Palestine, Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Persia (Iran), and Armenia (Georgia), which is the only country situated in modern Europe. The fourth chapter investigates Central Asia, China, and India. The fifth and sixth chapters highlight African countries such as Egypt, Carthage (Tunisia), Numidia, Mauretania (Morocco), and Tripolitania (Libya). The seventh chapter focuses on Asia Minor and Cyprus (a European country). The final three chapters go into European provinces such as the Greek Islands, Rome (Italy), and beyond. It is appropriate to say that the center of Christian gravity in the early century was located in the east although Christianity explored areas east, west, south, and north of Jerusalem.

This volume also points out the diverse nature of Christian beliefs and practices in the early centuries. Scholars recognize the different means of diffusion of Christianity in each region (61). This book discloses that early Christianities such as Montanists, Gnostics, Marcionites, Arians, Donatists, Nestorians, Monophysites, and other Christianities identified as heresies by groups of Christians who triumphed over the controversies of Christology, pneumatology, Trinitarian theology, and the role of Mary, were active missionaries. It also informs us that, before the first Crusaders arrived in 1099, Chalcedonian Christology and the unique Arab Orthodox Christianity were dominant in the gentile world (26-27).

Added to that, these scholars interestingly uncover two external influences of Christianity in the ancient Roman Near East: 1) the pilgrim movement that preserved the holy places associated with the first generations of Christians for future pilgrims and 2) the monastic movement that inspired devote Christians to live a purer and simpler way by solitude, contemplation, and study in the Holy Land (62). The book is informative and comprehensive; however, it lacks a theological cohesion, which could have been found by doing more to integrate the missio dei.
The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence
Thomas Jay Oord
Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic
2015, 229 pp., paper, $22.00

Reviewed by Nicholas W. Carpenter

For nearly 2000 years, Christians have been trying to figure out what God is like, how God interacts with the world, and ultimately who this God is. Within such endeavors, one of the main themes Christian thinkers have wrestled with is the fancy term “providence”: how much interaction does God do with creation/humanity and how much control does God have over creation/humanity? A great spectrum of answers to this question has given all kinds of ideas, many with just as much validity as others. Presently, one more wishes to add his thoughts to the great cloud of witnesses: Thomas Jay Oord, philosopher, theologian, professor, and ordained minister in the Church of the Nazarene.

With 15 years of writing and over 20 books as author or editor to his name, Oord seems to have written what could very well be the pinnacle of his work. For years now, Oord has researched and written on various issues including but not limited to: science and religion, philosophy of religion, concepts of love, Wesleyan/Arminian theology, etc. But in his newest book, The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence, Oord has beautifully balanced many of these various disciplines into one cohesive work to showcase some of his best thoughts relating to God, providence, and humanity.

Oord begins with various actual occurrences of tragedy and suffering with the question “where is God in this?” applied to each situation. Some aspects of suffering in these stories would be considered natural consequences, others random. From here, Oord builds upon the idea that we must be able to reconcile God with random occurrences and evil situations. Chapters two and three are then dedicated to exploring and defining key aspects to further understand what we mean by terms such as “random,” “free will,” and “evil.” His conclusion to each of these chapters is that these terms have a different understanding than what is normally attributed to them. For example, Oord discusses in chapter three how free will is not the ability to do whatever we want, but rather the “limited but genuine freedom” to choose between options in any given situation (58).
With his terms defined, we come to the mid-point of the book with chapter four discussing various models of providence. Oord lays out seven models, ranging from omnicausal (God determining all actions and outcomes within all creation) to extreme deism (God is complete mystery and simply observing outside creation). After going through the strengths and weaknesses of each, Oord begins elaborating a model he finds most conducive to balancing God's providence with randomness and suffering. In chapter five, Oord shares about the “open and relational alternative” theological position for which he advocates. He uses four different but significant “paths” to explain his position – Scripture, Christian theologies, philosophy, and science – a balanced yet diverse grounding for his position, similar to that of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

Oord begins to specify his position in chapter 6 by examining the work of John Sanders, a noted open and relational theologian. While agreeing with many of Sanders’ concepts, Oord ultimately finds it inadequate in advocating God’s defense for not preventing evil. Thus, in chapter 7, Oord presents his own view of God’s providence as “The Essential Kenosis” model. Basing his model on the primacy of love in both God’s character and nature, Oord gives a thorough account of his theory on God always doing, working, and ultimately “being” out of love for all creation in all instances and all contexts. The final chapter takes Oord’s Essential Kenosis idea and applies it towards the issue of miracles, where Oord claims that miracles may occur but never out of coercion or manipulation.

