

*The Asbury Journal*

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# *The Asbury Journal*

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Asbury Theological Seminary

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# The Asbury Journal

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# *The Asbury Journal*

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The Asbury Journal is a continuation of the Asbury Seminarian (1945-1985, vol. 1-40) and The Asbury Theological Journal (1986-2005, vol. 41-60). Articles in The Asbury Journal are indexed in The Christian Periodical Index and Religion Index One: Periodicals (RIO); book reviews are indexed in Index to Book Reviews in Religion (IBRR). Both RIO and IBRR are published by the American Theological Library Association, 5600 South Woodlawn Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637, and are available online through BRS Information Technologies and DIALOG Information Services. Articles starting with volume 43 are abstracted in Religious and Theological Abstracts and New Testament Abstracts. Volumes in microform of the Asbury Seminarian (vols. 1-40) and the Asbury Theological Journal (vols. 41-60) are available from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

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

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## *From the Editor*

How do we theologize about Christian mission in an academic world that is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary in its approach? This was the question that was put to faculty and students at the 2018-2019 Advanced Research Programs Interdisciplinary Colloquium held Friday, October 12, 2018 at Asbury Theological Seminary. We begin this issue of *The Asbury Journal* with the keynote paper from the colloquium presented by David R. Bauer, the renowned Biblical scholar in the area of Inductive Bible Study. He applies his expertise in the Book of Matthew to look at the question of mission through a Biblical Studies lens. Jerry Breen follows this Biblical Studies approach by examining how Matthew utilizes Isaiah in his understanding of mission. Sochangam Shirik applies a theological lens investigating the approaches of two well-known theologians, J. Andrew Kirk and John Hick in their views on mission. Kristina Whiteman ends the papers from the colloquium with a fascinating look at mission through the Orthodox perspective on mission as the “liturgy after the liturgy.”

Moving beyond the colloquium, Philip F. Hardt brings an historian’s eye to the Methodist missional use of rotating preachers in the New York Station in the early 1800s. Fred Guyette and Matt Ayars both present papers examining the work of, and our understanding of Paul, the Biblical missionary extraordinaire, through both a leadership lens and a theological lens. R. Jeffrey Hiatt explores John Wesley’s view of mission through his work and theology regarding health and medicine. Finally, James Patole brings a sociological perspective by examining the current situation of the New Middle Class in India, and seeking how Christian mission can best reach this rapidly growing new segment of Indian society. In our *From the Archives* essay this issue, I explore a little known, but important figure in the Holiness Movement, Leander Lycurgus Pickett (L.L. Pickett) an evangelist, author, publisher, politician, and hymn writer of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was certainly an interdisciplinary man who sought to influence the world around him in a multifaceted way for Christ.

Fundamentally, mission is about the bringing of the Kingdom of God into juxtaposition with the world we live in. This can occur in any



context at any time. Whether we utilize the traditional fields of Biblical Studies, Theology, or Missiology, or branch out into more secular fields such as History, Anthropology, Sociology, or even the sciences, we can always bring the principles and truths of Jesus Christ into our study, writing, preaching, as well as our everyday lives. The Gospel of Jesus was never intended to be lived out only one day in the week; it is meant to pervade our minds and hearts and permeate everything we do and say. It is meant to be as much a part of us as breathing. As we find and explore new ways to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to a hurting world, we need to live lives that exude our faith, integrity, and compassion. This can be accomplished in any academic discipline, and thus become a part of our goal of building the Kingdom of God here and now. If you feel God's call on your life, it does not mean you need to abandon the academic fields that interest you to become a pastor, but it does mean you need to bring your field of knowledge as well as yourself under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This is the best way for followers of Christ to influence and bring others into the Kingdom of God... and that is what mission is all about.

Robert Danielson Ph.D.

David R. Bauer

*The Theme of Mission in Matthew's Gospel From the Perspective of the Great Commission*

**Abstract:**

Presented as the keynote paper at the Advanced Research Program's Interdisciplinary Colloquium, held October 12, 2018. The Theme was the "Theology of Mission as an Interdisciplinary Enterprise." This paper explores the theology of mission found in the Gospel of Matthew through the lens of the Great Commission, using the tools of Inductive Biblical Studies. The Gospel of Matthew has mission as a central focus, even though Matthean scholars often overlook this focus. The paper argues three essential conclusions. First, the theme of universal mission is of critical importance in Matthew's Gospel. Second, Matthew insists that all the major themes in his Gospel, even Christology, must be understood finally within the framework of mission. Third, the Great Commission is intimately connected with Matthew's Gospel in the large and must be interpreted specifically in light of its function within the entire Gospel. These conclusions are explored throughout the remainder of the paper.

**Keywords:** Great Commission, Matthew, Christian mission, Christology, discipleship

**David R. Bauer** is the Dean of the School of Biblical Interpretation as well as the Ralph Waldo Beeson Professor of Inductive Biblical Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

It is a privilege for me to participate as a keynote speaker in this Interdisciplinary Colloquium given over to the topic "Theology of Mission as an Interdisciplinary Enterprise." I am honored to address the topic from the perspective of biblical studies, with special attention to the theme of mission in the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>1</sup>

It is appropriate that we should focus upon mission in Matthew's Gospel. It is true, as Christopher J. H. Wright reminds us, that mission stands at the center of the Bible from beginning to end.<sup>2</sup> But precisely because that is the case, we could not, within the time allotted, even begin to scratch the surface of this theme within the entire canon. The clock dictates that we limit our focus. And if we must limit our focus, The Gospel of Matthew offers to us a prime target. For, along with Luke-Acts, it is among the most explicitly missional books in the New Testament. Thus, Ferdinand Hahn declares, "Matthew's Gospel is of the greatest importance for the question of the mission in early Christianity."<sup>3</sup> And David Bosch insists, "our first gospel is essentially a missionary text."<sup>4</sup> We need consider only that Matthew gives over one of the five great discourses to the theme of mission (9:35-11:1),<sup>5</sup> and that Matthew's Gospel culminates with the missionary commissioning of 28:16-20.

And yet the theme of mission has received scant attention in Matthean studies. Only a handful of monographs and articles deal with the topic, reflecting (in my judgment) a theological aversion, and we might say embarrassment, toward the whole notion of mission on the part of many critical New Testament scholars. And when scholars do examine the issue they often focus on the tension between Jewish particularism (as reflected in 10:5-6, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"<sup>6</sup>) and Gentile universalism<sup>7</sup> (as expressed in the Great Commission, "Go, make disciples of all nations"),<sup>8</sup> in such a way as to reduce the matter to stages in salvation-history<sup>9</sup> or to Jew-Gentile dynamics as they bear upon the ecclesiology or makeup of the Matthean community,<sup>10</sup> rather than addressing the theme of mission as such.<sup>11</sup> Yet, while acknowledging the important role of Israel and the inclusion of the Gentiles within the schema of Matthean thought, we recognize that the center of Matthean theology is neither salvation history nor ecclesiology, but rather Christology. As recent scholarship has often noted, the Gospel of Matthew is not essentially a cipher for the ethnic complexion of the Matthean community, nor a manual for the ordering of life within the Church, nor reflections on the

periodization of salvation history, but a story about *Jesus*.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the Gospel itself requires that we consider every theological issue, including Matthew's presentation of mission, from a Christological focus.

It is, among other things, this Christological focus that rivets our attention, as we consider the theme of mission in Matthew's Gospel, upon the Great Commission. For Matthew so structures his story of Jesus as to bring it to a climax in the missionary commissioning by the Resurrected One in 28:16-20. The entire plot of the Gospel moves towards the resurrection: the resurrection of Jesus is adumbrated already in chap. 2 with God's deliverance of Jesus from death at the hands of Herod. It is foreshadowed in Jesus' declaration that "as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (12:40; cf. 12:41; 16:4). On several occasions, Jesus explicitly predicts his resurrection (16:21; 17:9, 23; 20:19; 26:32). And Matthew (alone among the evangelists) makes reference to Jesus' resurrection right in the midst of the crucifixion (27:52-53),<sup>13</sup> thus suggesting that the crucifixion event stands along the path towards the resurrection.

But if Matthew's story of Jesus reaches its climax in the resurrection, the missionary commissioning itself forms the climax to the resurrection narrative. The Great Commission is, in a sense, the climax to the climax. The scene at the empty tomb points ahead to the missionary commissioning; both the angel and the resurrected Jesus himself command the women to tell his disciples that Jesus will meet them in Galilee where "they [or you] will see him" (28:5-7, 9-10), thus fulfilling the promise Jesus made to the disciples earlier on the Mount of Olives: "after I am raised up I will go before you to Galilee" (26:32). The Great Commission is in fact a resurrection appearance; and it is, in Matthew's Gospel, the only resurrection appearance to Jesus' disciples, one might say, to the Church. It is the sole narrative depiction of Jesus and the disciples in the post-Easter period in which we live, the time between the resurrection and the Parousia.

Additional considerations also point to the supreme significance of the Great Commission. For one thing, several major themes in the Gospel come here to ultimate expression, including the authority of Jesus, Jesus' relationship to the Father, discipleship, and the role of the nations.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the Great Commission marks a dramatic reorientation in Matthew's story. Throughout the Gospel the ministry of both Jesus and the disciples is restricted to Israel (10:5-6; 15:24), but here that

restriction is upended and we encounter for the first time the declaration of universal mission. And the inclusio around the theme of “with-ness” (*Mitsein*) reinforces the climactic character of the Great Commission; Jesus’ promise to the disciples to be “with you” (μεθ’ ὑμῶν) in 28:20 echoes the announcement of 1:23 that Jesus is “Emmanuel, God with us” (μεθ’ ἡμῶν), thus bracketing the entire Gospel and pointing to the ultimate significance of Jesus’ statement in the final verse of the Gospel. Accordingly, Wolfgang Trilling declares that these verses contain “den wichtigsten Worten des ganzen Euangeliums,”<sup>15</sup> and Otto Michel insists that “*Matt. 28:18-20 is the key to the understanding of the whole book.*”<sup>16</sup>

These considerations lead to three conclusions. First, the theme of universal mission, set forth in this most prominent passage, is of critical importance in Matthew’s Gospel. These are the last words the audience of Matthew’s Gospel hears as they transition from the narrative world of the text back into their own world. Their sense of the entire Gospel is finally configured along the lines of mission. Second, Matthew insists that all the major themes in his Gospel, even Christology, must be understood finally within the framework of mission; for the Great Commission reprises these major themes and, as it were, ties them in a bundle bound with a ribbon that has “mission” written all over it. Third, the Great Commission is intimately connected with Matthew’s Gospel in the large and must be interpreted specifically in light of its function within the entire Gospel.<sup>17</sup> David Bosch has properly lamented that readers and preachers have often isolated the Great Commission from its Matthean context with the result that many of its rich insights have remained hidden and have been replaced by notions that are foreign to the passage and to the message of Matthew’s Gospel.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, the goal of this paper is to employ the Great Commission as a lens through which to explore some of the major emphases of Matthew’s theology of mission.

Although most think of the Great Commission as comprising Matt 28:18-20, the passage actually begins at 28:16. We might dub Matt 28:16-17 “Preparation for the Commissioning,” for these verses provide background to the remainder of the passage; but they also contain elements which, when read in light of the earlier chapters of the Gospel, themselves provide significant insight into mission. Matt 28:16 describes “The Arrival of the Disciples,” whereas 28:17 depicts “The Situation of the Disciples.”

The heart of the matter is certainly 28:18-20. After a brief introductory statement, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying...”

(28:18a), Matthew records the final words of Jesus in this Gospel according to a threefold movement. Jesus begins with the declaration of his own authority in 28:18b, then draws out the implications of this authority for his disciples in the commissioning proper (28:19-20a), and concludes with the promise of his presence (28:20b).

Three structural features are prominent. First, Matthew employs cause and effect between 28:18 and 28:19-20a. The “therefore” (οὖν) indicates explicitly that Jesus’ authority is the cause, or basis, for the discipling activity of the disciples. It assures them that they are fully equipped with transcendent efficacy<sup>19</sup> and implies that discipling involves bringing persons under Christ’s sovereign authority. Second, we observe the repetition of inclusive scope, expressed especially by the word “all” (πᾶς): “all authority; “all nations;” “all I have commanded you;” “I am with you all the days.” The causal movement from v. 18b to vv. 19-20a indicates that Jesus’ all-inclusive authority is the basis for, and is expressed in, these later references to “all.” Third, we find also a causal connection between the commission proper and Jesus’ promise of presence in v. 20b. Most likely, this involves the movement from effect to cause: “The reason why you can and must make disciples of all nations is because I am with you all the days...” Yet, the causal nexus may move in the opposite direction as well: “Because (or insofar as) you make disciples of all nations, therefore I will be with you all the days...”<sup>20</sup> All three of these structural features point to the Christological focus of the passage, since the command to make disciples is framed by references to Jesus; it has its basis in Jesus’ all-inclusive authority, described spatially (“in heaven and on earth,” v.18b), and in his all-inclusive presence, described temporally (“all the days until the completion of the age,” v. 20b). In this connection, we note that Jesus stands at the center also of the command proper: They are to make disciples by “baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” and by “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the Christological focus of the entire Gospel finds expression in this final passage. This passage, and by extension the mission of the Church that it describes, is ultimately not about the Church, but about Jesus Christ: who he is, and what he has done and is doing. The mission of the Church is an extension of his person and of his activity.<sup>22</sup>

Looking at the passage more specifically, we begin with the background in vv. 16-17. Matthew describes the arrival of the disciples in terms of identity, number, and destination. With regard to identity, the

reference to “disciples” in v. 16 may seem inconsequential, but it actually establishes the orientation of the whole passage: this passage deals with *post-Easter discipleship*. As I mentioned earlier, this is the only passage in the Gospel that narrates an event in the present period of the Church; it thus offers the most direct portrait of what discipleship for those of us in the Church is about. Clearly, the Gospel indicates that there is more to our discipleship than what Matthew explicitly describes in this passage; nevertheless, the Great Commission sets forth the essential task of disciples in the Church during the post-Easter period.

I equate “the disciples” here with the whole of the post-Easter Church. Such a construal is warranted when we consider that although the disciples have a once-for-all role in the historical account of Jesus’ life, nevertheless throughout the narrative Matthew often, indeed typically, presents the disciples in such a way as to foreshadow the post-Easter experience of the Church, even to the point where they may be said to represent the post-Easter Church.<sup>23</sup>

In this connection, I should mention that a certain dialectic pervades the Great Commission. On the one hand, Matthew wishes us to consider this passage as relating an event that has actually occurred at a specific point in time. After all, this pericope seamlessly connects with the immediately preceding historical reportage; and, as a resurrection appearance, it contributes to Matthew’s concern throughout 27:55-28:20 to provide historical evidence for Jesus’ resurrection;<sup>24</sup> and it employs aorist indicative verbs.<sup>25</sup>

But, on the other hand, it has a kind of timeless quality. For example, the passage lacks closure, with no reference to Jesus’ departing or ascending, but rather concludes with Jesus in the midst of his disciples, continuing to speak to them, promising to be with them (present tense) “until the end of the age.” The intended readers recognize that the end of the age could not occur during the lifetime of the original eleven disciples, some of whom had already died by the writing of this book; for Jesus had insisted that the gospel “must be preached to all nations before the end comes” (24:14). Therefore, the group he is addressing here as “the disciples,” with whom he is present and promises to remain to the end, must be the Church throughout the entire post-Easter period. Thus, at one level the passage is paradigmatic of the experience of the whole Church in the present time, from Jesus’ resurrection to the end of the age. We are

there on the mountain, experiencing and reacting to the presence of the Resurrected One; and he is speaking to us all.

But, in addition to identity, Matthew is also concerned about their number. The reference to “eleven” disciples is jarring to the reader, because always up to this point Matthew has spoken of “the twelve.”<sup>26</sup> Clearly, “eleven” draws attention to the absence of the disciple Judas, and thereby serves as a warning to disciples regarding the danger of falling away, not to return. Such danger will attend the disciples specifically as they engage in a mission to the nations where they will meet with persecution, for Jesus has already warned that, in their mission, “they will be hated by all nations” with the result that “many will fall away, and betray one another” (24:9-10);<sup>27</sup> the reference to “betray” echoes, of course, the language used otherwise of Judas.<sup>28</sup>

Yet the reference to “eleven” points not only to the absence of Judas, but also to the presence of Peter, who has failed, under pressure and in the shadow of the cross, to confess Jesus, and has actually repudiated his discipleship in the face of the challenge of public announcement; yet he repents and is thereby finally reinstated.<sup>29</sup> This implicit reference to Peter serves as a word of hope to those who thus fail, and an encouragement to the Church fully to embrace the reinstating of such persons for their role in the task of worldwide proclamation.<sup>30</sup>

Matthew rounds out his account of the arrival of the disciples by describing the destination as Galilee, which itself has a three-fold significance. For one thing, it points to the comparison, or analogy, between the mission of the post-Easter Church and the ministry of the earthly Jesus as recounted throughout Matthew’s Gospel. Even as the disciples position themselves for their mission by going “into Galilee,” so in 4:11 Jesus positioned himself for his ministry by withdrawing “into Galilee,” the same phrase (εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν) is employed in each case.

Here, then, we encounter an oblique reference to a major aspect of Matthew’s theology of mission that is found throughout the Gospel: Jesus is himself the exemplar, or model, for the mission of the Church. Indeed, both Jesus and the disciples are “sent” on their respective missions; Jesus has been sent by God (10:40; 15:24; 21:37), while the disciples have been sent by Jesus.<sup>31</sup> In fact, a key aspect of Jesus’ mission from God is to send the disciples (Church) on their mission. The mission of the Church is thus derived from and is a central component of the mission of Jesus.



The comparison between the mission of Jesus and that of the Church involves the *scope* of ministry; during the time of the earthly Jesus, both Jesus and the disciples have been sent only “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:5-6; 15:24). The *acts* of ministry are the same: Both Jesus and the disciples (the disciples eventually) teach;<sup>32</sup> both Jesus and the disciples have authority to cast out demons;<sup>33</sup> both Jesus and the disciples preach, and they preach the same message, “the gospel of the kingdom,”<sup>34</sup> and the substance of preaching is the same for both Jesus and the disciples, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (4:17; 10:7). The *consequences* of mission are the same; the consequences of rejecting the disciples’ message are expressed in the same language as those that come from rejecting Jesus’ message: “It will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you” (10:15; 11:22-24). The *results* of mission are the same. Both Jesus and the disciples experience persecution in the wake of their mission.<sup>35</sup> Thus, throughout Matthew’s Gospel Jesus demonstrates by example what the Church *should do in its mission, the struggles and challenges the Church will face in its mission, and how it should perform these missional activities.*<sup>36</sup>

Beyond drawing our attention to this repeated comparison between the mission of Jesus and that of disciples, the reference to “into Galilee” also points to the eschatological character of the mission of the Church. Matthew draws out the significance of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee by insisting that it fulfills scripture, specifically Is 9:1-2 (4:12-16), and is thus eschatological in the sense that it brings to realization God’s long-awaited end-time rule of breaking the power of cosmic evil and inaugurating God’s own reign over the earth. Manifestly, the reference to Galilee in 28:16 has the same significance for the mission that the Church is about to embark upon; it likewise is an eschatological breaking-the-power-of-cosmic-evil sort of mission. The Church’s mission is of a different, supremely transcendent order, over against all else that is otherwise generally done in the world, and is not reducible to it.

Then, too, the reference to Galilee here emphasizes mission to the Gentiles, that is, to all the nations of earth, which Jesus will make explicit in v. 19. For the fulfillment quotation of Is 9:1-2 at 4:14-16 speaks of “Galilee of the Gentiles,” and declares that “the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” The positioning of this quotation, just before the inauguration of Jesus’ ministry at 4:17, is surprising, since Jesus carefully restricts his

ministry, and that of his disciples, to Jews on the basis that he was “sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24).<sup>37</sup> It is only at 28:19 that Jesus will commission his disciples to expand their ministry to include Gentiles. The point is clear: God’s intention to bring end-time salvation to the nations is something that Jesus could not accomplish in his earthly ministry, but could be realized only through the post-Easter mission of the Church. Indeed, Jesus could not completely fulfill even the mission to Israel without the assistance of the disciples and those who will be made disciples by them (9:36-38; 10:5-23). In a sense, this points to a kind of insufficiency of Jesus in himself. There are certain things that Jesus himself, during his earthly ministry, could not do, things that require the participation of the Church in the post-Easter period, according to the sovereign decision of God. It involves a kind of divine self-limitation. But it is only a partial self-limitation; for, as we shall see, in the final analysis it is the exalted Christ who actually performs these things through the Church.

When the resurrected Jesus reveals himself<sup>38</sup> to his disciples they respond with the dialectic of worship and doubt. The act of worship clearly implies the deity of Christ. In the third, and climactic, temptation in the wilderness Jesus declared, quoting Deut 6:13, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.” Accordingly, to offer worship to anyone or anything other than God would be idolatry, and for anyone other than God to accept worship would be blasphemous. The Jesus to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given, who is about to commission his disciples to make disciples, and to whom disciples are to be made, is fully divine. The disciples, awaiting their commissioning, recognize that they are in the presence of ultimate reality, of absolute transcendence, so that everything else in the world is radically relativized to him and has value only in relation to him. In worshipping him they acknowledge that Jesus Christ is completely adequate to meet every existential challenge in the mission he is about to give to them, but that he will do so, of course, in his own sovereign way. The fact that he had been worshipped previously in the Gospel<sup>39</sup> emphasizes continuity between the earthly Jesus who walked the shores of Galilee and the Resurrected One. This warns against driving a wedge between the “Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.”

And yet it is precisely this sense of ultimate transcendence in the man Jesus Christ that creates the occasion for doubt. The word translated “doubt” here (δισταύω) occurs just once more in the New Testament, in Matt 14:33, the story of Jesus walking on the water, where the term is again

linked, as in 28:17, with the worship of Jesus by the disciples. Clearly Matthew intends that we should construe 28:17 in light of this earlier passage, usually called “the second boat scene,” because of its obvious connection with the “first boat scene” of 8:23-28 when Jesus calms the storm.<sup>40</sup>

Long ago Günther Bornkamm correctly saw that Matthew has so told the story of the first boat scene as to highlight its symbolism.<sup>41</sup> The boat in which the disciples were huddled, with Jesus asleep, is “the little boat of the Church;” the winds and the waves represent threatening horrors, “the distresses involved in discipleship of Jesus;” and Jesus demonstrates dominion over these distressful horrors by stilling the storm.<sup>42</sup>

It seems to me that the same symbolism is operative in the second boat scene, with some important modifications.<sup>43</sup> Once again, we have “the little boat of the Church,” but here Jesus is not physically in the boat, but is outside the boat in the midst of the wind and waves, i.e., in the world where evil forces are threatening the Church. Jesus, presented here by Matthew with a suggestion of his later resurrection glory,<sup>44</sup> bids Peter, who throughout the Gospel represents the disciples,<sup>45</sup> to come to him from the boat with its apparent safety out into the world with all of its distressing threats. As long as Peter focuses his attention upon Jesus he remains confident of the reality of the one who appears before him and he is able to join Jesus in doing the impossible,<sup>46</sup> but when he diverts his attention from the Lord to the afflictions and distresses that surround him he begins to sink; yet Jesus will not allow him to be destroyed. Jesus takes him by the hand and brings him to the safety of the community that in wonder worships Jesus as Son of God. It is important to observe that Jesus dubs Peter’s failure *διστάζω*, which he further characterizes as *ὀλιγόπιστος*, i.e., weak faith.<sup>47</sup> Thus, doubt (*διστάζω*) is a weakness of faith in the reality of the presence of the transcendent Jesus as he beckons and commands that prevents one from making use of all the resources in Christ for life and mission in the face of obstacles and opposition.

This reference to doubt, then, makes perfect sense in the context of the Great Commission. The resurrected Jesus is about to dispatch his disciples on a mission that will be conducted in the setting of ongoing, effective opposition by the same powerful and cunning forces that did Jesus in (28:11-15), and Jesus had already warned the disciples that in the time between the resurrection and Parousia they will “be hated by all nations” (24:9). It is precisely people who both adoringly worship and often only

haltingly believe that Jesus commissions.<sup>48</sup> He does not wait for, nor does he require, a perfection of faith before he sends them out.<sup>49</sup> The Church is sent precisely in its weakness. Yet the existential problem of doubt, which has the power to diminish and even nullify mission, is potentially solved by Jesus' presence and word (vv. 18-20).

I say "potentially" because, on the basis of the narrative, it is not clear whether the disciples' doubt will be overcome and thus how effectively they will fulfill the mission Jesus is about to give to them.<sup>50</sup> Their performance thus far has been disappointing.<sup>51</sup> Up to this point, Jesus has repeatedly dubbed them *ὀλιγόπιστοι*,<sup>52</sup> and they have deserved that characterization. For even when Jesus was physically with them they neither had the will nor did they exercise the power to fulfill the charge Jesus had already given to them in chap. 10,<sup>53</sup> and they ran away scared at even the prospect of persecution.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, the disciples have never disobeyed an overt command.<sup>55</sup> The Great Commission—and the Gospel—concludes in an open-ended fashion, with the question of the performance of the eleven left open, and with Jesus speaking as much to the readers as to the eleven. Therefore, the issue is not so much what the original eleven disciples will do, but whether we the readers will embrace Jesus' presence and word, as set forth in vv. 18-20, so as to overcome doubt and affirm the reality of the Resurrected One by meeting him where he is in the world through taking up the task that he gives to us.

In line with the Christocentric character of mission, Jesus begins his word with a declaration regarding himself, a declaration that centers on the essential issue of Christology as it bears upon mission: Jesus' authority. In Matthew, authority includes both the power to act (e.g., 10:1) and the right to act (e.g., 21:23-27), in other words, both legitimacy and capability. Thus, Jesus' authority is the rightful power to effect transcendent change.

This all-inclusive authority certainly includes the various aspects of authority that Jesus exercised during his earthly life, e.g., authority to forgive sins (9:6-8), to resuscitate the dead (9:23-26; 11:5), to alter the processes of the created world (8:23-27; 14:13-33; 15:32-38), to name just a few.<sup>56</sup> But the observation that this declaration in 28:18 leads to a commission to his disciples that transcends what Jesus had previously demanded of them suggests that the authority described here may go beyond what Jesus had possessed earlier.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, this verse echoes Dan 7:13-14 LXX,<sup>58</sup> which, when applied to Jesus, quite clearly points to his exaltation; and for

Matthew exaltation centers on the resurrection.<sup>59</sup> Thus, this authority was granted to Jesus by God<sup>60</sup> at the point of the resurrection.<sup>61</sup>

In line with the imagery of Dan 7, Matthew is describing Christ's enthronement over the cosmos. It is at this point that "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand....'" (22:44, quoting Ps 110:1). Consequently, his authority is comprehensive, both in terms of quantity ("all") and in terms of sphere ("heaven and earth").<sup>62</sup> There is no authority (rightful power) anywhere or of any kind that does not properly belong to the exalted Christ.

Yet this authority is not static, but dynamic. It cannot wait until the consummation to explode into the world. It lunges into the present age, demanding to be made known, insisting on exercising its capacity to achieve God's ultimately redemptive purposes. And the method by which it accomplishes all of this, or at least the primary method that is most relevant to the Church, is expressed by the mandate set forth in 28:19-20a.

The *substance* of that mandate is **make disciples**. This term, a single word in Greek (μαθητεύσατε), stands at the center of the passage, since it is the finite (main) verb in the sentence preceded by an aorist participle and followed by two present participles. Etymologically, μαθητεύω and its noun form, μαθητής, stem from μανθάνω, meaning "to teach," and in fact μαθητής originally meant "learner." But during the Hellenistic period it was broadened to refer to someone who placed himself<sup>63</sup> under the pronounced influence of another<sup>64</sup> for the sake of training or formation. This rather general meaning led to its being employed in a number of specific ways that were determined by the precise character of the disciple-relationship in view.<sup>65</sup>

It is clear, then, that we must establish the meaning of "make disciples" here on the basis of Matthew's description of μαθητής/μαθητεύω. The comparison that Matthew establishes between the mission/ministry of Jesus and that of the disciples, which I referenced earlier, and the connection between the eleven μαθηταί (28:16) and μαθητεύω in 28:19, may lead us to conclude that the disciples are to make disciples of others in the same way that Jesus made disciples of them throughout the Gospel. And to some extent this is true. Even as Jesus made disciples of the twelve by teaching, preaching, healing, correcting, warning, encouraging, and sharing ministry tasks with them, so these practices may form, at least in part and in some measure, the content of discipling in 28:19. Jesus models what our work of discipling is to look like. The earlier chapters of the Gospel make it clear also that those who are made disciples will form local congregations

characterized by nurture, discipline, and forgiveness,<sup>66</sup> in analogy to the circle of the twelve that Jesus established during his earthly ministry.

And yet Matthew does not present Jesus simply as a model for our work of discipling; but rather Jesus is the one final discipler. Jesus is not a facilitator of a discipleship that involves accepting a body of teaching or a set of ideas that is separate from himself, and thus could be offered with equal effectiveness by a host of others. But rather Jesus is the ultimate source of all discipleship; for Matthew has made it clear that discipleship must always be initiated by Jesus and that discipleship is a response to *his* call (4:18-22; 9:9; 11:28-30),<sup>67</sup> which is the offer of personal, intimate, trusting, and submissive relationship with himself.<sup>68</sup> In the final analysis, then, all disciple-making is accomplished by Jesus; in even the discipling performed by the Church Jesus is the ultimate actor (28:20b). Christian disciples are now the (essential and necessary) vehicles of Jesus' own continuing discipling work.

The scope of this discipling work is **all nations** (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη).<sup>69</sup> As I mentioned previously, this marks an expansion of the ministry of Jesus and of the disciples, which earlier had been restricted to Israel.<sup>70</sup> At least I take it as an expansion, and not a replacement. Indeed, several years ago a small but vocal group of scholars insisted that because ἔθνη in Matthew often means "Gentiles," therefore this statement should be rendered: "make disciples of all Gentiles," and that Matthew considered the mission to Israel (Jews) to be at an end.<sup>71</sup> But this can hardly be so, since Matthew frequently uses ἔθνος in the sense of "nation," and in several passages Jesus describes mission to Israel in the post-Easter period (e.g., 10:23; 23:34-36).<sup>72</sup> This is an important point, because it addresses the practical issue of the appropriateness, and necessity, of Jewish evangelization in our own day. Moreover, if ἔθνος does signify "nation" here, it indicates a concern for "ethnographic" entities (*Volkstum*, i.e., discrete culturally cohesive groups),<sup>73</sup> and thereby suggests the necessity of taking seriously the ethnic character of those who will be evangelized, in other words, cross-cultural communication of the gospel.

But even if τὰ ἔθνη should be understood as "all nations," it certainly emphasizes Gentiles. And we thus encounter here the critical issue of universal mission. Throughout the Gospel Matthew has placed side-by-side Jewish particularism, that I have already mentioned, and suggestions of Gentile inclusion. Thus, Jesus is "son of Abraham," through whom, "all the nations of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3; 18:18;

22:18), a claim supported by the mention of Gentile women included in the pre-history of the Messiah (1:1-17);<sup>74</sup> and the Gentile magi are proleptic disciples, and in fact the first “disciple-figures” in Matthew’s narrative (2:1-12);<sup>75</sup> and we are told that “many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (8:11); and even when Jesus sends his disciples to minister to Israel he insists that, in the process, they will bear witness to Gentiles (10:18); and Jesus is Isaiah’s “Servant” who will “proclaim justice to the Gentiles,” and in whose name “the Gentiles will hope” (12:18-21); and a Canaanite girl experiences the salvation of healing because of the super-abounding faith of her mother (15:21-28); and in 21:43 Jesus declares that the kingdom of heaven will be taken away from Israel as it has been constituted and given to a “nation” (ἔθνος) that will deliver to God the fruit of righteousness; and the parable of the wedding describes God inviting Gentiles to the messianic banquet in the wake of Israel’s general refusal (22:1-10); and Jesus insists that the end will not come until the gospel has been preached “throughout the whole world” (24:14; cf. 26:13); and at the Last Supper Jesus declares that his blood is poured out “for many” (26:28; cf. 20:28); and at the cross it is the Gentile centurion and those with him who actually crucified Jesus who confesses, as he faces the cross, “Truly this was the Son of God” (27:54), so that thereby the first and last Christological confession in Matthew’s Gospel come from Gentiles (cf. 2:2).

Matthew has included the tension between Jewish particularism and Gentile inclusion to indicate that from the beginning God has intended that all peoples would have the opportunity of God’s salvation, but that such opportunity would come specifically through Israel.<sup>76</sup> And, as far as Matthew is concerned, this is exactly what has happened, and that in two ways. On the one hand, Jesus *is* Israel in the sense that he embodies all that was involved in God’s dealings with Israel as God’s people; all of Israel’s history, institutions, and promises come to fulfillment in him.<sup>77</sup> And on the other hand, God through Jesus has established a reconstituted eschatological Israel, not identical with the nation itself but composed of the twelve disciples (corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel, cf. 19:28) and those Jews (and later Gentiles) who respond to the proclamation of the end-time kingdom with a repentance that bears fruit.<sup>78</sup> The centrality of this reconstituted Israel in the salvation of the world explains the temporal priority given to the exclusive evangelization of Israel (10:5-6); for this redemption of the remnant of Israel is the basis of the mission of reconstituted Israel to

the nations. In Matt 28:18-20 Israel finally fulfills the global mission that God always purposed for it in that this reconstituted Israel is dispatched to make disciples of all nations (who themselves may thereby be incorporated into this reconstituted eschatological Israel, and thus also become part of the ongoing discipling process), with the assurance that, as they do so, Jesus, who embodies Israel's existence before God, is with them.<sup>79</sup>

But this mission involves the *circumstance* of **going**. This aorist participle (πορευθέντες) that precedes the verb "make disciples" is certainly, as most translations render it, the "participle of attendant circumstance."<sup>80</sup> As such, it is properly understood as coordinate with the main verb and is therefore also a command. While the emphasis is upon "make disciples" Jesus is clear that disciples can accomplish this task only by moving away from where they are to the space inhabited by others. The repeated reference to the gospel being preached throughout "the whole world" (24:14; 26:13) certainly points to the crossing of geographical boundaries; but the broad context of the Gospel indicates that it involves every bit as much the crossing of all cultural, religious, and ethnic boundaries that typically separate human beings from one another, even in cases where no geographical distance must be spanned.<sup>81</sup> The prophetic hope was that, at the end, all the nations of the world would flock to the mountain of the Lord (Zion) and learn of the Lord there (e.g., Is 2:1-4; Mic 4:1-4; Zech 8:20-23), i.e., come to Israel; but because Jesus has now been made cosmocrator it is necessary for his servants to pursue an aggressive conquest of the peoples of the earth through a discipling that involves going to them.

The *process* of bringing such persons to discipleship involves **baptizing** and **teaching**. These are instrumental participles that, in this case, spell out the substance of "make disciples." The evidence for this relationship is simple, but compelling. In 13:52 Matthew has employed the verb μαθητεύω in the sense of "teaching" or "training." And, of course, one of the major ways in which Jesus makes disciples of the twelve is by teaching them.<sup>82</sup> The fact that "baptizing" and "teaching" are grammatically coordinate indicates that both of these tasks form the material content of discipling.<sup>83</sup>

One might object that the Gospel of Matthew in its entirety indicates that discipling involves more than "baptizing" and "teaching." And this claim contains some truth. Yet, as we shall see momentarily, "baptizing" and "teaching" have such broad ramifications that most of the



aspects of discipling that Matthew presents otherwise in his Gospel are herein included.

The present passage is the only reference in Matthew's Gospel to Christian baptism,<sup>84</sup> and Matthew does not here develop the meaning of baptism, which suggests that Matthew assumed his readers would bring their understanding of baptism to bear upon this statement. Matthew does describe the baptizing work of John (3:1-17), but John's baptism is manifestly not the Christian baptism that Jesus mentions here, although insofar as it anticipates Christian baptism it may contribute to our understanding of baptism here,<sup>85</sup> if we take seriously both points of continuity and discontinuity. Consequently, we must derive the specific significance of baptism here in 28:19 from the rest of the New Testament (which witnesses to the conceptual background of the readers) and (with qualification and carefulness) from John's baptism. In short, we find that baptism involves response to the preaching of the gospel;<sup>86</sup> confession of sin (3:6); repentance;<sup>87</sup> faith in Christ;<sup>88</sup> the experience of the forgiveness of sins;<sup>89</sup> the reception of the Holy Spirit;<sup>90</sup> and incorporation into community of faith.<sup>91</sup> It is really "an act of transfer,"<sup>92</sup> wherein one moves from being ἐν Ἀδάμ to being ἐν Χριστῷ, to use Paul's terminology.<sup>93</sup> To be baptized "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" means to be brought existentially into the sphere of, and in submission to, the active powerful presence of the Father, Son, and Spirit, so that one belongs to the Father, Son, and Spirit (e.g., 1 Cor 1:10-17).<sup>94</sup>

It is clear that baptism marks the initiation into discipleship, whereas "teaching" refers to the ongoing process of discipling.<sup>95</sup> "Make disciples," therefore, must in no way be restricted to conversion, but rather be construed as a lifelong process of re-formation. The order is significant here, for, in contrast to the typical early Christian practice of instruction before baptism,<sup>96</sup> reflected already in the *Didache*, this teaching is to take place after baptism.<sup>97</sup>

We note that mission involves teaching them to observe what Jesus commanded. Thus, they are to teach both the *necessity* of obedience to Jesus' commands ("to observe") and the substance of those commands ("what I have commanded"), in other words, *to do them*, and *what to do*. This concern for the necessity of obedience relates to the Matthean emphasis upon righteousness in the Christian life. The purpose of Jesus' coming was to "save his people from their *sins*" (1:21), the plural suggesting that the focus is upon salvation from sin as a life-practice over against sin as

a principle;<sup>98</sup> salvation in Matthew, then, is salvation from a life of sinning and its consequences.<sup>99</sup> Matthew describes such righteousness as “fruit” that is possible only by the transformation of the “tree,” or the inner life of persons,<sup>100</sup> that comes through receiving by faith<sup>101</sup> the proclamation of the kingdom that God has offered in Jesus Christ (3:2; 4:17); for this reason the reference to obeying Jesus’ commands must follow the mention of baptism. The mission, therefore, does not trade in moralism, i.e., appeal to adopt a different practice, but rather offers gospel, i.e., a divine opportunity for profound transformation that manifests itself in obedience to the will of God found in the Old Testament Scriptures (5:17-20) as they are interpreted by Jesus according to the centrality of the twofold love command (22:34-40).<sup>102</sup>

The substance of the teaching is “what *I* have commanded.” They are to teach his commands, and not their own. They are thus to be careful to make disciples of Jesus, and not of themselves.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, this statement may imply that they are not to add any commands of their own. And yet the Jesus who has commanded is present with his Church as one who continues to speak, suggesting that the commands that form the content of missionary teaching are both stable and dynamic. They are stable in that they are found written within the Gospel tradition, specifically the Gospel of Matthew;<sup>104</sup> but they are dynamic in that they must constantly be re-applied to new situations in which the Church finds itself, situations that Jesus, during his earthly ministry, would have had little opportunity to address. This, I think, is the significance of Matt 16:19: “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Drawing upon language used by the rabbis to decide what is required (“bind”) and what is not required (“loose”) for participation in the kingdom that is to come,<sup>105</sup> Jesus promises that the decisions of the Church<sup>106</sup> regarding emerging issues of praxis will be maintained by God as the standard at the Great Assize; and this will be so, because as the Church makes these decisions it is assured that it reflects the divine mind, since the Church enjoys the guiding help of the exalted Christ who continues to “be with you.”