After reflecting on Oord’s work, there seem to be two over-arching strengths to the book and one potential weakness. The first strength is Oord’s use of interdisciplinary studies. Throughout the book, Oord brings together various disciplines such as theology, philosophy, and science to explain how the various aspects to his ideas are not confined to a single subject. By blending the various disciplines together, Oord creates a sound structure with multiple supports for his case of “essential kenosis”, each building upon the other. By drawing upon a number of disciplines, the other strength of Oord’s work appears in how this work speaks to a wide audience. Two aspects can measure the breadth of the audience for this book: discipline and vocation. As previously mentioned, people from various disciplinary backgrounds can all find a piece of familiarity in Oord’s work while graciously being exposed to other fields with what they might not be familiar. This allows for discussion across disciplines to occur, generating a greater understanding of potentially difficult discussions. But Oord’s work also appeals to those of various vocations in that this work is not exclusively written for scholars and academics. Using simple phrases and an understandable writing style, Oord is able to communicate his ideas in a way that average lay-people in churches would
be able to engage with, including concepts previously deemed “too lofty” for them to consider.

One weakness that seems to affect Oord’s work was a seeming one-sidedness. Granted, it is the author’s intent to show how his view and understanding of God’s providence is more conventional than others. However, some of the discussions border on downplaying various other theological positions to be seen as not as valid as others. For example, in chapter 3 Oord discusses how free will is genuine and plays an integral part of creation and humanity, particularly seen through the lens of “liberation free will.” However, when ideas such as determinism or compatibilism, are discussed they seem easily dismissed as “not convincing.” Though most might be persuaded to see the rationality of genuine, actual free will, it would also do well to do this so that opposition to that view is also valid in its own way.

Thomas Oord set out to answer difficult questions regarding randomness and providence, seeking how God fit in the mix. What Oord produced was a book that combined years of passion and study of various disciplines into a single, cohesive body of work. Balancing thorough research of various perspectives while maintaining a simple, straight-forward writing style, Oord manages to effectively communicate his beliefs that God can still retain a nature of love and the will to work within creation while not being the cause of suffering within our world. He states his goal for this project is to “offer the best way to believe God acts providentially in a world of regularities and randomness, freedom and necessity, good and evil,” and he certainly has accomplished that in this volume (81). It is a most splendid addition to any library of those who have a passion for contemplating God in unique ways, and should become a valued resource for professional and novice thinkers alike.

The Matriarchs of Genesis: Seven Women, Five Views
David J. Zucker and Moshe Reiss
Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock
2015, 267 pp. paper, $32.00
ISBN: 978-1-62564-396-4

Reviewed by Robert Danielson

Retired rabbis David Zucker and Moshe Reiss decided to tackle the subject of the mothers of the Jewish faith: Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah. In addition to writing about these women, Zucker and Reiss
decided to write about each woman from five different angles. First, they examine each woman in light of what the Bible says about them. Then the authors move to the extra-Biblical literature up to and including Josephus. Third, they turn to the teachings of the Jewish rabbis in the Talmud and Midrashim. After this historical research, the writers assess each character in light of contemporary scholars, and then for a fifth lens they examine the arguments of modern feminist scholars. Finally, Zucker and Reiss sum up the collective evidence about each character from the five various lenses and offer their own opinions.