But if mission involves teaching only Jesus’ commands, in this sense, it requires also the teaching of *all* that Jesus has commanded. I have argued elsewhere that the critical core of this missional catechesis are the five great discourses that punctuate Matthew’s Gospel (chaps. 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25), each concluding with the formula, “when Jesus had

finished instructing his disciples" or the like.<sup>107</sup> Although these discourses are ostensibly directed to the twelve disciples as Jesus ministered in Galilee and Judea, in substance they pertain not to the twelve during Jesus' earthly ministry but to the whole of the Church in the post-Easter period. Moreover, the formula at the end of the final discourse reads: "Now when Jesus had finished *all* these sayings" (26:1), thus forming a link with "teaching them to observe *all* that I have commanded you" here at 28:20.

Yet if we take seriously the inclusive language "all" we will not limit this missional catechesis to the five great discourses, even if we give to them pride of place. It must include the entirety of Jesus' instructions throughout the Gospel. Indeed, it is not limited even to what Jesus said, but encompasses also what he did.<sup>108</sup> For, in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus instructs as much through actions as through speech. Thus, in a critical passage we read, "From that time Jesus began to *show* (δείκνυμι) his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things...and be killed..." (16:21). And Chrysostom perceptively explains the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount this way: "And for what reason is the clause added, 'He opened his mouth'? To inform you that in his very silence he gave instruction, and not only when he spoke. At one time he taught by 'opening his mouth,' while at another by the works that he did."<sup>109</sup> The whole of the Gospel of Matthew, what Matthew calls "this gospel of the kingdom,"<sup>110</sup> contains both implicitly and explicitly Jesus' commands that are the content of ongoing mission.<sup>111</sup>

Incidentally, the embodiment of "obey all that I have commanded you" on the part of the community is itself an important aspect of the Church's mission. The ordering of the Church's life together in compliance with the commands of Christ is a witness to the surrounding world both to the reality of the presence of the kingdom and to its character. In the Sermon on the Mount, which sets forth the essential principles of the kingdom, Jesus insists that insofar as the community lives according to the precepts of the Sermon it is the "light of the world" and the "salt of the earth" (5:13-16). In fact, it is a city set<sup>112</sup> on a "hill" (ὄρος, the same word used for the "mountain" upon which Jesus gives the Sermon, 5:1) that cannot be hidden.<sup>113</sup> The Church's proclamation is received by the world not only as something heard with the ears, but also as something seen with the eyes.

But that mission, proclaimed either by word or example, is possible only because of Jesus' presence (28:20b). The declaration "I am with you" echoes many Old Testament passages in which God promises to be with his chosen people or chosen leaders among his people in the

sense of saving them from destruction (e.g., Josh 22:31; 1 Sam 17:37; Is 41:10) or empowering them to fulfill the task he has given to them which lies beyond human capacity (e.g., Ex 3:11-12; Josh 1:5; Hag 2:4-5).<sup>114</sup> The first reference in Matthew's Gospel to divine presence is the programmatic statement of 1:23, "Emmanuel, God with us," and pertains to salvific divine presence, whereas this final reference to divine presence pertains to empowering divine presence. This framing (*inclusio*) signifies that the Jesus who promises to be "with you" in 28:20 is himself "God with us." Thus, God himself, in the person of his Son (28:19), dwells with his people precisely as they fulfill their global mission.

But 28:20b not only participates in an *inclusio* with 1:23, but also brings to a climax the theme of *Mitsein* developed throughout the Gospel. The *Mitsein* of 1:23 is soteriological, or salvational, with-ness (linked as it is with salvation from sins, 1:21). In 18:20 ("where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them")<sup>115</sup> Jesus promises to be with the Church (in the form of its local congregations) as it goes about its most difficult task of disciplining errant members; this is ecclesial with-ness. All of this anticipates Jesus' eschatological with-ness ("I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom," 26:29), which is, however, contingent upon the disciples "watching with" Jesus (26:38, 40), pointing to provisional with-ness.<sup>116</sup> The consideration that all of these references to *Mitsein* culminate in the missional with-ness of 28:20 suggests that, in a sense, these various forms of God's presence with his people through his Son Jesus realize their full significance in the mission of the Church.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup>The word "mission" is not found in Matthew's Gospel. In fact, it occurs rarely in the New Testament. The term appears only once in the NIV and NASB, at Acts 12:25, where it translates *διακονία*; and in the RSV it appears not only at Acts 12:25, but also at 2 Cor 11:12 where it is simply supplied for the sake of sense and does not translate any specific Greek term, and at Gal 2:8, where it translates *ἀποστολή*. Neither *ἀποστολή* nor *διακονία* appears in Matthew. Yet the theme of mission is manifestly present. As is often pointed out, our English word "mission" derives from the Latin *mittere*, meaning to send ("Mission," s.v., *The Oxford English Dictionary* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971]). And, in this instance, etymology accords with the current use of the term, since sending with a view toward fulfilling a purpose is the denotation of the English word (see, e.g., "Mission," s.v., *Webster's II New College Dictionary* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995]). Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity,

2006), 23, defines it as “a long-term purpose or goal that is to be achieved through proximate objectives and planned actions,” but he does so in order to be able to speak of God assuming a mission for the world (the *missio Dei*). Yet it is better to differentiate between purpose and mission; God has a *purpose* and therefore sends Israel, Christ, and (through Christ) the Church on a mission to fulfill that purpose. According to the Bible, God is active in fulfilling his purpose, but usually not directly so, but through mediate agency. In fact, *missio Dei* originally had to do with the doctrine of the trinity: God (the Father) *sent* the Son, and the Father and the Son *sent* the Spirit. For the history of this concept, see David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 398-402.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1965), 120.

<sup>4</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 58.

<sup>5</sup> The five great discourses are (1) Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5-7); (2) Missionary Discourse (chap. 10); (3) Parables Discourse (chap. 13); (4) Community Discourse (chap. 18); and (5) Eschatological Discourse (chaps. 24-25). For discussions of the role of these discourses in Matthew's Gospel, see Benjamin Wisner Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York: Henry Holt, 1930), 80-90, 165-261; Christopher R. Smith, “Literary Evidence of a Fivefold Structure in the Gospel of Matthew,” *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997): 544-51.

<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical quotations represent the translation of the author.

<sup>7</sup> I am using this term not in the broad soteriological sense that all persons will ultimately be saved, but in the missional sense that God offers the possibility of salvation to all (including Gentiles). As we shall see below, Matthew's Gospel contains several other allusions to the eventual inclusion of the Gentiles.

<sup>8</sup> For a helpful review of scholarly treatments on the relationship between 10:5-6 and 28:16-20, see Axel von Dobbeler, “Die Restitution Israels und die Bekehrung der Heiden: Das Verhältnis von Mt 10,5b.6 und Mt 28,18-20 unter dem Aspect der Komplementarität. Erwägungen zum Standort des Matthäusevangeliums,” *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 91 (2004): 21-28.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., John P. Meier, “Salvation History in Matthew: In Search of a Starting Point,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37 (1975): 203-15; idem, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel: A Redactional Study of Matthew 5:7-48*, *Analecta Biblica* 71 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 27; Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus*, 3e. Aufl. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971).

<sup>10</sup> E.g., Schuyler Brown, "The Matthean Community and the Gentile Mission," *Novum Testamentum* XXII (1980): 193-221; James LaGrand, *The Earliest Christian Mission to "All Nations" in the Light of Matthew's Gospel*, University of South Florida Studies in Formative Christianity and Judaism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Paul Foster, *Community, Law and Mission in Matthew's Gospel*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2 Reihe, 177 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 218-42; Eung Chun Park, *The Mission Discourse in Matthew's Interpretation*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe, 81 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), 6-8.

<sup>11</sup> Among exceptions to this general lack of concentration upon a theology of mission in Matthew are Donald Juel, "The Mission Theology of Matthew," in *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, ed. Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 233-54; Mark Allan Powell, *God With Us: A Pastoral Theology of Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 1-27; and Bitrus A. Sarma, *Hermeneutics of Mission in Matthew: Israel and the Nations in the Interpretive Framework of Matthew's Gospel* (Carlisle, UK: Langham, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> E.g., the recent insistence that Matthew's Gospel, along with the other Gospels, are of the genre of ancient biography, emphasizes that the focus is upon the subject of the biography. See Richard Burrige, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 247-50, 289-94.

<sup>13</sup> Actually the passion and resurrection form a complex climax in Matthew's Gospel, as suggested by the fact that passion and resurrection are mentioned together in the thrice-repeated formalized predictions at 16:21; 17:22-23; and 20:18-19, and by the connections between crucifixion and resurrection that Matthew forges through the reference to the resurrection at 27:53 and the reference to crucifixion at 28:5, and through the role of the women, who form a bridge between the events of Jesus' death and resurrection (27:55-61; 28:1-10). But within this sequence the resurrection holds a position of ultimacy, since every stage of the plot, including the crucifixion, lunges forward towards it. Moreover, the crucifixion is an act of humans (17:23; 20:18-19; 26:57-27:54), whereas the resurrection is the act of God, the supreme reality in the world of Matthew's Gospel, and indeed the final act of God recounted in the narrative.

<sup>14</sup> It is this representation of certain major themes found earlier in the Gospel that led Bornkamm to refer to the Great Commission as "a summary of the entire gospel of Matthew." See Günther Bornkamm, "The Risen Lord and the Earthly Jesus," in *The Future of Our Religious Past*, FS Rudolf Bultmann, ed. James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 205. Yet it is not a summarization in the narrow, technical sense, since it does not contain a point-by-point retelling of the Gospel; see David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 110-113; cf. Esther 9:24-28.

<sup>15</sup> "the most important words of the entire Gospel," my translation. Wolfgang Trilling, *Das Wahre Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus-*

*Evangeliums*, Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, 10, 3d Aufl. (München: Kösel, 1968), 21.

<sup>16</sup> Otto Michel, "The Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, Issues in Religion and Theology, 3, ed. Graham Stanton (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 35, italics his.

<sup>17</sup> Some scholars have argued that the Great Commission reflects a form, or *Gattung*, drawn from the Old Testament, and should therefore be construed primarily according to Old Testament passages that bear the form identified, whether royal decrees (Bruce J. Malina, "The Literary Structure and Form of Matt. xxviii. 16-20," *New Testament Studies* 17 [1970]: 87-103), or Old Testament commissions (Benjamin J. Hubbard, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 28.16-20*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, 19 [Missoula: Scholars, 1974]). But almost certainly the passage is a creation of the evangelist and was not found in any preexisting form. See Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Composition and Christology of Matt 28:16-20," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974): 573-84.

<sup>18</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 58. Bosch himself attempts to correct this deficiency by examining the Great Commission in light of other Matthean passages and themes. My attempt to do the same thing in this paper differs from Bosch's treatment in a number of emphases and matters of interpretation.

<sup>19</sup> Karl Barth, "An Exegetical Study of Matthew 28:16-20," in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 60, insists that the "therefore" indicates that "the disciples' carrying out of the charge will not at all be determined by the excellency and strength of their own will and work; nor will it be jeopardized by their deficiencies." Yet we must avoid sliding into a monergism here; the participation of the Church is necessary, and will have a bearing upon outcome.

<sup>20</sup> The significance of this possibility is expressed well by Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 720-21: "If many Christians today have lost a sense of Jesus' presence and purpose among them, it may be because they have lost sight of the mission their Lord has given them." The issue here, of course, is whether divine presence is to be understood exclusively in terms of function (salvation and empowerment), or whether it includes also relationship, i.e., interpersonal intimacy. See David D. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine presence and God's people in the First Gospel*, Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series 90 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 113-16.

<sup>21</sup> And, of course, it is Jesus who actually gives this command.

<sup>22</sup> Thus Otto Michel, "The Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel," p. 35, asks "Must this composition really be understood in terms of its middle piece, the mission charge—as usually happens—or is it not *right from the*

*start christological?*" [italics his] I would counter only that even the mission charge is Christological in that it is Jesus who gives the charge and who mentions himself twice within it.

<sup>23</sup> Note (1) that the five great discourses (chaps. 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25) are directed to "the twelve," and yet these discourses focus not upon matters pertaining to the twelve during Jesus' earthly ministry, but upon the concerns of post-Easter Christians in general, so that what the Matthean Jesus says to the disciples is really being said to the post-Easter Church; (2) that the twelve in Matthew's Gospel are constantly presented as struggling with the kinds of issues and experiences that would be especially relevant to the Christians of the post-Easter Church (e.g., 14:28-32; 16:5-12; 17:14-21, 24-27; 26:30-46); and (3) that both "the twelve" and Christians in general are called "disciples" (cf. 10:1 with 10:2; 13:52; 27:57; 28:19, although Matthew distinguishes between the noun μαθηταί, used for the disciples, and the verb μαθητεύω, which Matthew uses for those who will become disciples in the post-Easter period. But I would draw back from redaction critics who employ the category of "transparency" in the sense that they consider the disciples to be little more than ciphers for specific groups or members within Matthew's community. See, e.g., Ulrich Luz, "The Disciples in the Gospel according to Matthew," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, pp. 98-128; idem, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9, 62-66. For a more nuanced view, reflecting a narrative-critical reading, see David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplemental Series 42 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> Thus, Matthew is careful to include the statement "and when they saw him" in 28:17. Note Matthew's attempts throughout to establish the historicity of the resurrection. He does so, e.g., by emphasizing the sealing of the tomb and the posting of guards (27:65-66; 28:4), by explaining the silence of the guards regarding the resurrection event (28:11-15), by undermining the report that the disciples stole Jesus' body (27:62-64; 28:11-15), and by insisting that the women had seen the actual burial of Jesus in the sepulcher (27:61), thus making it impossible to believe that on Sunday morning they visited the wrong tomb, a different, yet-to-be-occupied grave.

<sup>25</sup> Many contemporary scholars reject the notion of temporality in Greek verbs in favor of "aspect" and "space." See, e.g., Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament with Reference to Tense and Mood*, Studies in Biblical Greek 1 (New York: Lang, 1989); and Constantine R. Campbell, *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*, Studies in Biblical Greek 13 (New York: Lang, 2007). But several scholars have pushed back, insisting that the indicative mood, at least, grammaticalizes time. See most recently, Timothy Brookins, "A Tense Discussion: Rethinking the Grammaticalization of Time in Greek Indicative Verbs," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137 (2018): 147-68.

<sup>26</sup> 10:1, 2, 5; 11:1; 19:28; 20:17; 26:14, 20, 47.



<sup>27</sup> Almost always in Matthew's Gospel persecution is connected to mission. In the first reference to Christian persecution Jesus links it with the persecution experienced by the prophets (5:10-12); and the first reference to "cross" pertains to the cross of disciples in their capacity as proclaimers of the kingdom (10:38-39; cf. 10:7-15). See also 10:16-39; 13:20-21; 23:34-36; 24:9-14. Indeed, the first reference to Judas' betrayal is at 10:4, at the beginning of the Missionary Discourse, suggesting that falling away and betrayal is a potential danger of the rejection of the disciples' ministry and message described in 10:16-39.

<sup>28</sup> The word *παραδίδομαι*, which occurs in 24:10, is used repeatedly of Judas (10:4; 26:15, 16, 21, 23, 24, 25, 46; 27:3, 4). Of course, Judas' betrayal did not itself occur because of persecution arising from his pursuit of mission. Yet, Judas' apostasy is due to his repudiation of the way of the cross in favor of the allure of wealth (26:6-16), temptations that will be occasioned by the challenges of mission (10:8-11, 38-39); and Judas apostasizes just after Jesus' declaration regarding the gospel "preached in the whole world" (26:13). Thus, Judas represents the kind of apostasy that would be occasioned, in the case of other (later) disciples, by persecution attending ministry.

<sup>29</sup> Insofar as he twice denied being "with Jesus" (26:69-72) Peter repudiated his discipleship, which involves, in Matthew, primarily the notion of being "with" Jesus (1:21-23; 26:29, 39-41; 28:20), and placed himself under eschatological judgment (10:32-33). But in the wake of his denial Peter "weeps" (26:75); and in the Bible "weeping" (*κλαίω*) often carries the significance of submissive turning towards God. See Karl Heinrich Rendtorff, "*κλαίω*," *TDNT*, 3:722-25. The very fact that Peter, in obedience to Jesus' command, goes to Galilee and there worships the resurrected Jesus suggests repentance. Thus W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 3:550, correctly speak of Peter's weeping as "the beginning of repentance." Judas, on the other hand, does not repent, but experiences remorse (*μεταμέλομαι*, 27:3), i.e., a different feeling over against a changing of the mind or alteration of intention (*μετανοέω*, cf. 4:17). This distinction between *μεταμέλομαι* and *μετανοέω*, found consistently in classical Greek, was sometimes blurred in Hellenistic Greek, and consequently to some extent in the LXX. But the New Testament, and particularly Matthew, generally maintains the distinction. See Otto Michel, "*μεταμέλομαι*," *TDNT*, 4:626-29.

<sup>30</sup> This passage understandably played a significant role in the debate involving the Novatians and Donatists over full reinstatement (including reinstatement to ministry) for those who had lapsed under pressure of persecution. See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28: A Commentary, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 459-62.

<sup>31</sup> 10:2, 5, 16; 23:34, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Of Jesus at 4:23; 5:1, 19; 7:29; 9:35; 11:1; 13:54; 21:23; 22:1. Of the disciples at 28:20a.

<sup>33</sup> Of Jesus at 8:16, 28-34; 9:32-34; 12:22-29; 15:21-28; 17:14-29. Of the disciples at 10:1, 8; 17:14-20.

<sup>34</sup> Of Jesus at 4:23; 9:35. Of the disciples at 21:14; 26:13.

<sup>35</sup> Persecution of Jesus at 2:3, 13-23; 9:1-13, 33; 12:1-14, 24-42; 15:1-21; 16:1-12; 20:17-20; 21:12-17, 23-23:38; 26:3-5, 47-27:26, 41-45, 62-66. Persecution of disciples at 5:10-11; 10:16-22, 38; 13:21; 16:24; 20:22-23; 23:29-36; 24:9-14. The comparison between the persecution of Jesus in the wake of his ministry and that of the disciples as they minister is explicitly connected in 10:24-25.

<sup>36</sup> Of course, comparison is not identity; consequently, certain aspects of Jesus' ministry belong to him alone and are not reproducible by disciples. Only Jesus can "save his people from their sins" (1:21), or atone for sins by death upon the cross (20:28; 26:28), or fulfill the law and the prophets by identifying the will of God that lies behind the letter of the law and is, at least in part, obscured by that letter (5:17-48). Even though both Jesus and the disciples forgive sins (9:1-8; cf. 6:14; 18:21-35), forgiveness by the disciples is derivative of forgiveness effected by Christ and therefore does not carry the same value. For a rather thorough analysis of this comparison between the mission of Jesus and that of the disciples, see Powell, *God With Us*, 3-15.