This text is well organized to move historically through each character and examine how each of the mothers of the faith is seen through each lens. Sometimes, the evidence is a bit repetitive since many of these women overlap in scripture: Sarah and Hagar, and Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah for example, but even here, the writers always manage to surprise the reader with some new thought or idea about each woman or her motivations. As an evangelical Christian reader, some of the material from the Jewish tradition, which is not found in the Bible, is a bit surprising. Such as the suggestions that Leah and Rachel might have been twins and originally planned to marry Esau and Jacob. Or the idea that Abraham remarried Hagar after Sarah died, calling her Keturah. Some of these ideas from the Jewish Midrashim can be quite challenging, but often increase our own reflection and speculation on trying to understand the story.

Perhaps most challenging, and yet also very enlightening, was Rabbi Zucker’s interpretation of the Rebekah and Jacob narrative. I was so intrigued by his suggestion that I asked him to write on this for *The Asbury Journal* in a separate article, which he kindly agreed to do for a future issue. Instead of seeing Rebekah as a cunning manipulative woman taking advantage of an elderly, feeble Isaac for her favorite son, Jacob, Zucker asserts that the evidence shows perhaps Isaac and Rebekah were working together in an attempt to be sure Jacob took a wife from within the family, unlike Esau, and that in reality, it is Jacob who is fooled by Isaac’s acting and not the other way around! I found his arguments to be quite persuasive and helped redeem Rebekah from a history of maligning interpretations.

*The Matriarchs of Genesis* is a very accessible book for anyone interested in learning more about the early women figures found in the Genesis narrative. Books such as this provide an amazing opportunity for Christian and Jewish scholars to learn from their various traditions. I have found reading more of the Jewish understanding of the Old Testament materials really deepens my own level of understanding, and provides new lenses through which to reflect on scripture. I sincerely hope we can see similar resources continue to emerge that can enrich both of our faith traditions in the near future.
Recognizing the world church now looks more like John’s vision of the great multitude from every nation (Revelation 7:9) than ever before, the authors call Christians to find common identity with our global human family and our global Christian family. They also call Christians to work together for justice and peace in an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world.

Part One addresses our changing world. The authors note the “middle of nowhere is becoming the middle of everywhere” but also remind us of the widening gap between the rich and poor. Part Two describes our changing identity beginning with Volf’s insight that “the future of our world will depend on how we deal with identity and difference.” The authors note how Christians often embrace identities that are far too small. Christianity has always been both local and global.

Part Three addresses our changing relationships in today’s world. The authors promote an “evangelical theology of interfaith solidarity” built on shared values and common concerns. They call us to develop cultural intelligence and sensitivity through hospitality and friendships with neighbors from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Part Four focuses on changing our world. Tennent remarks this book “helps us move past the ‘let’s-change-the-world’ drumbeat, to a focus on “faithful presence” in the world today. The authors provide a practical guide for faithful presence.

In conclusion, the authors call for common identity, education, action, patience and humility to understand “how our plans fit with others.” We need cultural sensitivity as we make deliberate choices alongside members of our global family for global good in local contexts daily. The authors provide a small group discussion guide helpful for reflection.

This book is an excellent introduction for Western Christians seeking to develop cultural sensitivity. It will help pastors and professors at Christian institutions hoping to educate their congregations and students. The discussion guide could be used in multi-cultural settings providing Christians from different backgrounds a forum to share concerns, pray for one another and plan ministries.
together. For many people today, being in “the middle of everywhere” means being more painfully aware than ever of being left out and left behind. Multi-cultural discussion groups could help diverse members of our global Christian family promote biblical justice and peace together.

African Christian scholars (e.g. Adogame, Asamoah-Gyadu, Hanciles) describe African Christian experience and dynamic diaspora congregations in vivid detail. The outreach and ministries of our fellow members of the global Christian family, who are changing the world in the name of Christ, often go unnoticed even when they live as our neighbors. Pew Research has documented the steady decline in American Christianity while Walls, Hanciles and others have noted the simultaneous growth of Christianity in the global south during an era of increased migration. As Christians migrate from the global south to the West, Walls (2002, 47) believes, “the oxygen-starved Christianity of the West will have most to gain.” This book can help those of us in the West listen to and learn from our global family.

The Call of Abraham
Gary A. Anderson and Joel S. Kaminsky, eds.
Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press
2013, 408 pp. cloth, $64.00

Reviewed by Benjamin J. Snyder

This festschrift in honor of Jon D. Levenson features a collection of essays oriented around the central theme of “the theological meaning of Israel’s election” (1). It continues the conversation started by his 1995 work also on election, The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity. The central theme is treated from three perspectives: “The Hebrew Bible” (five essays), “Reception of the Hebrew Bible” (eight essays) and “Theological Essays” (two essays). In keeping with Levenson’s legacy this work will be of interest to both Jewish and Christian readers alike. Due to the impossibility of covering each chapter in detail, my treatment will be necessarily selective. As such, I will give close attention to chapters 1, 2, 3, and 12 which focus on Genesis 1, 15, the Bible (OT and NT) as a whole, and Romans 9-11 respectively. The topics of the other chapters are merely mentioned thereafter.

Chapter 1, “Election in Genesis 1” (by Richard J. Clifford), attempts to demonstrate that “covert references to several defining features of Israel, viz.,
the Sabbath, the temple, the dietary laws, and the conquest” may be isolated in Genesis 1:1–2:4, a P source (7). This has the effect of situating Israel and its practices “in the beginning” thereby predating all others (20). Some explanations are more plausible than others. Notably, the essay struggles with the chicken and egg dilemma; which legitimates the other? Does Israel legitimate itself in the way it writes its own cosmogony or do the preexisting traditions legitimate and form the nation? A curious fact noted by Clifford, but not addressed, is why does the Israelite cosmogony break from the conventions of ANE cosmogonies by not making an explicit connection between the “defining features of Israel” and creation (13-14)? Moreover, it remains unclear how these covert references were supposed to “help anxious and displaced exiles reread their traditions as promises and assurance” (11)?

W. Randall Garr, in chapter 2, “Abraham’s Election in Faith,” deals with Genesis 15:6 and the *hiphil* נמא (ʾmn). He argues, “not a single *hiphil* verb form has an uncontestable [sic] stative meaning” as is argued by G. Bergsträsser (25). While his lexical exploration of the *hiphil* נמא (ʾmn) in its various forms and idioms is laudable, the relevance of the data to the argument is not always evident. Moreover, he creates a straw man argument leveled against any tradition (i.e. Judaism and Christianity) which describes Abraham’s faith as a “state of mind,” i.e. stative meaning. He does not demonstrate that Paul, James, Ben Sira or the author of 1 Maccabees, let alone the traditions behind these texts, intend to convey a stative meaning nor that they believe “faith” to be a “permanent state” (38). Indeed, the author himself describes Abraham’s experience in Gen 15:6 as a “conversion experience” (39) and that “he behaves in a manner consistent with the *hiphil* verb form and maintains as much involvement and effort as (he feels) the situation requires” (39). It is a significant assumption that Paul, James, Ben Sira or the author of 1 Maccabees would disagree with this assessment.

Chapter 3, “Can Election be Forfeited?” (by Joel S. Kaminsky), explores the Biblical evidence relating to divine election in its diverse forms (i.e. individuals, families, offices, and the nation of Israel). He effectively demonstrates that the evidence is varied, but certain conclusions remain consistent. For one, punishment, even exile, actually points to the *persistence* of Israel’s election (48). On another level, Eli retains his elect status whereas his progeny looses out. However, the elect status of the *office* is simply transferred to another family (50-3). This same principle can be seen with Saul (transferred to David) and Shiloh (transferred to Jerusalem). While this explains the basis on which the later Church could develop Supersessionism, it is ultimately a faulty theory (59). The Torah unequivocally maintains Israel’s national election. The Former Prophets support the possibility of abrogation, but only in exceptional cases (e.g., Eli and Saul) and Israel’s election is maintained (54). The
Latter Prophets maintain that Israel’s “special status does not insulate her from God’s coming judgment” but this cannot be forced to say that she will be diselected (54). When considering Paul’s argument in Romans 9-11, isolated parts (9:6-18) can sound as if Israel is replaced, but the larger argument maintains Israel’s election (Rom 9:1-5; 11:28-9) even if it may be temporarily suspended, by analogy with Hosea or Isa 54 (60).