<sup>37</sup> As we shall see, Jesus ministers to Gentiles on only two occasions (8:5-17; 15:21-28); in both cases these Gentiles come to him and manifest super-abounding faith. It is only such extraordinary faith that causes Jesus to transcend his otherwise carefully maintained restriction. Although twice Matthew reports that Jesus traveled to Gentile areas (8:28-34; 15:21-39), the restrictive statements at 10:5-6 and 15:24 require us to understand that Jesus did not go into these areas with the purpose of ministering to Gentiles; in fact, both these areas contained a significant Jewish population. Accordingly, Matthew is careful to record that both the demoniacs and the Canaanite woman "came out" to Jesus (8:28; 15:22). In the account of the Gadarene demoniacs, the demons' statement (found only in Matthew), "Have you come to destroy us *before the time*" probably suggests that, before the resurrection, ministry in Gentile lands was premature and in a sense anticipatory of the world-wide mission that would be inaugurated at 28:16-20; though cf. John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 375-76. See Walter T. Wilson, *Healing in the Gospel of Matthew: Reflections on Method and Ministry* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014), 131-38; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary*, *Hermeneia-A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 24-25.

<sup>38</sup> The reference to "mountain" in 28:16 highlights the revelatory character of the scene, for (as most scholars recognize) Matthew uses this image to refer to the place of revelation. See, e.g., Bornkamm, "The Risen Lord and the Earthly Jesus," 204. But cf. Terrence Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplemental Series 8* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), who sees "mountain" signifying the place where the eschatological messianic

community is constituted in line with Old Testament and Jewish notions of the New Jerusalem.

<sup>39</sup> 2:2, 11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20.

<sup>40</sup> In addition to the obvious general similarities (boat, storm, Jesus' deliverance of his disciple[s] from danger) we note a number of specific resonances, e.g., μη φοβείσθε; Κύριε, σῶσον; ὀλιγόπιστοι/ὀλιγόπιστος. And the question that the disciples pose at the conclusion of the first boat scene, "Who is this....?" they answer at the conclusion of the second boat scene, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

<sup>41</sup> "Günther Bornkamm, "The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, 56. Scholars generally consider this brief work by Bornkamm to be the beginning of redaction-critical study on Matthew's Gospel. This symbolic, virtually allegorical, function of the story has been subsequently affirmed by many other scholars, e.g., Jean Zumstein, *La condition du croyants dans l'Évangile selon Matthieu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 245-55; Birger Gerhardsson, *The Mighty Acts of Jesus according to Matthew*, Scriptura minora Regiae Societatis humanorarium litterarum Ludensis (Lund: Gleerup, 1979), 58; and Romeo Popa, *Allgegenwärtiger Konflikt im Matthäusevangelium: Exegetische und sozialpsychologische Analyse der Konfliktgeschichte*, Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus/Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments, 111 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 334-35.

<sup>42</sup> Bornkamm's figural interpretation of this passage was anticipated by the Fathers, e.g., Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 12; Peter Chrysologus, *Sermons* 50.2.

<sup>43</sup> Gerhard Held, a student of Bornkamm, correctly notes connections between these two boat scenes, but does not sufficiently analyze the combination of similarities and differences between the two pericopes. See Gerhard Held, "Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*," 204-206.

<sup>44</sup> Note that Matthew is careful to note that Jesus appears at the fourth watch of the night (14:25), i.e., between 3:00 and 6:00 in the morning, just before dawn, corresponding to the time of Jesus' resurrection according to 28:1. Note, incidentally, that Jesus has just expressed his deity by the divine designation ἐγὼ εἰμί (14:27). See Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 319.

<sup>45</sup> See below, footnote 106.

<sup>46</sup> Thus Peter exercises true faith, which is the proper response to the appearance of the glorious Lord, as emphasized by Held, "Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories," 206. The notion of διστάζω may indicate weakness of faith (ὀλιγόπιστος) but not the absence of faith (ἄπιστος). Thus, διστάζω stands in a dialectical relationship not only with προσκυνήσις but also with πίστις. The presentation of Peter in this pericope anticipates the combination of worship and doubt in 28:17; as Peter is characterized at one and the same time by strong and weak faith in 14:22-33, so the disciples in

28:17 hold simultaneously the strong faith implicit in worship along with doubt.

<sup>47</sup> Adolf Schlatter, *Der Glaube in Neuen Testament* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), 112, describes the person who is ὀλιγόπιστος as “der das früher betätigte Glauben nicht festhält, sondern es in der neuen Lage wegen ihrer besonderen Schwierigkeit unterläßt.” “[T]he one who has not held fast the faith which was earlier exercised, but in the new situation pulls back because of its special difficulty”—my translation.

<sup>48</sup> The Greek construction indicates that this doubting characterizes all the eleven (versus the rendering of the NRSV, “but some doubted”). See R. W. L. Moberly, “Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel as Son of God,” in *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus*, ed. R. W. L. Moberly, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 191-93; contra R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 1111.

<sup>49</sup> Matt 17:20-21 makes it clear that ὀλιγοπιστία involves not amount of faith (“little faith”) but character of faith, a faith mixed with doubt (“impure” or “alloyed” faith).

<sup>50</sup> Matt 8:11; 23:34-35; 24:14; and 26:13 indicate confidence that worldwide mission will occur.

<sup>51</sup> Richard A. Edwards, “Uncertain Faith: Matthew’s Portrait of the Disciples,” in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 47-71; Jeannine K. Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples*, Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 59-120.

<sup>52</sup> 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8. In 17:20 Jesus applies to them the noun ὀλιγοπιστία (“little faith”).

<sup>53</sup> 14:13-21; 15:32-39; 17:14-21; 19:13-15. In contrast to Mark (Mark 6:12-30) and Luke (Luke 9:6; 10:17) Matthew mentions nothing of the disciples actually ministering. See Dorothy Jean Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse: A Literary Critical Analysis*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, 38 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 127-53.

<sup>54</sup> 26:30-35, 56, 69-75; see also 15:12.

<sup>55</sup> 4:18-22; 9:9; 21:1-7; 26:18-19; 28:16.

<sup>56</sup> To this list could be added: authority to teach the will of God (7:28-29), even insofar as it involved the abrogating of certain commandments of the law (5:17-48); authority in himself to heal, since he performed these healings without recourse to prayer (4:23-25; 8:1-9:35; 11:5-6; 12:9-23; 15:29-31; 19:2; 20:29-34; 21:14); authority to exorcise demons and thus “plunder” Satan’s kingdom (8:16, 28-34; 9:32; 12:22-32, 43-45; 15:21-28; 17:14-21); authority to demand that persons abandon

possessions and family to follow him (4:18-22; 19:21-22, 29), even if it meant violating the commands of the Decalogue (8:21); authority to send the twelve to minister to Israel (10:1-42); authority uniquely to reveal the Father (11:27); and authority to seize property (21:3).

<sup>57</sup> Matt 28:19-20a is the first time Jesus gives the command to make disciples, baptize, or teach; and, of course, this passage also marks the broadening of ministry from Israel alone to "all nations," the reference to "all" here corresponding to "all authority" in the preceding verse.

<sup>58</sup> Here one "like a son of man" comes with clouds of heaven to "the ancient of days" [God] and is presented before him, at which time he "was given (ἐδόθη) authority (ἐξουσία) and glory and kingdom, and all nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) according to race were serving him." In Daniel this "son of man" represents the "saints of the Most High" (Dan 7:22, 25, 27a), i.e., Israel, or a righteous remnant of Israel; yet at the end of the passage Daniel describes the "son of man" by the third person masculine singular (Dan 7:27b), which allows its application to a specific individual.

<sup>59</sup> In New Testament Christology exaltation involves the resurrection and ascension. See, e.g., Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 446-466. The Gospel of Matthew, of course, contains no account of, or even reference to, the ascension.

<sup>60</sup> The verb "has been given" (ἐδόθη) is certainly a divine passive, i.e., the passive voice used without an explicit reference to the one who does the action as a substitute for the divine name; as such, we understand it as "given by God." The divine passive appears throughout the New Testament, but is especially prominent in Matthew's Gospel. Of course, in the narrative world of Matthew's Gospel only God could grant "all authority in heaven and earth." See, e.g., 11:26-27. We should note also that during his earthly life Jesus apparently did not have authority over the angels (26:53), but was to exercise such authority later (13:30, 39-43; 16:27; 24:31).

<sup>61</sup> The notion that Jesus was given greater status or authority at the point of his exaltation is found throughout the New Testament, e.g., Acts 2:29-36; Rom 1:1-4; Phil 2:5-11; Heb 1:1-5. Some have argued on the basis of 11:27 that 28:18 does not describe a new authority, but is a confirmation of the authority he had all along. See, e.g., von Dobbeler, "Die Restitution Israels," 38; Barth, "An Exegetical Study," 62, who speaks of an unhiding of the authority that was his previously. Cf. Moberly, "Jesus in Matthew's Gospel," 193-96, for a thoughtful analysis of the relationship between 11:27 and 28:18, in which he suggests that the degree of authority that Jesus possesses is always relative to his relationship to the Father at any particular time, and that therefore there is a progressive degree of "Sonship" (although Jesus has been Son all along, and thus there is no hint of adoptionism) that corresponds to a progressive experience of authority. In other words, at 11:27 Jesus had received from the Father "all things" that were appropriate to his relationship with the Father at that point. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1113, perceptively notes that finally at 28:18 Jesus enjoys the range of authority that is commensurate with that of the Father, who is described in 11:27 as Lord of *heaven* and earth;" cf. 9:6.

<sup>62</sup> This reference to authority “in heaven” (ἐν οὐρανῷ) also points to a greater degree of authority than he enjoyed previously, a cosmic co-authority with the Father; for up to this point in the Matthew’s Gospel Jesus exercised authority “on earth” (e.g., 9:6). Thus Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 203-206, points out that when Matthew combines “heaven and earth” he typically uses “heaven” in the sense of the divine realm. This explanation is preferable to that offered by Barth, “Exegetical Study,” 61, who argued that authority in heaven corresponds to Paul’s notion of Christ having authority over the “principalities and powers,” for which there is no evidence.

<sup>63</sup> I use the masculine pronoun since in the ancient world μαθηταί were typically male.

<sup>64</sup> Indeed, μαθητής sometimes referred to the adherent of a philosophical or religious school.

<sup>65</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew’s Gospel*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 11-125. Although the concept of master-disciple appears in the Old Testament and intertestamental material, the Greek terms are not found therein, but occur for the first time among the Jews in the writings of Philo and Josephus. The rabbis in the Tannaitic period often used the corresponding Hebrew terms to refer to those who studied the Oral Torah under rabbis with a view toward becoming rabbis themselves; and they sometimes projected this notion back into the first century, say to describe those who were disciples of Shammai and Hillel.

<sup>66</sup> 5:1-7:28; 12:46-50; and esp. the “Community Discourse” of chap. 18. See Juel, “Mission Theology,” 77-78; Powell, *God With Us*, 22-26.

<sup>67</sup> David R. Bauer, “The Major Characters in Matthew’s Story: Their Function and Significance in the First Gospel,” *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 357-67. The scribe who attempts to initiate discipleship (8:18-19) is no exception, since this man is rebuffed by Jesus in part precisely because of this self-initiation. See Jack Dean Kingsbury, “On Following Jesus: The ‘Eager’ Scribe and the ‘Reluctant’ Disciple (Matthew 8:18-22),” *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988): 45-59. Jesus’ practice of initiating discipleship is unique among Jewish rabbis; otherwise it was always the would-be disciple who approached the teacher. See Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1993), 76-77.

<sup>68</sup> Note how Matthew consistently uses spatial language to point to the relational character of discipleship: “follow me” (4:20, 22; 8:19, 22; 9:9; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21, 27; 20:34; 27:55); “come to me” (2:2, 8, 9, 11, 23; 9:10; 15:28, 29; 16:24; 19:14, 21; 21:5); “with you/with me” (1:23; 18:20; 26:29, 38, 40; 28:20). See K. H. Rengstorf, “μαθητής,” *TDNT*, 4:444-52, who emphasizes this personal relationship of disciples to Jesus over against the way discipleship was typically construed in intertestamental and first-century Judaism, i.e., with a focus on the teachings of a school or

(especially toward the end of the first century AD) the interpretation of Oral Torah.

<sup>69</sup> In spite of the phrase, "make disciples of all nations," he does not have in mind discipling whole nations or people-groups, but rather persons within these nations, as the masculine accusative plural ἀποστόλοις (vs. the neuter accusative plural form of ἔθνη) later in v. 19 demonstrates. Thus Barth, "Exegetical Study," 64; contra Warren Carter, "Matthew and the Gentiles: Individual Conversion or Systematic Transformation?," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (2004): 259-82. Thus there is no anticipation of "Christendom" here.

<sup>70</sup> von Dobbeler, "Die Restitution Israels," argues that the restrictive command of 10:5-6 and the demand of universal mission in 28:16-20 both remain in force in that the mission in chap. 10 pertains to Israel while the Great Commission pertains to Gentiles, and that both are to continue until the end. von Dobbeler insists that Matthew calls for a "restitution" of Israel, which involves Jews' embracing obedience to their law as Jesus has brought it to fulfillment; this constitutes not conversion but an affirmation of the faith that has always been theirs. But, according to von Dobbeler, Matthew looks to the conversion of the Gentiles through a process of discipleship, since it involves for them a turning away from paganism to the faith of Israel as Jesus has fulfilled it. Thus, according to this view, Matthew envisages two separate missions. But this ingenuous solution fails to persuade, since disciples are to be made of Jews as well as Gentiles, and since both the restricted command of 10:5-6 and the universal commission of 28:18-20 are directed to the same group: the twelve [eleven] disciples. Either they are not to go to the ἔθνη (10:5-6) or they are to go and make disciples of the ἔθνη (28:19); these are mutually exclusive alternatives. A much better solution is that 10:5-6 reflects the limited scope of mission that was appropriate during Jesus' earthly ministry, but was to be followed by a subsequent universal mission on the part of the now reconstituted Israel. See Anton Vögtle, "Das christologische und ekklesiologische Anliegen von Mt 28,18-20," *Studia Evangelica* 2 (1964): 266-94; Strecker, *Der Weg*, 33, 117-18; Joachim Gnllka, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium*, 2 Teile, Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 1:362-63.

<sup>71</sup> They also noted the emphasis upon the guilt of Israel in rejecting Jesus as Messiah (e.g., 27:20-26) and the consequent judgment upon Israel as set forth in 21:43 and 22:1-10. See Joachim Lange, *Das Erscheinen des Auferstandenen im Evangelium nach Matthäus*, Forschung zur Bibel, 11 (Würzburg: Echter, 1973), 177; Rolf Walker, *Die Heilsgeschichte im erstern Evangelium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 111-13; Joachim Gnllka, "Die Missionsauftrag des Herrn nach Matthäus 28 und Apostelgeschichte 1," *Bibel und Leben* (1968): 1-9; and esp. Douglas R. A. Hare and Daniel J. Harrington, "'Make Disciples of all the Gentiles' (Mt 28:19)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37 (1975): 359-69. See the rejoinder to Hare and Harrington by John P. Meier, "Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19?," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (1977): 94-102.

<sup>72</sup> Trilling, *Das Wahre Israel*, 26-28.

<sup>73</sup> So also Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 719, who speaks of “peoples” over against our contemporary notion of “nation-states;” also John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 177-81. Contra Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 107. The reference to a new ἔθνος in 21:43 points to the cultural distinctives of the community of faith, first Israel and now the Church. If so, the mission of the Church involves attention to the culture of evangelized peoples, and at the same time recognizes that certain cultural markers belong to the community of faith, in whatever indigenous culture that community takes shape.

<sup>74</sup> For this understanding of the role of the women in the genealogy, see David R. Bauer, “The Literary and Theological Function of the Genealogy in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *Treasures New and Old: Contributions to Matthean Studies*, ed. David R. Bauer and Mark Allan Powell, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Studies 1 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 147; also John C. Hutchison, “Women, Gentiles, and the Messianic Mission in Matthew’s Genealogy,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (2001): 152-64. For different views on the role of the women, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 71-74; Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies with special reference to the setting of the genealogies of Jesus*, 2d ed., Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Jason B. Hood, *The Messiah, his Brothers, and the Nations (Matthew 1:1-17)*, Library of New Testament Studies, 441 (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2011).

<sup>75</sup> David R. Bauer, “The Kingship of Jesus in the Matthean Infancy Narrative: A Literary Analysis,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 57 (1995): 319-23.

<sup>76</sup> Juel, “Mission Theology,” 234; Sarma, *Hermeneutics of Mission*, 145-202; Amy-Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Salvation History*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 14 (Lewiston: Mellen, 1988). Rollin G. Grams, “Narrative Dynamics in Isaiah’s and Matthew’s Mission Theology,” *Transformation* 21 (2004): 238-55, insists that Matthew derived this notion that Israel’s mission to the nations was always at the center of God’s plan especially from Isaiah. Grams fails to demonstrate that Matthew draws upon Isaiah’s vision in detail, but his study does support the possibility that Matthew drew his sense of Israel’s mission in the Old Testament through the lens of Isaiah. Michael Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel: The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplemental Series 68 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 320, has suggested that Matthew has obtained his perspective on Israel’s missional role through Jeremiah. That this motif is found throughout the Old Testament, or at least in many portions of the Old Testament, is strongly argued by Christopher J. H. Wright, *Salvation Belongs to Our God: Celebrating the Bible’s Central Story*, Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2008), 69-90.



<sup>77</sup> Note, e.g., the genealogy of Matt 1:1-17 and Matt 2:15. See R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 206-10.

<sup>78</sup> As Barth, "Exegetical Study," 64, puts it: "It is the eschatological Israel, the Israel which receives into its life and history the chosen ones from among the Gentiles." This command to the disciples (reconstituted Israel) to make disciples, i.e., those from all nations who will become disciples like themselves, means that these who are made disciples also participate in the reconstituted Israel. In this sense, they become the "true Israel," as Trilling, *Das Wahre Israel*, puts it (though that expression appears for the first time in Justin Martyr, *Dialogues* 123; cf. *Dialogues* 135). Thus, believing Jews and Gentiles form one "nation" (21:43). In Pauline terms, they become one people out of two (Eph 2:11-22). The fact that Matthew has in mind one new nation probably explains his omission of the phrase "for all the nations" from the statement we find in Mark 11:17, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations" (cf. Matt 21:13; also Luke 19:46).

<sup>79</sup> The centrality of this reconstituted Israel in the salvation of the world explains the initial exclusive mission to Israel (10:5-6); for this redeemed remnant of Israel is, according to the divine economy as set forth in the Old Testament Scriptures, to be the agent of salvation to the nations. To paraphrase the message of Isaiah (esp. chaps. 40-55): "God will save you in order that you may thereby bring God's salvation to the nations." Thus, Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, 126-27: "What Matthew wants to assert in his own way is the priority of the mission to Israel and the permanent obligation towards it—for without Israel as the center there would indeed be no salvation. This mission, however, is only carried out rightly if at the same time the universal commission is observed by working among all nations." Cf. also Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 105-106.

<sup>80</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 640-45. Wallace is especially insistent that when the participle precedes the imperative it is virtually always a participle of attendant circumstance; he references, in this connection, specifically Matt 28:19.

<sup>81</sup> Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 106-107; Sarma, *Hermeneutics of Mission*, 208-209. Wilson, *Healing in the Gospel of Matthew*, 195-225, 316-19, emphasizes the crossing of various kinds of boundaries in the ministry of Jesus.

<sup>82</sup> Matthew maintains a distinction between "teaching" and "preaching" (cf. 4:23; 9:35).