We now jump ahead to chapter 12, “The Salvation of Israel in Romans 9-11” by Mark Reasoner. He challenges the notion of Supersessionism by arguing, “Paul’s expression ‘all Israel will be saved’ includes the idea that corporeal, ethnic Israel will be restored in its land” (257). His argument includes an anti-Imperial reading of the text, but whether or not one accepts this, it is difficult to counter the essential point he makes: the context of all of the OT texts which Paul employs in Rom 9-11 include “the political dimension of Israel’s plight in the world” (259). Another significant observation he makes which strengthens his argument is that in this section alone “the Israel/Israelite terms predominate over Ioudaioi.” Since Paul consistently uses this latter term throughout Romans, his choice to change the terminology is intentionally related to national/political Israel (258). Thus, when Paul asks in Rom 11:1, “God has not rejected his people, has he?” (NET), Reasoner argues that he is really asking, “Has God decided to leave Israel scattered among the nations and subjugated under Rome?” (268). A final significant observation he makes is noting Paul’s language in Rom 11:25, “Why does Paul say ‘comes in?’” (272). Reasoner reads this in light of 11:12 which mentions “the wealth of the nations,” a concept that refers to restoration from exile in the citations he makes in 11:26-7. However one evaluates his conclusion, alternative readings will need to respond to the fact that the OT citations Paul uses affirm Israel’s irrevocable calling by God.


The end of the book contains three lists: (1) publications by Jon Levenson; (2) doctoral dissertations supervised by him; and (3) the contributors of the essays. There are also two indices on ancient sources and modern authors. It is unlikely that a reader will find all of the essays interesting or of equal quality. Anyone interested in the topic of divine election or who wishes to read further fruit derived from Jon Levinson’s work will find that this work contains numerous thought provoking essays written from diverse perspectives.

The Future of Evangelical Theology: Soundings from the Asian American Diaspora
Amos Yong
Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic
2014, 255 pp., paper, $25.00
ISBN: 978-0830840601

Reviewed by Jeremy B. Griffin

Amos Yong’s book pushes the traditional framework and processes of evangelical theology as he promotes the idea that Asian American theology adds to global evangelical theology. His thesis is “that Asian American experiences and perspectives have much to contribute to the broader evangelical theological discussion” (27). The material of the book is not entirely new for it is a reworking of previously published articles and essays, and only the final chapter is new material. This causes redundancy in some chapters; however, this is minor, and Yong lets the reader know he has sought to present a coherent contribution to evangelical theology in his preface.

Yong is a Pentecostal and an evangelical, and he subscribes to the quadrilateral of evangelicalism as defined by David Bebbington (a conversion emphasis, active spirituality leading to a different observable way of life, Biblicism focused on the authority of Scripture, and a focus on the death of Christ for the world’s salvation). Yong adds a fifth feature to the quadrilateral: a broad Pentecostalism with a Pentecostal and charismatic voice. Yong calls these five features a “pent-evangelical,” and he uses this term throughout the book.
The question Yong answers in his book is: In the global context, how and what does an Asian American point of view of theology contribute to evangelical theology? To accomplish this, the first two chapters speak about the contributions in the literature of the voices of Asian Americans. Then chapter three looks at the problem of why their voices have been ignored. This chapter was a highlight for me as Yong discusses the epistemology base of evangelical theology where evangelicals think they are producing a universal theology, and they tend to ignore that they are developing theology from a certain local and social location. As some evangelicals seek to push their truth claims as universal, they hold to a foundationalism viewpoint, which leads them to think their theology is “a-historical, a-cultural and even a-contextual” (114). And Yong insightfully remarks how the theological and doctrinal truths of the faith have already been developed (according to some evangelicals), and the problem is that evangelicals look at Asian American theology as having little relevance for their theology except for being a topic on local concerns.

The mid-section of the book (chapters 4-6) looks at the heart of what Yong is developing in this theology. Chapter five examines immigration as he seeks to develop a theology of migration and the issues it raises, and chapter six ventures deeper into those issues, seeing what the spirit of jubilee contributes to the discussion. In his final chapter, Yong addresses three contemporary dimensions of Asian American life: immigrant generations, second and later generations of immigrants, and the roles of women. He posits that Asian American theology contributes to North American evangelical theology as Asian Americans write about a theology of culture, public theology, and how to have constructive theology in a multi-faith world. Overall, Yong weaves numerous Asian American works into his book, and I believe he has accomplished his task of contributing to global evangelical theology from this standpoint. It would be profitable for Western evangelicals to read his work, which may press the boundaries of their evangelical theological thinking.
The study of the Gospels in relation to oral history, eyewitness testimony, and social memory has experienced a tremendous surge in the past decade. While many commentators have been contributing to this fruitful field of study, three of the most important “pillars” of recent oral history and memory-related Gospel studies are James D. G. Dunn and his massive *Jesus Remembered* (2003), Samuel Byrskog and his *Story as History—History as Story* (2000), and Richard Bauckham and his masterpiece, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses* (2006).

With the publication of Michael Bird’s book, *The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus*, it may well be time to add a new, “fourth pillar” to this group of key commentators. Not only does Bird extensively interact with and build upon the work of Dunn, Byrskog, and Bauckham (as well as other key voices, such as Richard Burridge and the late Martin Hengel), he adds a new understanding of what exactly the Gospels are and were intended for in the earliest Christian communities.

While space precludes an extensive interaction with Bird’s assessment of the major scholarly views of the genre and function of the Gospels, it will suffice to say that he is in agreement with the growing consensus among New Testament scholars that the canonical Gospels fall under the categorical umbrella of Greco-Roman biographies. This in itself is not new of course. What Bird does though, is take a deeper look at the kerygmatic nature of these biographies within and for the early Christian communities. Bird notes how deeply woven through the Gospels are with intertextual quotes, echoes, and allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures. Just as one cannot dismiss the Gospels’ historical-biographical emphasis on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, so too one cannot dismiss how heavily indebted these same texts are to the story of Israel and what they perceive as its culmination in Jesus of Nazareth.

With this equal focus on the story of Israel’s climax and the historical-biographical literary emphasis on Jesus of Nazareth, Bird labels the Gospels as *biographical kerygma*. They are meant to function within the Church in a kerygmatic role, proclaiming what God has done in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of
Nazareth. At the same time this kerygma is anchored in and reliant upon the fact that the events proclaimed happened in space and time, as attested to by eyewitnesses.

While this assessment alone would be more than worth the price of admission for the book, Bird also places extensive excursuses at the end of each chapter, dealing with subjects such as the failure of form criticism, patristic writings on the Gospels, and the nature of the various non-canonical “gospels” such as the Gospel of Thomas. Combine all of this with one of the best discussions on the Synoptic Problem this reviewer has read and you have what may be a new standard text in the field of Gospel studies.

Michael Bird’s The Gospel of the Lord is a must read for anyone involved in Gospel studies or New Testament studies in general. If I were to recommend one book that not only critically interacts with the major scholarly voices in Gospel studies over the past two centuries, but also paves a new way forward in understanding the Gospels in their oral-historical and social memory contexts, it would be Bird’s volume. Of all of the books I have read in 2015, this volume takes first place.

Methodism in the American Forest
Russell E. Richey
New York, NY: Oxford University Press
2015, 230 pp. cloth, $55.00

Reviewed by Robert Danielson

Russell Richey, the dean emeritus of Candler School of Theology has presented in this volume a fascinating framework for reflecting on Methodism in America. Based on a triumvirate of wilderness, shady grove, and garden, he examines both the historical development of American Methodism and its theological growth as part of the taming of the New World. He draws this theme in part from Asbury’s journals in which the American environment becomes a metaphor for many different aspects of the circuit-riding ministry. The same forest becomes both the wilderness, a place of challenge and obstacles, the shady grove, a place to preach out of the torturous sun, and the garden, a place to retreat for spiritual renewal and reflection.