<sup>83</sup> Contra Bruce J. Malina, "The Literary Structure and Form of Matt. XXVIII.16-20," 87-103, who insists that both participles are to be taken as imperatival, and thus the eleven are commanded to make disciples and then to baptize and teach.

<sup>84</sup> Note that the reference to baptism in Mark 10:38-39 (which may allude, in some measure, to Christian baptism) is absent in Matthew.

<sup>85</sup> Matthew draws connections between Jesus' baptism at the hands of John (3:13-17) and Christian baptism in 28:19, e.g., both passages involve the Father, Son, and Spirit. Yet we must consider the differences. John himself contrasts his baptizing work from that of the "coming one" who will baptize with "the Holy Spirit and fire" (3:11); and in early Christian tradition Christian baptism is the occasion of the baptism with the Holy Spirit (e.g., Acts 2:38; 9:17-19; 19:6; cf. 10:44-48 with 11:13-18). Consequently, those who have experienced John's baptism are required to undergo Christian baptism (Acts 19:1-7). We note, too, that Matthew excludes the connection of John's baptism with "the forgiveness of sins" that is found in Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3, inserting that phrase instead into the account of the Last Supper (26:28).

<sup>86</sup> Matt 3:6; Mark 1:4; Acts 2:37-41; 8:12, 36; 10:37, 44-48; 13:24; 16:15.

<sup>87</sup> Matt 3:3; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38.

<sup>88</sup> Matt 21:32; Acts 11:18; 16:31-32; 18:8.

<sup>89</sup> Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom 6:1-12; Col 2:11-13; 1 Peter 3:21-22.

<sup>90</sup> Acts 2:38; 9:17-18; 10:47; 19:1-7.

<sup>91</sup> Acts 2:37-42; 16:15, 34; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27-29.

<sup>92</sup> Michel, "The Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel," 38.

<sup>93</sup> Rom 5:1-6:14; Gal 3:23-20; cf. 1 Cor 15:21-22, 42-50.

<sup>94</sup> Hans Bietenhard, "ὄνομα," *TDNT*, 5:243-83; and most recently, Carmen Joy Imes, *Bearing YHWH's Name at Sinai: A Re-examination of the Name Command of the Decalogue*, Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplements 19 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2018).

<sup>95</sup> This follows from the Matthean Jesus' own practice of discipling the twelve through constant, ongoing teaching. Contra Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 137, who argues that the absence of a connective (καί or δέ) between the participles indicates that the teaching takes place at the time of baptizing (a "taught" baptism). But this claim places far too much weight on the absence of the connective and fails adequately to account for the sequence of the participles, since, practically speaking, this would involve a process of teaching prior to baptism. The absence of καί here is best explained by a desire to join together βαπτίζοντες and διδάσκοντες so as to set the statement off over against v. 20b, which begins with καί. The construal I am advocating was shared by at least some in the early Church, as indicated by the witness (involving, apparently, a scribal emendation) of the early manuscripts B and D, which have the aorist participle βαπτισθέντες, suggesting that baptism takes place prior to teaching. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 89, insists that the absence of the article

between the participles means that they depend “in different ways upon the main verb;” he concludes that “make disciples,” which involves primarily preaching, comes to completion in baptism, which is then followed by teaching. But his reducing discipling to preaching is without foundation and actually contradicts the role of preaching and teaching throughout Matthew’s Gospel.

<sup>96</sup> Though cf. Acts 2:41-42.

<sup>97</sup> *Did 7:7-14*. For the relation between the *Didache* and Matthew’s Gospel, see J. M. Court, “The *Didache* and Matthew’s Gospel,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (1981): 97-107; Huub van de Sandt and Jürgen Zangenberg, *Matthew, James, and the Didache: Three Related Documents in their Jewish and Christian Settings*, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Studies 45 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 2008). For the general practice in the early Church of pre-baptismal instruction, see Lawrence D. Folkemer, “A Study of the Catechumenate,” in *Conversion, Catechumenate, and Baptism in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Ferguson, Studies in Early Christianity, XI (New York, NY: Garland, 1993), 244-307; also A. Turck, “Aux Origines du Catéchuménat,” in *Conversion, Catechumenate, and Baptism*, 22-27. In the earliest stages, the emphasis in the catechumenate teaching was upon Christian practice more than doctrine, as is reflected also here in Matt 28:19. Matthew’s sequencing here does not exclude pre-baptismal catechesis; in fact, the various ramifications of baptism that I described above assume some significant knowledge about the faith on the part of the ones baptized.

<sup>98</sup> Powell, *God With Us*, 6-7. The notion of salvation from sin as a principle is reflected in the Gospel of John; note, e.g., John 1:29, with its employment of the singular.

<sup>99</sup> This salvation certainly involves forgiveness of sins (26:28; cf. 6:12-15; 18:21-35), but the emphasis is upon a life of active righteousness (e.g., 5:17-20; 7:13-27; 12:46-50; 13:41-43; 15:10-20; 21:28-32). In terms of systematic theology, it involves both imputed and imparted righteousness. The notion of “salvation” was typically deemed in Jewish messianic expectations to refer to deliverance from political or military enemies (e.g., Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 1:210; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 23-24, as in *Psalms of Solomon* 17-18. But here the focus is not political, but relational, i.e., personal reconciliation to God through which both forgiveness and righteous obedience are made possible. Note that repeatedly Matthew presents discipleship in terms of the relational category of sonship (5:9, 45; 7:9; 9:15; 13:38; 17:25-26; cf. 12:46-50). Wright, *Salvation Belongs to Our God*, 72-79, insists that blessings associated with salvation were relational from the very beginning of the biblical meganarrative.

Matthew can use salvation language (σώζω) in reference to healing (e.g., 9:21-22). Matt 9:1-9 indicates that one function of Jesus’ healings is to point to his authority to forgive sins. Thus, salvation is broad in that it entails also physical healing; but it has its center in deliverance from sin, i.e., relational wholeness with God. For a detailed discussion

of the connection between forgiveness of sins and physical healings in Jesus' ministry according to Matthew, see Wilson, *Healing in the Gospel of Matthew*, 139-59.

<sup>100</sup> 3:7-10; 7:15-23; 12:33-37; cf. 21:33-43.

<sup>101</sup> For the role of faith in the Christian life according to Matthew's Gospel, see Gerhard Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, 112-16.

<sup>102</sup> This would include, of course, obedience to the Old Testament law, as Jesus has brought it to fulfillment (5:17-20). Scholars disagree among themselves regarding whether Matthew regards this teaching as including insistence on circumcision. In my judgment, evidence is lacking for any definitive answer to this question. Thus, von Dobbeler, "Die Restitution Israels," 38-39; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1989), 86. But the centrality of the love command (22:34-40; cf. 7:12), which leads to significant reconstrual of certain commands (5:21-48), and the general lack of attention to matters such as circumcision or dietary regulations suggests that, in the theological structure of the Gospel, such demands may not necessarily be pressed; Thus, France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Theologian*, 234-35; contra David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community*, *Studies of the New Testament and its World* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 251-55.

<sup>103</sup> Disciples of Jewish teachers (*rabbis*) generally undertook their instruction in order to become teachers, or rabbis, themselves, eventually with their own disciples, at least in the period of the Tannaim. According to the Matthean Jesus, this is not to be the case with his disciples (23:8). See Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Gospel of Matthew*, 116-25; Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 718; Rengstorf, "μαθητής," 437-40, 447-49.

<sup>104</sup> This point is properly emphasized by Pierre Bonnard, *L'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu*. *Commentaire du Nouveau Testament*, 10e Serie (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1982), 416, 419.

<sup>105</sup> See Friedrich Büchsel, "δέω," *TDNT* 2:60-61; Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 6 Bände. (München: Beck, 1922-94), 1:732-38; Günther Bornkamm, "The Authority to 'Bind' and 'Loose' in the Church in Matthew's Gospel: The Problem of Sources in Matthew's Gospel," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, 85-97.

<sup>106</sup> Matt 16:19 is directed to Peter, but as he represents the entire disciple circle, which in turn is representative of the Church (cf. 18:18). For the notion that Peter (often) represents the entire disciple-circle in Matthew, see Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Figure of Peter in Matthew's Gospel as a Theological Problem," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979): 69-83.

<sup>107</sup> David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplemental*

Series, 31; Bible and Literature Series, 15 (Sheffield: Almond, 1988), 132-34. Cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 70-71, who sees the substance of the teaching here in 28:20a as referring especially to the Sermon on the Mount. I grant that the Sermon on the Mount sets forth the principles of the Kingdom and is foundational for the subsequent four great discourses; yet all five of these discourses contain vital instruction necessary for all the members of the post-Easter community.

<sup>108</sup> Hubert Frankemölle, "Zur Theologie der Mission im Matthäusevangelium," in *Mission im Neuen Testament*, ed. Karl Kertelge (Freiburg: Herder & Herder, 1987), 127-28.

<sup>109</sup> Chrysostom, "The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 15.1," quoted in *Matthew 1-13*, ed. Manlio Simonetti, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament 1a (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 78-79.

<sup>110</sup> 26:13; cf. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14. See Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 3d. ed. (Napanee, IN: Evangel, 1998), 28-29.

<sup>111</sup> Contra Eckhard J. Schabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2004), 2:1495, who inaccurately reduces teaching here to explicit commands.

<sup>112</sup> The passive voice (divine passive) suggests that the righteous life-style set forth in the Sermon, which is to be a witness to the world is effected by God.

<sup>113</sup> The framing of the Sermon on the Mount also points to the missionally witnessing character of the right ordering of life within the community. Matthew frames the Sermon with references to the crowds (who are those on the outside) in part to suggest that the life of discipleship as set forth in the Sermon must be conducted in the context of, and to some extent for the sake of, those who are on the outside. This is a point Matthew makes within the Sermon itself at not only 5:13-16, but also at 5:43-48.

<sup>114</sup> See Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 138-56.

<sup>115</sup> Hubert Frankemölle, *Jahwebund und Kirche Christi: Studien zur Form- und Traditionsgeschichte des "Evangeliums" nach Matthäus*, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen, neue Folge 10 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1974), 30-32, has shown that in the LXX ἐν μέσῳ ("in the midst") is equivalent to μετὰ ("with").

<sup>116</sup> Matthew emphasizes that Jesus was physically present with his disciples throughout his ministry; but Jesus' promise to be with them here in 28:20b, following as it does his new self-affirmation (28:18) and commissioning (28:19-20a), involves a new kind of presence, one that has both continuity and discontinuity with his physical presence among his disciples. Some negatives attend this new (spiritual presence), insofar as it entails mourning over a kind of separation vis-à-vis Jesus' physical presence during his earthly life (9: 14-17). But overall this is a transcendent presence, anticipated even during Jesus' earthly ministry; for on those (rare) occasions

when Jesus was physically absent from them he expected the disciples to minister according to his transcendent power (e.g., 17:14-20), though they failed to operate according to the authority that was theirs (cf. 10:1, 8). Indeed, throughout the Gospel, whenever Jesus is away from the disciples they fail to perform in anything like an adequate fashion. In addition to 17:14-20, see 8:23-27 (where, as asleep, Jesus is practically absent); 14:22-27; 26:69-75. See Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 66-108.

Jerry Breen

*An Ancient Hope: Matthew's Use of Isaiah to Explicate Christianity's Mission to the Nations*

**Abstract:**

The early church explained their story within the context of the story of Israel contained in the Hebrew scripture. The life and death of Jesus indicated that God was doing something new and amazing, but it could not be understood apart from God's ancient promises of hope delivered through the prophets. Each of the writers of the New Testament quote and allude to the story of Israel in their works, but perhaps none more than Matthew. This paper explicates Matthew's use of Isaiah to demonstrate that Jesus fulfills the promised restoration of Israel so that Israel can be a light to the nations. This study can help the reader understand how Matthew uses Isaiah to achieve his narrative purposes by identifying which significant themes Matthew has applied to his presentation of Jesus.

**Keywords:** Matthew, Isaiah, mission, restoration, healing

**Jerry Breen** is a Ph.D. student in Biblical Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

“This is the apex of the eschatological vision: a day when the people of God can be set free from their own sins and the sins of others, when they can come home to their God and be fully restored to his image, when a lifelong struggle to avoid grief and pain will be ended in their being overwhelmed by gladness and joy. This is the hope of the biblical faith.”- John Oswalt (1998:626)

## **Introduction**

Jesus Christ came into a world that was searching for hope. The Jewish people of Jesus’s day questioned when the elaborate promises of future blessing contained in their holy scriptures would ultimately be accomplished. The book of Isaiah, and especially Isa 40-66, envisions future promises of restoration, health, and witness for the nation of Israel. Isaiah promises that there will come a day when God will raise Israel up and fill her with his glory so that all the nations of the world will be drawn to the sight and worship God. The Gospel of Matthew cites Isaiah to show that in Jesus the promises given by Isaiah and other prophets are realized. Israel will be restored through the coming of Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, and all nations will experience the glory of God through the restoration that Jesus brings.

This paper will examine Matthew’s use of Isaiah to explicate Christianity’s mission to the nations in order to demonstrate that in Matthew Jesus inaugurates the promised restoration of Israel, which enables Israel to be a light to the nations. This realization will illuminate the significance of Isaiah within the narrative scheme of Matthew, particularly pertaining to the restoration of Israel and the Gentile mission. The Gospel of Matthew intentionally interweaves many passages from the Hebrew scriptures into the text in order to advance its narrative agenda, and the focus on Isaiah in this paper is not to suggest that quotations and allusions from other texts are not equally valid. Rather, it should be recognized that Matthew uses a homogeneous mixture of quotations and allusions from a variety of sources to illustrate the continuity of the life and death of Jesus with the Hebrew Bible. Before looking at Matthew’s use of Isaiah, it will be helpful to examine significant themes in Isaiah in order to understand Isaiah in its own context before observing how Matthew has used these themes for his purposes.



## Significant Themes in Isaiah

Contemporary scholarship generally envisions Isaiah as a work composed in three or more settings, which span hundreds of years, and was finally brought together by an accomplished editor. Whether this historical reconstruction of the text is accurate or not, and while dissimilarities are observed from one section to another, there is a remarkable coherence of significant themes throughout the book. The book itself claims to be written by one author and the view of a single author for the work has been the predominant view throughout history. If there were later authors and redactors, they were careful not to explicitly reveal their identities, perhaps because they wanted to preserve the flow of the narrative and build upon the themes that had already been established. For example, God's power over the rulers and nations of the world is consistently portrayed as an essential doctrine throughout the work. Similarly, Isaiah details the punishment of Israel through exile because of her sin and her impending restoration through the faithfulness and strength of God. Further, Isaiah illuminates the impact a restored Israel will have on the other nations as she fulfills her role as the servant of God. These themes are important to our understanding of Isaiah and its impact on the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>1</sup> Because of this, we will examine how Isaiah presents the restoration of Israel and Israel's role as a light to the Gentiles.

### The Restoration of Israel

#### Israel's Problem: Sin

Isaiah begins his treatise with a diagnosis of the problem: Israel's sin has made her sick (1:4-6). The people of Israel did not keep the covenant they established with God and turned to idols time and again. According to Isaiah, the exile was the punishment for their unfaithful hearts. Isaiah 1 portrays God's anger with Israel, lists her rebellious acts, and then promises punishment for her sin and future restoration (Childs 2000:17).<sup>2</sup> In this way the first chapter of Isaiah provides a broad outline for the contents of the book. Throughout Isaiah, Israel is portrayed as a blind and deaf servant who has sinned against her master and has failed in her tasks.<sup>3</sup> Because of her sin, God has brought judgment in the form of exile. Despite her sin, God will bring restoration to Israel and bring her back to the land he has promised her (Isa 1:26-27).

Isaiah presents God as the only one able to restore Israel because he alone is the ruler over all gods, rulers, and nations. According to ancient belief, Israel's exile at the hands of the Assyrians and Babylonians proved to Israel and the nations around them that Israel's God was not as powerful as other gods, a point evidenced by his lack of protection for his people. This belief is particularly evident in Isa 36:18–20, where the Assyrian general Rabshakeh argues that Israel's God cannot be trusted to deliver the people because no gods have been able to protect their people against the Assyrians. Isaiah presents a counter-worldview that insists that God is the ruler of all in the heavenly and earthly realms and that all that has occurred has done so at his behest. This theme becomes especially prevalent when Israel's God is compared with Marduk (often called Bel) and Nebû.<sup>4</sup> Isaiah repeatedly condemns the worship of idols and even mocks the process by which idols are made.<sup>5</sup>

God's sovereignty is developed in detail in Isa 40-55, where God repeatedly asserts that there is no god or idol like him.<sup>6</sup> He alone is the creator and the savior of Israel.<sup>7</sup> As such, only God is worthy to be king of Israel (43:15; 44:6). God commissions Cyrus to his task of defeating Babylon and decreeing the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (44:28-45:4), and commands that a highway be built from Assyria and Babylon to return the faithful remnant to the promised land (11:16; 40:3; 49:11–12; 62:10). Brevard S. Childs observes this developing theme when he states, "Although First Isaiah (6:3) had announced that God's rule as king stretched from eternity, even when not perceived by sinful humanity, Second Isaiah speaks of God's power actually controlling every form of human activity occurring within history" (2000:318). Despite Israel's unfaithfulness, God is determined to restore her to her former glory and make her a light, which shines the glory of God throughout the whole world.

#### God's Solution: Restoration

Isaiah 40 presents a shift in the tone of the prophecy from one of judgment to one of restoration.<sup>8</sup> This shift is perceived immediately with declarations of comfort for God's people and acknowledgment that her punishment has been fulfilled through the exile and her sins have been pardoned (40:1-2). This theme of comfort is reiterated throughout Isa 40-66, since the prophet has been commissioned by God to deliver the good news to God's people that God will restore Israel.<sup>9</sup> There are many facets to restoration, such as forgiving Israel's sin, healing Israel's sickness, redeeming

from captivity, and returning Israel to the Promised Land where they will live in peace and security. For the purposes of this paper, we will examine forgiveness of sins and healing of sickness.

In Isaiah, restoration begins with forgiveness of sin. God's promise of forgiveness is offered to Israel at the outset of the book—there will come a day when her sin will be white as snow and will become like wool (1:18). The promise of forgiveness for the sins of Israel is reiterated by the prophet and is necessary for reconciliation to occur between God and his people.<sup>10</sup> This promise will not exempt Israel from punishment in the immediate future, however, as is evident from the many pronouncements of judgment. Rather, once Israel has endured the punishment for her sins God will forgive and restore her. Isaiah presents a vivid picture of forgiveness with his depiction of the servant of the Lord who “poured out himself to death” and “bore the sins of many” (53:12). Here it appears that sin will be “lifted” or “carried away” (נִשָּׂא) through the suffering of the servant.<sup>11</sup>

In Isaiah, restoration involves healing the sick. Isaiah's diagnosis of the problem with Israel is that her sin has made her sick, but God promises to heal her (30:26; 33:24). Where Israel has proven to be blind and deaf, God will restore her sight and enable her to hear once more.<sup>12</sup> The future healing of Israel is especially prevalent in Isa 35:5-6, where God promises to heal the blind, deaf, lame, and mute. The entire chapter of Isa 35 is important structurally in the book because it is the last prophetic oracle in the first half of Isaiah and, despite the many warnings of judgment contained in the thirty-four chapters that precede it, presents a glorious picture of future restoration for the nation of Israel. Isaiah 35 is closely connected to Isa 34, which reiterates the judgment pronounced on the nations. Like Israel, the nations will be judged for their wrongdoing, but there will come a day when all those who are redeemed and ransomed of the Lord will experience healing and restoration (35:8–10). Isaiah 35 is also significant structurally because of the close linguistic and conceptual connections that it holds with Isa 40. Isaiah 40-66 develops many themes that are presented in Isa 35, one of which is that God will heal Israel's sickness.<sup>13</sup>

Despite what the nations think about the God of Israel, he is the ruler of the world and the savior of Israel.<sup>14</sup> His promise of salvation for Israel undergirds the restoration that he intends for his people. God is in control of the world and the “gods” of other nations are little more than worthless idols (Schaudig 2008:557-572).<sup>15</sup> God puts these idols on trial and demonstrates their impotency and weakness (Isa 41). The people of

Israel may be dispersed and defeated now, but Isaiah promises that a day is coming when they will be restored to their former glory and rejoice with God in the land.