In the same way, American Methodism has moved through similar patterns in its experience on the continent. The period of the wilderness recalls
the toils of circuit riders battling the elements to establish the earliest movements of Methodism. The shady grove reflects back to the vibrancy of the camp meeting tradition, as the fledgling movement began to grow in power and influence. Finally, the garden, as Methodism became more domesticated and part of the urban scene in the late 19th century. Indeed the camp meeting itself becomes the most visible examples of uniting all three views of the forest into one common experience.

Richey poetically crafts this narrative, tying together an impressive amount of historical material from journals and early publications, while at the same time illuminating the impact of the American environment on the theological development of Methodism. Circuit riding was not British field preaching, and likewise American Methodism would develop its own unique and creative aspects.

Methodism in the Forest is not an introductory text for the beginning student, but it is far more than a textbook. It is the deep scholarly reflections of a top Methodist historian summing up a vast wealth of knowledge and experience and offering it back to the Methodist community as a piece of art, a visual masterpiece painted in words, yet somehow articulating the historic truth of American Methodism in a way that I have never encountered before. This is a very scholarly work, filled with all that the academy asks of such works, and yet there is a level of beauty that the reader encounters that is not normally found in scholarly works. Reading this work almost becomes devotional, as you start to explore the wilderness, the shady grove, and the gardens in your own spiritual walk as you journey side by side with the history of American Methodism.
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.


Dyrness, William A. and Oscar García-Johnson

Dunn, James D. G.

Edwards, Ruth B.

Fares, Diego, S.J.

Fleming, Dean

Green, Gene L., Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo, eds.

Greenway, William

Greenwood, Kyle

Gruder, Darrell L.

Gundry, Robert H.
Hauerwas, Stanley  

Jacobsen, Douglas  

Johnson, Keith L.  

Kim, Grace Ji-Sun  

Klingbeil, Gerald A.  

Lim, Bo H. and Daniel Castelo  

Longenecker, Richard N.  

Lucas, Ernest C.  

McCall, Thomas H.  

Niringiye, David Zac  

Olson, Roger E.  


Skinner, Matthew L.  

Stott, John  

Sunquist, Scott W.  

Sunquist, Scott W. and Amos Yong  

Ten Elshof, Gregg A.  

Thiselton, Anthony C.  

van Deusen Hunsinger, Deborah,  

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. and Daniel J. Treier  

Vanhoozer, Kevin J. and Owen Strachan  

Whitacre, Rodney A.  
Winter, Bruce W.  
2015  *Divine Honours for the Caesars: The First Christian’ Responses.*  

Wirzba, Norman  

Witherington, Ben, III, and Todd D. Still, eds.  

Wood, Ralph C., ed.  
About First Fruits Press

Under the auspices of B. L. Fisher Library, First Fruits Press is an online publishing arm of Asbury Theological Seminary. The goal is to make academic material freely available to scholars worldwide, and to share a valuable resource that would not otherwise be available for research. First Fruits publishes in five distinct areas: heritage, academic books, books, journals, and papers.

In the Journals section, back issues of *The Asbury Journal* will be digitized and so made available to a global audience. At the same time, we are excited to be working with several faculty members on developing professional, peer-reviewed, online journals that would be made freely available.

Much of this endeavor is made possible by the recent gift of the Kabis III scanner; one of the best available. The scanner can produce more than 2,900 pages an hour and features a special book cradle that is specifically designed to protect rare and fragile materials. The materials it produces will be available in ebook format, easy to download and search.

First Fruits Press will enable the library to share scholarly resources throughout the world, provide faculty with a platform to share their own work and engage scholars without the difficulties often encountered by print publishing. All the material will be freely available for online users, while those who wish to purchase a print copy for their libraries will be able to do so. First Fruits Press is just one way the B. L. Fisher Library is fulfilling the global vision of Asbury Theological Seminary to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.

asbury.to/firstfruits