### A Light to the Nations

Isaiah is preoccupied with the relationship between God and Israel in Isa 40-66. Israel is recognized as Jacob, Israel, Zion, Jerusalem, my chosen one, and my servant, all of which elucidate the election of the nation of Israel. There are clues sprinkled throughout the text, however, that God views himself as ruler of more than just the nation of Israel. The repeated mention of God as creator and king of the world is one hint that points to this expanded vision. The way the prophet reminds the people of their lineage in Abraham, to whom was promised a multitude of descendants and the legacy of blessing every family on earth, provides another clue (Gen 12:3; cf. Isa 41:8; 51:2-4; 63:16). Isaiah envisions more than just a restored Israel; he imagines Israel reflecting the glory of God so brilliantly that every nation in the world is drawn to her light.<sup>16</sup>

Closely interwoven with the themes of the restoration of Israel and the glory of God shining out to the nations is the presentation of God's servant. Scholars have been fascinated with the so called "servant songs" ever since Bernard Duhm excised these four passages from the larger context of Isa 40-55 in his 1892 commentary (Childs 2000:291). Duhm's work was both insightful and unfortunate; insightful for recognizing the uniqueness of these passages and postulating a possible connection between them, but unfortunate because of the way this realization has allowed many to ignore the greater context in which these passages were likely written. The identity of the servant still has no consensus among scholarship (Childs 1998:291).

Context should hold a place of priority among the evidence when considering the identity of the servant in Isa 40-55. In Isa 1-39, the prophet, Eliakim, the people, and David are all referred to as God's servant. In Isa 40-48, "my servant," along with "my chosen one," is reserved for "Jacob" and "Israel," terms that are often used in parallel to speak of the same group. The first mention of Jacob as servant is in Isa 41:8-9, which immediately precedes the first servant song (42:1-4) and appears to supply its referent. The referent, along with the consistency with which the author labels Jacob/Israel as God's servant throughout Isa 40-48, suggests that the identity of the servant in 42:1-4 is Jacob/Israel.<sup>17</sup> The identity of the servant appears to change in Isa 49-55, where the primary addressee is Zion/Jerusalem and

the writer appears to depict himself as the servant.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Israel has failed in her role as a servant in Isa 40-48 and is characterized as blind and deaf, despoiled and plundered, all of which is likely referencing her current spiritual condition (cf. 40:2; 42:18-22). With these contextual clues in hand, John Goldingay and David Payne are likely correct when they conclude that in Isa 49-55 the prophet is embodying the role of Israel as servant on an interim basis because Israel has failed to fulfill her tasks (2014:52-57).

The identity of the servant is important to our topic because the servant himself is tasked with being a light to the nations. The vision of nations streaming to the glory of God is first cast in Isa 2:2-4, which describes God giving his law and judging the nations. Light is again a key feature of the nation of Israel in Isa 9:1-6, where the elevated language and promise to establish the throne of David forever indicate there may have been a future messianic component to the passage (Childs 2000:81). Isaiah 40-66 further develops the theme that one day Israel will shine like a light that will draw nations to the glory of the Lord.<sup>19</sup> The servant, who is endowed with God's Spirit, is tasked with bringing justice to the nations through the law of God (42:1, 3, 4). He will then embody a covenant with the people and a light to the nations (42:6). It should be noted, then, that the purpose of the servant is to reach out to the nations of the world on behalf of Israel's God. If God was not claiming influence over the entire world, he would have no need for his servant.<sup>20</sup>

The servant's role is reiterated and expanded in Isa 49:1-13, where he is now commissioned with the regathering of Israel as well as being a covenant and light to the nations (Lessing 2011:132).<sup>21</sup> In Isa 49:6, God commissions his servant to both restore Israel and be a light to the Gentiles through the power of God. Isaiah 49:7-8 then accentuates the power of God to restore Israel in the face of nations and rulers of the world and reiterates the servant's call to be a covenant for the people. The meaning of "covenant for the people" is debated, but the parallel structure at this point probably indicates that the servant will embody a covenant with the nations, which may or may not include Israel (Childs 2000:326; Witherington 2017:202). As Ben Witherington III points out, this would indicate a new covenant rather than a renewal of an old covenant (2017:202). God is not content to simply restore Jerusalem to former glory; he is determined to demonstrate that he is the creator and sustainer of the world and he is ultimately the one who controls the destiny of kings and nations (Isa 44:28-45:4).

### **Matthew's Use of Isaiah's Significant Themes**

The New Testament writers explain the significance of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Christian church within the story and scriptures of the Jewish people. Each writer consciously weaves quotations and allusions from the Hebrew Bible into their presentations to substantiate their claims and their movement. The author of Matthew arguably has done this more than any other writer and his favorite text to quote and allude to was Isaiah. In addition to the many times Isaiah is incorporated into Matthew's text, Matthew explicitly connects events in Jesus's life to Isaiah at least thirteen times (six of which mention Isaiah by name).<sup>22</sup> The reference to ancient scriptures is so pervasive in Matthew that one Matthean scholar, R. T. France, argues that fulfillment is the central theme of the gospel (2007:10). Richard Hays asserts that the inclusion of fulfillment formulas was for apologetic purposes to ground Matthew's Christological claims in the Jewish authoritative text in response to those who contend that Jesus's life and ministry had nothing to do with the Jewish story (2016:107).

Scholars have debated the purpose of these quotations and allusions in the Gospel of Matthew. Morna J. Hooker, for example, contends that references to Isa 53 are used as proof texts by NT writers and argues that the larger context from which those verses were taken should be ignored in interpretation (1998:90-91). Her argumentation, however, does not account for first century Jewish rules of interpretation. Hillel the elder posits seven rules of Midrash, the last of which specifically states that the entire context is implied when a statement is quoted or implied (Evans 1992:544-545). Since this was the expectation of first-century Judaism, it seems likely that Matthew includes quotations and allusions to the Jewish scriptures because he is confident that most of his audience would be aware of the major themes of the works cited and have a general knowledge of the surrounding contexts. One major theme that Matthew derives from the Hebrew scriptures is God's desire to restore Israel.

#### **The Restoration of Israel**

##### **Matthew's Presentation of Jesus's Mission to Israel**

The Gospel of Matthew clearly portrays Jesus as a Jewish child raised in a Jewish home who is viewed by many as the savior of the Jewish people and who is eventually executed on the charge of being the "king

of the Jews." Matthew begins his writing by identifying Jesus as the son of Abraham, son of David, and the long-expected Messiah whom the Jews hoped would free them from their present plight. These designations do not make sense within the story of any other nation. The genealogy, birth story, life in Galilee, visits to Jerusalem, and various trips throughout Israel clearly and distinctly describe a person who is intricately tied to the history, culture, and customs of ethnic Israel. Jesus calls twelve disciples, which mirrors the twelve tribes of Israel. He disputes interpretations of Torah and points of Halakah with the Jewish leaders and critiques their effectiveness as one intimately familiar with Jewish laws and customs. While Jesus engages in strident confrontation with the Jewish leaders, he is empowering to all who believe his message and compassionate towards the Jewish crowds who seek him out for healing or a blessing.<sup>23</sup> The story of Jesus in Matthew cannot be divorced from the larger story of the Jewish people.

Jesus's declared mission to Israel and his commission to make disciples of all nations creates a narrative tension within Matthew. David Bosch, for example, argues that the mission to the Gentiles as epitomized in 28:18-20 is irreconcilable with Jesus's stated mission to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel in 10:5-6 and 15:24. He postulates that Matthew included this tension in his narrative for pastoral reasons (2011:61, 83). Other scholars, such as Anthony Saldarini, conclude that the non-Jewish world is presented at the edge of the Jewish world in Matthew (1994:76). Still others, such as David C. Sim, contend that in Matthew, Jesus did not intend to include Gentiles in his mission at all (1995:43-44). Despite these divergent views concerning Gentiles, most scholars recognize that Jesus was intent on ministering to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel." The Jewish leaders were given the task of shepherding the people, and their failure led to people who were distressed and dispirited (9:36).<sup>24</sup> Jesus sent his disciples to the Jewish people rather than to Gentile and Samaritan towns (10:5-6). When confronted by a Gentile woman, Jesus initially rebuffs her request for healing because his mission is to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24). In fact, Matthew barely mentions Jesus's extensive missionary journey through Tyre, Sidon, and the Decapolis that is described in Mark and Luke. Rather, when Matthew gives a summary of healings that alludes to the eschatological healing found in Isa 35:5-6, he first clearly indicates that Jesus has moved from the Gentile region of Tyre and Sidon to the Jewish region around the Sea of Galilee (15:29-31).<sup>25</sup> As Donald Senior observes, "Matthew's concern in these kinds of reconfiguration is consistent

with the overall portrayal of Jesus's mission as one confined to Israel during his earthly ministry" (1999:13).

Jesus's mission to Israel is presented in the Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants (Matt 21:33-44). In this graphic parable, Jesus intimates that the current Jewish leaders are part of a long line of leaders who refused to listen to the prophets of the God of Israel and killed them instead. After abusing and killing many of the owner's servants, the tenants proceed to also kill the owner's son. By referencing the son of the owner of the vineyard, Jesus is recognizing his exalted position as Son of God and predicting his death. As Hays notes, the image of the vineyard comes from Isa 5:7a, "but instead of condemning the vineyard, as in Isaiah, Jesus condemns the tenants (the Jewish leaders), and asserts that the vineyard will be given to different tenants" (2016:138). The history of interpretation of this parable contends that the vineyard will be taken from the Jews and given to Gentiles, but this interpretation is unlikely. Rather, the recipients should be understood as those who follow Jesus, whether Jews or Gentiles (Senior 1999:7).<sup>26</sup> The necessity of following Jesus is emphasized throughout the gospel. In addition to calling the disciples to follow him, Jesus exhorts others to come follow him as well (8:22; 16:24; 19:21). Jesus acknowledges that following him will be difficult (10:38; 16:24), but those who do will gain their life (16:28), sit on thrones (19:28), and inherit eternal life (19:29). Just like God in Isaiah, Jesus is concerned for Israel and seeks to restore her to right relationship with God.

Jesus's mission to restore Israel is realized in his ability to forgive sins. Just as God promised to forgive Israel's sins and so restore her to right relationship with him, so Jesus offers forgiveness so people can be made right with God. Matthew foregrounds Jesus's ministry with the promise of the angel to Joseph that Jesus will "save his people from their sins" (1:21), which, as Mark Allen Powell has correctly observed, is programmatic for the entire gospel (1992:196).<sup>27</sup> The Gospel of Matthew explains how precisely Jesus saves his people from their sins. It comes as no surprise to the reader, then, when Jesus declares to the paralytic that his sins are forgiven (9:2). In the narrative context of Matthew, however, Jesus's pronouncement does surprise the scribes, who immediately recognize the ramifications of Jesus's proclamation. By declaring that one's sins were forgiven, Jesus was placing himself in the role of God (cf. Isa 43:25).<sup>28</sup> Jesus establishes forgiveness as a necessary characteristic of kingdom people since they cannot be reconciled with God if they refuse reconciliation with another (Matt 6:14-15; 18:35).



Toward the end of the gospel, Jesus declares that he will be poured out for the forgiveness of sins, which indicates that his death is necessary to make forgiveness effective (26:28).

While forgiveness of sins is present in both Isaiah and Matthew, it should be noted that Matthew does not directly draw from the text of Isaiah to demonstrate restoration through forgiveness of sins. Rather, Matthew references Isaiah to show that the restoration of Israel is realized in the healing of the people. Jesus told his opponents that he spent time with tax collectors and sinners because it is the sick who need a physician, which indicates that Jesus viewed himself as the answer to the sinner's malady (Matt 9:12). Matthew relates such healings to the mission of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. It is to that theme that we now turn.

#### Matthew's Presentation of the Suffering Servant

The presentation of Jesus as the Suffering Servant from the servant passages in Isa 40-55 has been an important image for Christianity through the centuries. The correlation between the suffering and death of Jesus and the suffering of the servant was noticed early in the history of the church. Luke, for example, depicts Jesus quoting from Isa 53:12 in the Garden of Gethsemane (22:37). The same reference was added to the Gospel of Mark at an early stage of transmission, although as a fulfillment of scripture rather than a quotation on the lips of Jesus (15:28).<sup>29</sup> In Acts, Luke describes the perplexity of the Ethiopian eunuch as he reads Isa 53:12, and Philip immediately preaches Jesus to him from the scriptures (8:32-35). The author of First Peter boldly applies numerous quotations and allusions of Isa 53 to Jesus that explicitly describe his suffering and death in terms reminiscent of the servant (2:18-22). Hebrews 9:28 may also offer an allusion to Isa 53:12, although one much subtler than Peter's references.

Matthew, however, does not make this specific connection. While he does quote and allude to select servant passages, he does not explicitly relate those passages to the suffering and death of Jesus.<sup>30</sup> This is particularly curious considering that Matthew repeatedly indicates that the words and deeds of Jesus fulfill scripture, and particularly Isaiah. In addition, while Luke draws the theme of redemption for the people of Israel from Isaiah, Matthew does not explicitly mention redemption (Cf. Luke 1:68; 2:38; 21:28; 24:21). Instead, Matthew uses Isaiah to illustrate restoration through forgiveness of sins and healing of the sick. In Isaiah, God promised that a day would come when the sin that had made Israel sick would be

forgiven and her sickness would be healed.<sup>31</sup> Matthew intentionally weaves quotations and allusions that encapsulate significant themes in Isaiah to communicate that the plan and promises of God are being fulfilled in the person and ministry of Jesus.

This is seen, for example, in Matt 8:17. The larger context depicts Jesus performing a particular healing (Peter's mother-in-law), followed by a general statement that Jesus healed all who were ill, and a fulfillment formula from Isaiah, before concluding with a quotation from Isa 53:4 where the servant is said to carry our illnesses (לְיָדָיו) and afflictions (מִכָּאֲבִיב; cf. Exod 3:7) (Köhler et al 1994:2892, 5138). Matthew ignores the translation given in the LXX (which he utilizes in other quotations), and correctly translates this verse as "he takes up our weaknesses/diseases (ἀσθενείας), and carries our distresses/diseases (νόσους)." What is important for Matthew, and consonant with the original Hebrew text, is an emphasis on physical sickness and the emotional trauma that physical sickness has caused. Matthew applies Isa 53:4, which his audience would have recognized as describing God's servant from Isaiah's text, to both the particular healings which precede the quotation, and more importantly, to the general healing for the Jewish people since Jesus healed all who were sick (8:16).<sup>32</sup> This portrait of Jesus healing the sick is a theme throughout Matthew. In addition to numerous personal healings, the evangelist includes a plethora of general concluding statements where Jesus healed all the sick.<sup>33</sup> The exclusive scope of the healing rhetorically represents the entire nation. Closely tied to this theme is Jesus's compassion for the people. On three separate occasions Jesus's compassion compels him to heal people (9:35-36; 14:14; 20:34).

Matthew again cites Isaiah in 12:18-21, where we find the same basic narrative pattern that we found in Matt 8:17: Jesus performs a particular healing, which is followed by a general statement that Jesus healed all who were ill, and a fulfillment formula from Isaiah, before concluding with a quotation from Isa 42:1-4. The differences in this passage include the addition of conflict with the Pharisees who were displeased with Jesus healing people on the Sabbath and Jesus's admonition to the people to not tell others who he was. The additions should not distract us from the fact that Matthew is once again asserting that Jesus's healing ministry fulfills what is written in Isaiah.<sup>34</sup> In fact, the opposition of the Pharisees serves to heighten the contrast between Jesus, who is the chosen servant that heals God's people, and the religious leaders who have proven to be inadequate shepherds over Israel. Matthew's quotation follows the

MT over the LXX through the first three verses, which is significant because the LXX explicitly identifies the servant as Jacob/Israel in Isa 42:1 whereas the MT leaves the servant unidentified. The ambiguity of the MT may have made that translation more attractive for Matthew's purposes. The final verse, however, follows the LXX nearly verbatim against the MT, which differs greatly. Where in the MT the writer states that the islands will wait for the instruction of the servant, the LXX indicates that the nations will hope in the name of the servant. Matthew presumably chooses to follow the LXX at this point because it forwards his rhetorical narrative that the Gentiles will be invited into the new covenant (28:16-20). As mentioned, the servant in this passage likely refers to the nation of Israel, but Matthew applies this verse to Jesus.<sup>35</sup> God had promised to restore Israel to a position of strength where she could faithfully bring justice to the nations as a light that reflects the glory of God. Here Matthew implies that Jesus will fulfill that role as the messianic representative of the nation. His healing ministry is a sign of the healing and restoration that Jesus will bring to the nation of Israel through his death on their behalf, and through that healing Israel will become a light to the nations as God has promised.

Whereas in Isaiah, the servant is commissioned to bring justice to the nations, Matthew portrays Jesus and his disciples as the ones who bring justice to the nations.<sup>36</sup> In Matt 19:28, Jesus assures the disciples that they will sit on twelve thrones with the Son of Man and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Later, Jesus describes the Son of Man sitting on a glorious throne and judging all the nations of the world (Matt 25:31-45). By contrast, the application of justice is absent in the leadership of Pharisees and the scribes (Matt 23:23). Only Jesus, and one day his disciples as well, are qualified to bring justice to the nations.

Further, whereas the servant in Isaiah is appointed as a covenant to the nations, so Jesus will establish a new covenant through his sacrifice on the cross.<sup>37</sup> Jesus commanded his disciples earlier in the gospel to preach the good news to Israel, but after his death and resurrection Jesus commissions them to make disciples of every nation (Matt 10:7; 28:18). The new covenant that is established in the blood of Jesus is open to many, which, in the context of Matthew, appears to be an intentionally vague term to refer to anyone who follows Jesus (20:28; 26:28). The purpose for this new covenant is the forgiveness of sins, which will restore relationship between God and his people. Matthew, then, strongly connects the person and work of Jesus with God's servant in Isa 40-55 by demonstrating Jesus's

ability to bring forgiveness and healing to Israel, and through Israel, to bring both justice and a new covenant to the nations.

### A Light to the Nations

Matthew portrays Jesus as one who will fulfill the mission of a restored Israel to be a light to the Gentiles. The gospel begins by identifying Jesus as the Messiah, son of David, and son of Abraham, titles that serve to indicate his ability to fulfill God's will on earth for both the nation of Israel (Son of David) and the world (Son of Abraham). Just as in Isaiah, God's justice and light would go out to all the nations, so in Matthew the influence of Jesus's disciples will impact the entire world. Those who follow Jesus will be the light of the world and the messengers of the gospel of the kingdom to all the world (5:14; 24:14). Jesus commissions them to make disciples of all nations (28:18).

Future ministry to the Gentiles is foreshadowed throughout the breadth of the Gospel. Senior lists eighteen texts that portray Gentiles as examples of faith or allude to their future involvement in the kingdom (1999:13-16).<sup>38</sup> The genealogy, which begins with a formula that is almost identical to in introductory formulas of genealogies in Genesis, "ensures continuity with Israel's story and presents Jesus as the heir of the promises to Abraham" (Hays 2016:110). Matthew establishes Jesus's identification with Israel's story early in the gospel through such stories as the worship of the wise men, the flight to Egypt, Jesus's baptism of repentance, the testing in the wilderness, and the choosing of the twelve disciples.<sup>39</sup>

The depth of thought concerning the Gentile mission is demonstrated in Matthew 4:14-16, which quotes Isa 9:1-2 to proclaim that in Jesus, the light is coming to those who are in darkness in Galilee of the Gentiles. While the mention of Gentiles could be excused as unimportant to the narrative agenda of Matthew, there are substantial reasons to argue that Matthew intentionally underscores the theme of light to the Gentiles. First, Hays observes that whereas the MT and LXX say the people "walked" in darkness, Matthew diverts from this translation to say the people "sat" in darkness (2016:176). The concept of sitting in darkness is absent from Isa 9:1-2 but present in the LXX translation of Isa 42:7 as part of a passage that, like Isa 9:1-2, contrasts light and darkness and says that the servant of God will be a light to the nations. Hays concludes, "By conflating the wording of the two texts, Matthew's formula quotation hints metaleptically that the 'great light' appearing in Capernaum as Jesus inaugurates his

mission of proclaiming the kingdom of heaven (Matt 4:17) is precisely the 'light to the nations' of Isaiah 42:6" (2016:177-178). Second, following this pronouncement, Matthew gives a general statement of healing and explains that people are coming to Jesus from all over, including Syria and the Decapolis, two places which are highly populated with Gentiles. In fact, Syria is mentioned first and most prominently in the passage (4:24-25). While Israel is the primary missional target in Matthew, there are hints throughout the gospel that Gentiles will be included in God's plan for salvation for the world.

Jesus's connection with Israel continues throughout the gospel as Jesus challenges the major symbols of Judaism, such as the interpretation of Torah, the constitution of the true Temple, the location of the Promised Land, and the identity of the true people of God (Wright 1992:365-68; 384-90).<sup>40</sup> Matthew illustrates that Jesus is able to fulfill the mission that God has given to Israel and that Jesus's followers rightly become the people of Israel who are commissioned to be a light to the Gentiles. This is seen, for example, when there are exceptions to Jesus' exclusive ministry to Israel and Jesus heals because of the great faith of a particular Gentile (8:13; 15:28).<sup>41</sup> And though the disciples are clearly sent to Israel only, there will come a day when they will give their testimony to the Gentiles, either apologetically or evangelistically (10:18; 28:18). In fact, just as the Servant of God was given the task of declaring justice to the nations in Isaiah, so Jesus and his followers will declare justice to the Gentiles resulting in the Gentiles hoping in the name of Jesus (12:18-21). While these allusions to future ministry to the Gentiles clearly do not comprise the main theme of Matthew, the healing exceptions and repeated mention of ministry to the Gentiles foreshadows the proclamation at the end of Matthew where Jesus commands his disciples make disciples of all the nations (28:18-20). In this way, the vision of Isa 40-66 that God will restore his servant Israel and, through Israel, will become God to all the nations is forecasted in Matthew. Thus, when Jesus calls twelve disciples and commissions them to bring healing and good news to the Jewish people, he is restoring Israel and gathering Israel to himself. When Jesus and his disciples heal and preach good news to the Gentiles, either as a present action or a future commission, they are fulfilling the task given to Israel to be a light to the nations (cf. Isa 49:6) (Hays 2016:175).

Matthew climaxes with Jesus commissioning his disciples to make disciples of every nation (28:18). This universal scope is consistent with

the message of Isaiah, where God was creator and sustainer of the whole world and other gods were impotent and worthless before Him. Because of this, Isaiah envisions the nations of the earth seeing the glory of God and worshipping him (e.g., 60:1-3).<sup>42</sup> Matthew likewise presents the good news of the kingdom being preached to all nations so that all may glorify and worship God (24:14; 28:16-20). The implicit theme of healing and preaching to the Gentiles that permeated Matthew becomes explicit in the climatic end. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the nation of Israel is restored, the promises given by the prophets are realized, and Israel is now commissioned to be a light to the Gentiles.<sup>43</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Isaiah tells the story of a God who has punished Israel for her sins and promises a restoration that through forgiveness, healing, redemption, and a return to the Promised Land. Israel's restoration will be so glorious that she will reflect the glory of God to the nations and all people will come to her light. The Gospel of Matthew quotes and alludes to Isaiah pervasively to demonstrate that the promise of eschatological restoration is fulfilled through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Through Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God, God will forgive Israel's sins and heal her sickness so that Israel can be a light to the nations as envisioned by Isaiah. Matthew illustrates Jesus's purpose by applying such passages as Isa 9:1-2, 42:1-4, 53:4 and 35 to the healing ministry of Jesus. The restoration of Israel is Jesus's primary goal during his earthly ministry (Matt 10:8; 15:24), but after his death and resurrection he commissions his disciples to make disciples of every nation (Matt 20:18). Jesus teaches that he and his disciples will bring justice to the nations (19:28; 25:31-46) and through his sacrifice, Jesus established a new covenant with many (20:28; 26:28). God will then both keep his promise to Israel and establish himself as the God of the whole world. Through the preaching of the gospel the nations will be invited to participate in the restored Israel and experience the glory of God. All who believe that message and dedicate their lives to follow Jesus will embrace the ancient hope of a restored Israel and will themselves become the light of the world.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of space, this paper will not attempt to present an exhaustive list of the major themes in Isaiah but will instead select the particular themes that are germane to the impact of Isaiah on Matthew.

<sup>2</sup> Childs rightly notes the theocentric nature of Isa 1 as God expresses his anger at his people.

<sup>3</sup> See especially, Isa 6:10; 42:19; 43:8; 56:10; 59:10.

<sup>4</sup> This occurs explicitly in 46:1-2, but implicitly throughout 40-55.

<sup>5</sup> Isa 2:8, 18-20; 10:10-11; 19:1-3; 31:7; 40:19-20; 42:17; 44:10-17; 45:16, 20; 48:5; 57:13; 66:3.

<sup>6</sup> Isa 43:11; 44:6, 8; 45:5-6, 14, 21-22; 46:9; 47:8, 10; 50:8

<sup>7</sup> Isa 40:28; 43:1, 3, 11, 15, 21; 45:12, 26; 60:16; 63:8. Many scholars argue that these passages present the first realized argument in the Hebrew Bible for monotheism, but this point is contended.

<sup>8</sup> While the general tone changes at this point, it should be acknowledged that there are promises of restoration in Isa 1-39 and warnings of judgment in Isa 40-66. In Isa 56-66 especially, the prophet is careful to qualify the future promises with the need for Israel to return to God and be faithful to him.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Isa 40:1; 51:3, 19; 57:18; 61:2; 66:18.

<sup>10</sup> Isa 22:14; 27:19. According to HALOT, the pual use of כפר in these instances means “to be exempt from punishment” or “to be atoned.” (Köhler et al 1994: 4384). Cf. also Isa 43:25 and 44:22, where God promises to “wipe out” (מחה) Israel’s “transgressions” (פְּשָׁעֵי).

<sup>11</sup> In the present context, the use of the verb סבל suggests that idea of “lifted,” but the niph'al form of רצה in Isa 40:2 indicates the idea of being “carried away.” Likely both ideas are in view when applied to sin or iniquity. The concept of the removal of sin is also found in Isa 33:24 and 40:2, where the future salvation of God will bring a removal of sin.

<sup>12</sup> Isa 29:18; 35:5-6; 42:7. As Oswalt notes, the repeated reference to Israel’s blindness and deafness applies to both a spiritual condition and a physical one (1998: 627).

<sup>13</sup> For example, Childs notes that Isa 35:10 is elaborated on in Isa 65 (2000: 258).

<sup>14</sup> Isa 35:4; 43; 45:15-25; 49:25-26; 59:1; 60:16; 63:1-9.

<sup>15</sup> Schaudig discusses the explicit comparison made between Israel’s God and the Babylonian gods in Isa 46:1-2. Especially telling is the

visual of people carrying large statues of the gods while they sway and totter in the yearly processions.

<sup>16</sup> According to N. T. Wright, “Israel believed herself to be the linchpin of what the creator god was doing, and would do, for the world as a whole; when Israel was restored, the whole creation would be restored. (1992:193).

<sup>17</sup> Many scholars argue that Cyrus should be viewed here, which is certainly possible, but it should be noticed that Cyrus is never called God’s servant or his chosen one. Those terms are reserved for Jacob/Israel. Rather, Cyrus is called God’s “shepherd” (44:28) and “anointed” (45:1). The contrast can be seen clearly in 45:1-4.

<sup>18</sup> Notice especially the first-person references in Isa 49:1-6 and 50:4-9.

<sup>19</sup> Isa 45:22; 41:4; 52:7-12; 54:15; 56:3-12; 58:8-10; 60:1-3, 19-20; 66:17-23.

<sup>20</sup> According to Childs, Hellenistic Judaism interpreted the servant in Isa 42:1-4 as Israel, but Palestinian Judaism interpreted the passage messianically (2000:327).

<sup>21</sup> Lessing notes that the literary structure of Isa 49:1-6 corresponds to that of 42:1-4.

<sup>22</sup> By comparison, Jeremiah is the only other prophet Matthew mentions by name in fulfillment quotations, and that occurs just twice.

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that Matthew goes out of his way to portray the Jewish leadership negatively. The two positive examples of Jewish leadership, Jairus and Joseph of Arimathea, are not identified as Jewish leaders in Matthew, in contrast to Mark and Luke (cf. Matt 9:18//Mark 5:22//Luke 8:41; Matt 27:57//Mark 15:43//Luke 23:51).

<sup>24</sup> The portrayal of the people as sheep without a shepherd could be contrasted with the portrayals of God as shepherd in the Hebrew scriptures, particularly in Isa 40:10-11.

<sup>25</sup> According to Matt 15:30-31, Jesus healed the mute, crippled, lame, and blind in a list that is reminiscent of the afflictions that God promises to heal for a restored Israel in Isa 35:5-6. (The Greek word for “mute” used in these verses, κωφός, can mean either deaf or mute). What makes this allusion even more powerful is that Matthew alludes to Isa 35:5-6 earlier in his gospel. In Matt 10:1 Jesus gives his disciples authority to cast out unclean spirits and heal every kind of sickness and disease and then commissions them to their task in 10:8. In Matt 11:5, when John’s disciples seek proof that Jesus is the expected one, he reiterates that the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them, which serves as a compilation of promises of healing from Isaiah and reiterates



Jesus's commission to his disciples from Matt 10:8. (Cf. Isa 26:19; 29:18; 35:5-6; 61:1). Matthew is communicating that the promise of healing that accompanies the restoration of Israel in Isaiah has come to the Jews.

<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that the Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants is the middle of three parables that Jesus delivers in the Temple to the Chief Priests and elders in which one group refuses to do their allotted task and is replaced by another group.

<sup>27</sup> The quotation of Isa 7:14 following this statement substantiates the fact that God is in control and has sent Jesus to bring restoration to Israel.

<sup>28</sup> E. P. Sanders has likely overstated how comfortably Jesus's declaration would have been received Judaism. It is unlikely that a common Jew (as opposed to a priest) would proclaim that all of a person's sins are unequivocally forgiven. If Sander's proposal is correct, and the difference between Jesus and the norm is that Jesus pronounced forgiveness before evidence of repentance and the Jewish people would require evidence of repentance before one is pronounced forgiven, then Jesus's proclamation could still be viewed as blasphemous as only God could properly forgive sins without evidence. (1985:204-208).

<sup>29</sup> While most manuscripts include this verse in Mark, the earliest witnesses do not.

<sup>30</sup> Matthew likely does include subtle allusions to Isa 53 in Matt 26:63 and 27:57-60.

<sup>31</sup> As France observes, "It thus seems that for Matthew the figure of the servant of Yahweh in Isaiah, which other early Christians looked to for an explanation of Jesus's suffering and death, was a more holistic model for Jesus's ministry as a whole" (2007:322).

<sup>32</sup> France notes that some early Jewish interpretations of Isa 53 envisioned a messiah figure (2007:322); Craig S. Keener contends that "The context in Isaiah 53 suggests that the servant's death would heal the nation from its sin" (2009:273).

<sup>33</sup> Matt 4:23; 8:16; 9:35; 11:2-6; 12:15; 14:13-14; 15:29-31; 19:1-2. For a detailed discussion of these statements, see Lidija Novakovic 2003:118-123.

<sup>34</sup> Hays does become distracted by the command to secrecy and suggests that the fulfillment applies to both the command to secrecy and to Jesus's healing ministry. Considering the paucity of evidence for the former and the abundance of evidence for the latter, it appears that Matthew's intention is to connect the healing ministry with significant passages in Isa 40-55. (2016:181).death, and resurrection took place "according to the Scriptures" stands at the heart of the New Testament's message. All four canonical Gospels declare that the Torah and the Prophets and the Psalms

mysteriously prefigure Jesus. The author of the Fourth Gospel states this claim succinctly: in his narrative, Jesus declares, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me” (John 5:46)

<sup>35</sup> Matthew likely connects Jesus with this passage at Jesus’s baptism where the Spirit comes upon Jesus and a voice declares that Jesus is the Son of God in whom God is well pleased, which are both mentioned of the servant in Isa 42:1 (3:17). Matthew reiterates the declaration that God is pleased with his son at the transfiguration (17:5). Matthew links these three passages by using the verb εὐδοκέω, meaning, “well pleased,” in each passage. Jesus’s identification as son rather than servant is heightened in the Parable of the Vineyard and the Tenants.

<sup>36</sup> Note especially the three mentions of the servant bringing justice to the nations in Isa 42:1–4, a passage which Matthew applies to Jesus in 12:18–21. Cf. Isa 49:6–8; 51:4.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Isa 42:6; 49:6; Matt 20:28; 26:28. Isaiah says the servant will be appointed/given as a covenant for the people and a light to the nations. The parallel structure in these verses indicates that the people in question are the nations.

<sup>38</sup> The eighteen references are: 1:1; 1:2–16; 2:1–12; 4:12–16; 4:23–26; 8:5–13; 11:20–24; 12:18–21; 12:38–41; 15:21–28; 20:1–16; 21:43; 22:1–14; 24:14; 25:31–46; 27:19; 27:54; 28:16–20. Senior notes that fourteen of these eighteen examples have no parallel in Mark and twelve are only found in Matthew.

<sup>39</sup> For a full treatment of Matthew’s identification of Jesus with Israel, see Hays 2016:110–37; Rollin Gene Grams 2004:238–255. death, and resurrection took place “according to the Scriptures” stands at the heart of the New Testament’s message. All four canonical Gospels declare that the Torah and the Prophets and the Psalms mysteriously prefigure Jesus. The author of the Fourth Gospel states this claim succinctly: in his narrative, Jesus declares, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me” (John 5:46)

<sup>40</sup> N. T. Wright argues extensively that Jesus reconstitutes the symbols of Judaism, both as it effected the Christian movement as a whole and its impact on Matthew in particular.

<sup>41</sup> It should be noted that although Jesus initially rebuffed the Canaanite woman for her request for healing for her daughter, he relents because of her great faith.

<sup>42</sup> Jesus is worshipped in Matthew in 2:8; 28:9, 17.

<sup>43</sup> The promises of restoration in the prophets are made effective by the death and resurrection of Jesus but may not be fully realized until the eschaton.

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Sochanngam Shirik

*Epistemological Foundation for Contemporary  
Theology of Mission: Trajectories from a  
Conversation Between J. Andrew Kirk and John  
Hick*

**Abstract:**

With the expansion of Christianity comes different ways of expressing the Christian faith. When new ways of conceiving Christian faith are presented, old models are challenged. Sometimes, tensions arise. During such transition, our epistemological convictions play an important role in the decision we make. J. Andrew Kirk and John Hick's positions are two examples. While both care deeply about Christianity and peoples of other faiths, the conclusions that they reach from their different epistemological stances are telling in their differences, indicating the crucial role that epistemology plays in mission. As representatives of a broader group, their positions remind us of the importance of assessing our epistemic positions in relation to mission, especially in thinking about our theology of mission. This article presents and evaluates their epistemological positions and uses them as catalysts for conversations in exploring the theology of mission. The aim of this article is to illustrate the need for critically assessing the epistemological assumptions behind our theological positions so that we can effectively navigate the terrain of shifting theological paradigms in mission.

**Key Words:** theology of mission, epistemology, mission, John Hick, J. Andrew Kirk, contextualization.

**Sochanngam Shirik** is a Ph.D. student in Intercultural Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

## Introduction

Beneath the disputes of the particular model of a mission or theology is the broader issue of epistemology—how we know what we know. Exploring the latter will help us develop a more informed grounding of the former. While those in the field of missiology are acutely aware of its importance, in the past, owing to their particular interest and desire, they have not paid enough attention to the interrelation between epistemology and theology. Jan A. B. Jongeneel once observed that the epistemological grounding of mission studies remains the most unexplored area of mission scholarship (1997:372). In 2004, J. Andrew Kirk wrote: “To my knowledge, the only published work which explicitly relates mission to epistemology is J. Andrew Kirk and Kevin Vanhoozer’s *To Stake a Claim: Mission and the Western Crisis of Knowledge*” (2004:131). In 2011, in *Mission as Dialogue: Engaging the Current Epistemological Predicament of the West*, Kirk reiterated that the tradition of epistemological engagement with missiology is a “relatively unexplored” area (2011:10).<sup>1</sup>

Kirk often contrasted his position with that of John Hick, a theologian and a philosopher. One reason why Kirk was unrelenting in engaging with Hick is because he (Kirk) thinks the latter’s position encapsulates the epistemological dilemma that undercuts the unique claims of Christianity at its foundational level (Kirk 2011:18, 87, 95; 2002:23–36; 2000:27, 132). Both Hick and Kirk, in a way, are representatives of a broader group that attempt to articulate the epistemological predicament in the face of transition. While the second focuses on bridging the increasing disconnect between Christianity and Western secular culture, the first stresses resolving the conflicting claims of religions. Both articulated the contested claims about the ontological reality in ways consonant with their convictions. Although both genuinely care about people of other faiths and their truth claims, their epistemological convictions led them to different conclusions. As such, their positions are illustrative of the importance of epistemological posture in articulating our theology of mission. Hence, we use their positions as springboards for a more extensive discussion of the importance of epistemology in theology of mission.

The aim of this article is to illustrate the importance of critically assessing the epistemological assumptions behind our theological positions so that we can effectively navigate the terrain of shifting theological paradigms in mission. First, I will elaborate on how both Hick and Kirk postulate their epistemological position. Second, I will look into the context

from, in, and through which both theologians articulate their theological viewpoints, allowing us to evaluate their positions contextually. Third, based on our examination of the thoughts of both thinkers, I shall raise some questions and make some applications in the context of global Christianity, mainly from a theological angle. I shall then conclude by summarizing the key points.

### **Hick and Kirk's Epistemological Postulation**

The Enlightenment period (ca. 1700–1850), as in the case of many other fields of study, brought a revolution in the area of epistemology. What is different in this modern theory from the pre-modern concepts (such as that of Plato's notion of Forms) and that which is relevant to our purpose, is that metaphysics—the questions of what is real—comes under the mercy of epistemology (Myron B. Penner 2005:22). R. Albert Mohler Jr. observes that the epistemological turn during the Enlightenment period led many from what Charles Taylor terms as, “impossible not to believe” to “possible not to believe” (2008:36). According to Hans Frei, there was a sort of Copernican revolution in biblical interpretation beginning from the early eighteenth century. During this revolution, the biblical stories that were taken for granted as literal were beginning to be questioned (1974:1-5). As a result, Frei avers, such reorientation in approach affected both the radical thinkers and the conservatives (1974:4).<sup>2</sup> Although we must not overemphasize the epistemological turn as others have rightly pointed out (Copleston 1994:435), we must also not overlook the difference from the earlier period, at least in emphasis (Copleston 1994:436–437; Penner 2009:22; Bevans 2008:103–104).

In this article, we trace the “epistemological revolution” in reference to Immanuel Kant's construal of reality partly because of his important influence in epistemological discussion<sup>3</sup> and because both Hick and Kirk invoke him in their discussions to either support their case (in Hick's case) or deconstruct the other's position (in Kirk's case). Kant's epistemological construal, in some ways, epitomized the shift in the condition of belief. He is skeptical that metaphysics as a science that transcends sense experience is possible (Kant 1965 [1781]:485ff). For him, humans do not have the intuition to perceive supersensible realities (say God). This is so, he argues, because we do not have access to the *noumena*—reality-in-itself—but only phenomena—things as they appear to us. While we can validate the claims about phenomena through our *a priori* intuitions, we cannot

perceive *noumena*, especially God, because we do not have the intuition to perceive them (Kant 1965 [1781]:89–90, 648ff). Kant thus challenged the commonly accepted notion that humans have direct access to reality. The result, as David Clark puts it, is, “knowledge results when the mind actively apprehends the world, shaping knowledge according to its own subjective categories” (2003:55). In Kant’s paradigm, human minds no longer conform to reality, but reality conforms to the mind. While Kirk is skeptical of the overall approach of Kant, Hick is sympathetic.<sup>4</sup>

In his autobiography, Hick wrote of Kant’s work thus:

Kant’s ‘Copernican revolution’, making the mind central to the process of cognition, seemed to me so significant that I devoted almost all of my final year at Edinburgh to a detailed study of the first Critique. I have retained from Kant what today I identify as ‘critical realism’—the view that there is a world, indeed a universe, out there existing independently of us, but that we can only know it in the forms provided by our human perceptual apparatus and conceptual systems (Hick 2005:69).

Hick was only eighteen or nineteen at this time, i.e., during 1941-1942. He attempts to locate his position between what he calls a naïve realism and idealism. According to him, the idealist holds “that the perceived world exists only as a series of modifications of our own consciousness” and the naïve realist believes “that the world is just as we perceive it to be.” He opts for what he terms “critical realism” (Hick 1993:4). However, the critical realism he subscribes to has a nuanced Kantian flavor. He articulates critical realism as the belief that “there is an important subjective contribution to our perceiving it, so that the world as we experience it is a distinctively human construction arising from the impacts of real environment upon our sense organs, but conceptualized in consciousness and language in culturally developed forms” (Hick 1993:4). Regarding the material world, Hick, like Kant, claims to be a realist; but regarding immaterial things—God, ethics, etc.—he is a relativist if not an agnostic (Hick 1993:3–6). Where Hick diverges from Kant is in his emphasis that our understanding of reality, especially God, is the projection of our experience (Hick 1993:159) whereas for Kant it is the postulation of the mind.

However, Hick suggests our experience does not exhaust the fullness of the transcendent, for we always experience the transcendent through our particular religious framework. Therefore, the transcendent cannot be confined to our particular experience. This means that no



experience of one religious group has more epistemic currency than others since different people experience the Real differently. Besides, were God to be immediately present to our experience, his power and mercy would overwhelm us (Quoted from Heim 1999:17). Therefore, the “epistemic distance” between God and humans, a logical necessity for humans to be autonomous persons (Hick 2010 [1966]:281), can be bridged only through faith (1966:68). It is here that he makes room for faith, an experience-based faith. The idea of the objectification of subjective epistemic experience in answering the question of the Real is what Hick developed from Kant. Although there are differences in their epistemological postulation (Heim 1999:18; Hick 1966:57–68; Kirk 2002:23–36), what we focus on here is on the commonality. For Hick, one does not perceive *the* table; one always perceives it as the table.

Kirk contends that in using Kantian epistemology, “Hick has made himself a hostage to fortune, for . . . [ultimately Hick’s framework] ends up with linguistic signs without any signification” (Kirk 2002:29). Although Hick attempts to differentiate from Kant, ultimately he succumbs to the fallacy of objectifying epistemology construed through one’s experience. This is problematic, Kirk argues, because the end result is implicit atheism (Kirk 2002:31). Like Kant, Hick’s hypothesis has shifted from the mind conforming to the objective reality to the reality conforming to the mind (in Hick’s case, religious experience).

Alternately, Kirk argues for an epistemology that he thinks is capable of preventing the “disintegration of a unified field of knowledge that encompasses an understanding of both the external world of material objects . . . and internal world [of human values, purpose, relations, etc.]” (2011:14, 103–108). He acknowledges that regarding the first world, there is unanimity; the ambiguity is about the second world. The solution lays in incorporating the source of knowledge from the Word of God and the world of God (Kirk 2011:17). He suggests a heuristic device called “Inference to the Best Explanation” (IBE) that he thinks might serve as a useful missiological tool (Kirk 2011:20). IBE, in its simplest term “is the procedure of choosing the hypothesis or theory that best explains the available data.”<sup>5</sup> Kirk means that since humans are created in the image of God and endowed with reason, Christians are (should be) able to have a meaningful dialogue with non-Christians by taking into account the “universally-available evidence and proven categories of rational argument. The truth claims that are made are related to self-awareness, human experience of the world, the

universal concourse of alternative traditions, ideas and explanation and are open to a critical exchange of views” (Kirk 2011:21). Unlike Hick, Kirk believes that “Christian faith . . . is the best of all possible explanations of our unique experience of the universe as human beings: one which offers the most coherent, consistent, and complete account” (Kirk 2011:21). Such an approach is both dialogical and dogmatic and is conducive to the postmodern context as opposed to ignoring the religious differences, Kirk contends.

### **Reflection Through the Historical Lens**

Putting others’ works in the historical context is a helpful way to understand them. Whether it is Kant or Kirk or Hick, they were all attempting to articulate their “theistic” convictions in the face of challenges amidst transition. The case of Kant is not a pressing concern here, and hence we will focus on the other two.

Hick and Kirk have more things in common that they may or may not realize. They sincerely care about Christian mission, albeit in their own understanding. Both left their respective careers- Kirk, his military service, and Hick, his law education- in pursuit of the study of Christian ministry and service. The two are interested in interreligious dialogue. Both see the growing secularist culture as a threat to religious ethos and values. They are philosophically oriented in their approach. Although Hick was slightly the older (1922-2012), they share many experiences including their experience in military service—Kirk (1937–) as an active soldier and Hick as a medical assistant since he was a conscientious objector. In the light of all those shared experiences, it is unsurprising to see the intersection in their articulation of Christianity in their respective contexts.<sup>6</sup>

However, the most common experience between the two, and one that is of more significant interest to our immediate context is their intercultural and interreligious experiences. It is of interest to observe that life-changing experience for both came about as a result of their cross-cultural interaction particularly in the late 1960s, a period that will become relevant again in our discussion later. Hick moved to Birmingham, UK, in 1967, “where he encountered another set of experiences that dramatically affected his life and work” (IEP).<sup>7</sup> The Birmingham experience was a second life-transforming experience, the first of which was his personal conversion at the age of eighteen. Of his conversion, he recounts rather dramatically:

I was kneeling at a chair when Jeffreys, coming round the circle, laid his hands on my head. I immediately felt a strong physical effect, like an electric shock except that it was not a sharp jolt but a pervasive sensation spreading down through my body. I was in floods of tears—not of sadness or fright but, I suppose, a tremendous emotional impact. Although people who have never experienced such things pooh-pooh them I am in no doubt that there are individuals through whom a real psychic force of some kind flows (Hick 2005:27–28).

In Birmingham, he was exposed to people of different cultures, religions, and races. He reflects of his life experience thus: “As I spent time in the mosques, synagogues, gurudwaras and temples as well as churches something very important dawned on me. On the one hand all the externals were different . . . But at a deeper level it seemed evident to me that essentially the same thing was going on in all these different places of worship. . . .” (Hick 2005:160). He was also working on civil rights issues. Although he had read Kant with great fascination in his early years (Hick 2005:68–69), these real, on-the-ground life experiences prompted him to critically assess his theological convictions relying largely on Kant’s macro paradigm of phenomenal/noumenal hypothesis. The result was a pluralistic hypothesis as many of his writings that emerged from his time from Birmingham show: *Christianity at the Centre* (1968), *Arguments for the Existence of God* (1970), *God and the Universe of Faiths* (1973), *The Myth of God Incarnate* (1977), *God Has Many Names* (1980), *The Second Christianity* (1983), *Problems of Religious Pluralism* (1985), among others.

Kirk had similar life-changing experiences in the 1960s. He traveled to Argentina in 1967 and witnessed the social, political, and religious unrest as they related to civil rights (Kirk 2004a:71). There he observed the seductive power of the secularist agenda and the danger of the church uncritically aligning with the dominant ideological forces (in this particular case, the military dictatorship). Kirk sighed, “[Although the Church] came to regret its cultural captivity to the forces of the extreme political right . . . the church found it virtually impossible to express officially real repentance for the errors it made” (Kirk 2004a:71–72). His experience in, and reflection of, the inter-cultural context led him to reassess his theological position, the result of which was his dissertation published later as *Liberation Theology: An Evangelical View from the Third World* (1979). In it, he was both sympathetic and critical of the methodology

of liberation theology. He was sympathetic with the conviction that all theologies should take account of the experiential realities of the ordinary people in theologizing; he was critical of letting the experience become normative in interpreting the Scripture (Kirk 2011:207). In retrospect, Kirk may not seem to have offered much in terms of his theological and hermeneutical proposal; however, taking his work in context, it holds more value than it appears today. Later, through his interaction with evangelical scholars like John Stott and particularly Leslie Newbigin—with the latter being especially formative, which Kirk acknowledges (Kirk 2004a:73)—he began to articulate his philosophical grounding of Christianity more acutely. The result was a book that he co-edited with Kevin Vanhoozer and also contributed a chapter to: *To Stake a Claim: Mission and the Crisis of Knowledge* (1999).

Before we take the views of Hick and Kirk in conversation with the broader context of world Christianity, I would like to draw our attention to an important missiological and theological point from the discussion thus far. The aim of this article, as stated earlier, is to illustrate the importance of critically assessing the epistemological assumptions behind our theological positions so that we can effectively navigate the terrain of shifting theological paradigms. Thomas Kuhn, writing from the context of scientific development (1996 [1962]), observed that when new discoveries can no longer neatly fit into the old ways of conceiving reality, a new interpretive model or paradigm emerges. Tension arises, and usually, the old models fade away. The application of a Kuhnian sense of paradigm shift to theology and mission is an important discussion, but we cannot enter into a detailed conversation here, except for one particular clarification.<sup>8</sup>

While not completely transporting the Kuhnian sense of the paradigm shift to theology, Hans Küng, in *Paradigm Change in Theology*, applied the framework to theology (1989a:3–33 [1980]). Because of the ambiguity related to the term “paradigm” Küng suggests terms such as “interpretive models, explanatory models, and models of understanding” (Küng 1989a:7). While he admits that there “is never an absolute break with the past” in theology even in the change of paradigm (Küng 1989a:30), he argues that macro changes (not just micro) take place in theology just like in science (Küng 1989a:214). By it, he means, “fixed and familiar concepts are changed; laws and criteria controlling the admissibility of certain problems and solutions are shifted; theories and methods are upset” (Küng 1989a:21). Just “as in the change from geocentric to the heliocentric

theory," one theological model can replace the other (1989a:21, 23). Küng seems to have arrived very close to Kuhn's use of paradigm. What is of pressing importance here, however, is the historical context on which Küng articulated his thoughts.

In the mid-twentieth century, as Christians around the globe came into close juxtaposition and as they gained greater exposure to the cultures of other peoples and religions, they were once again reminded of the urgency of taking the experiences, worldviews, and claims of others seriously. Although such interaction with other cultures, religions, and fellow Christians was the very atmosphere upon which Christian mission found its origin and theological foundation in the early centuries, the church and the world were divided due to geographical, political, and ecclesiastical reasons for too long. This division was breaking down, and now Christians had to relearn to navigate this new terrain. The documents of Vatican II show that in the 1960s there was an intentional theological reorientation (within the Roman Catholic Church at least) with a much more optimistic approach to other religions and cultures (Abbott 1966:580–633, 665–668). Whether the Council came to affirm that non-Christian religions could be salvific or not is a matter of debate (Roukanen 1990:56). What is clear is that at least some notable Catholic theologians like Karl Rahner and Küng were more optimistic than others. In 1964, the 31<sup>st</sup> International Eucharistic Congress was held in Mumbai, India. There, Küng delivered a message that captures the sentiments of at least some Roman Catholic thinkers. His message was entitled, "The World Religions in God's Plan of Salvation." In it, he argued that world religions should be regarded as an ordinary means of human salvation and the Roman Catholic Church as an extraordinary way (Küng 1967 [1965]:51–52). Küng calls for moving away from an ecclesio-centric approach to a more theo-centric understanding of religions.

Hick finds Küng's theological posture optimistic and welcoming, but not revolutionary (1973:120–132). Hick saw that although Küng was generous in his attempt to accommodate non-Christian religions, he still operates on the old, to use Hick's terminology, "Ptolemaic" conception with Christianity at the center (Hick 1973:131). He insisted that to bring about a Copernican revolution would require "a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre to the realisation that it is *God* who is at the centre.." (Hick 1973:131). For him, to be dogmatic of the uniqueness of Christianity in the light of the many truth claims is to ignore its historical relativity (Hick 1973:132). Hick wants to operate on what I would call an

“interpretive view”—a concept that I will revisit later—in which each one is allowed to interpret reality through his or her experience.

We have seen how, beginning from the 1960s, Hick’s pluralistic outlook was emerging as he spent time in the city of Birmingham “outside of class with multi-faith groups working on race issues in and around the city” (IEP). Kirk’s theological conviction was also refined in the city of Birmingham as he spent time with people of other faiths, especially the “Muslims who he met monthly for the discussion of both important social issues and the essential questions of... faiths” (Kirk 2004a: 74). Like Hick, those experiences “prompted [Kirk] to consider seriously matters relating to the reality of diverse religions as an aspect of Christian mission” (Kirk 2004a:74–75). He saw that at the bottom of the different truth claims—be it religious, generational, or cultural—are the contested claims of epistemology. Hence, Kirk affirmed, the crisis in mission, at least in the West, is first and foremost, the crisis of epistemology (Kirk 2011:46–59). Necessarily, therefore, Christians must begin with an epistemological stance that is both able to authenticate their claims and dismantle the antithetical views.

For Kirk, a Christian epistemology must begin with a realist framework that can accommodate propositional truth claims (Kirk 2011:49). This means, among other things, a provision to claim a true and objective knowledge of God, by which he means, “knowledge of God in-Godself can be true without having to be exhaustive” (Kirk 2002:n22). In this sense, Kirk operates on what I designate as a “dogmatic view” (see below). There is, and should be, certain core values and beliefs in our missional posture, and these principles are “distinguishable from the cultural formulations of them” (Kirk 2002:49). Nonetheless, he recognizes that there is no such thing as biblical epistemology if by the term it means a single theory of knowledge supported by the biblical text. Therefore, he believes that it is more helpful to talk about rethinking mission rather than “reinventing the wheel *de novo*” (Kirk 2011:47). Whereas in the former project, we readjust our theological views in the light of new evidence without necessarily surrendering our core convictions, in the latter, we demand that others abandon their whole theological framework (Kirk 2011:47).

Our main point in this section has been to look at the works of Hick and Kirk through the lens of their respective historical context. In doing so, we were able to get a more refined picture of how their epistemological postures influenced their theological articulation. Without

denying the possibility of other forces shaping their views, we could argue that since both had similar intercultural and interreligious experiences but developed different theological outlooks, it is more reasonable to say that their epistemology shaped their theology rather than that their life circumstances and educational upbringing determined their epistemology. David K. Clark's dictum, although uttered in different context, seems to reflect what I am trying to say: "What people start with determines what people will end up with" (Clark 2000:283). Even if we may argue that for some their theological decisions do not correlate with their epistemological convictions, it remains true that it does for people like Kirk and Hick. We shall now turn to a more global conversation by using Hick's and Kirk's positions as trajectories to investigate a contemporary theology of mission.

### **Lessons, Challenges, and Propositions**

In this section, using the thought frame of Hick and Kirk, I would like to explore how our epistemological inclination tends to direct the choices we make, particularly in the context of our theology and mission. I shall do this by looking at the way global Christianity responded during the transition in the mid-twentieth century and probing further questions for more clarity on the matter.

Let us recall the labels "interpretive" and "dogmatic" referring to Hick and Kirk's positions with one important exception. Unlike Hick, most Christians affirm the ontological existence of God. Hence, we take that for granted while keeping the rest of Hick's idea, i.e., our knowledge of the Real is always mediated through our contextual lens, be it language, mental scheme, culture, etc. Let the word "dogmatism" not appall you. By it, I am referring to the realist position, as Kirk held, i.e., there is an objective truth, and we can know it as such. We may not know truth exhaustively, but we may know it truthfully. Although labels and generalizations have the tendency for simplification and often risk misrepresentation, they can be helpful in demarcating and clarifying an underlying ideological premise. We need not necessarily see them in terms of polarity but as two different emphases in a spectrum with various positions in between them. These different epistemological postures have missional and theological implications.

Resonant of the Enlightenment period, there was a sort of epistemological re-orientation in the field of global theology in the mid-twentieth century. Although Christians have been missionaries, done mission work, and thought about mission throughout the centuries, it was in the mid-twentieth century that missiology as a specialized field of study gained greater traction (or at least, missiology as we understand it today). The first missiology chair, established in 1896 in Germany (Küster 2014:170), anticipated a wider recognition and reproduction. The 1910 World Missionary Conference held at Edinburgh was instrumental in paving the way, yet a more robust missional repercussion of Edinburgh arose only after two or three decades. The development and study of world Christianity in the mid-1940s (Pachau 2018:5), the shifting focus from “church-centered mission to a mission-centered church” following the Conference of World Mission and Evangelism in Willingen in 1952<sup>9</sup> (Bosch 1995:370), the re-orientation of Roman Catholic attitudes toward non-Christian religions following the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s (Bosch 1995:265; Küster 2014:172), the independence of national churches from their Western “mother” churches following the rise of post-colonial nations giving birth to “postcolonial” readings of the scriptures (R.S. Sugirtharajah 2003:1–3), and the increase in reverse migration beginning from 1960s (from the rest of the world to the West) leading to a more informed knowledge of the Majority World Christianity (Bryant Myers 2017:115–116) brought about a more decisive epistemological paradigm shift in mission. For instance, in reaction and as an alternative to what they perceived as a Western-dominated theology, a group of majority theologians (twenty-two, to be precise) gathered together in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 1976 to map out their own path. Together they were able to affirm, “We are prepared for a radical break in epistemology which makes commitment the first act of theology and engage in critical reflection on the praxis of the reality of the Third World” (Sergio Torres and Virginia Fabella 1976:269). While Christians have always critiqued the dominant and unjust paradigm of discourse, what is particular about this period is the emphasis on the “epistemologically decolonizing” critique from the Majority World (Erinque Dussel 2018:562).

During every transition, Christians have had to negotiate the principles of universality and particularity. The formulation of the Ancient Creeds, the Protestant Reformation, and the Roman Catholic Councils are examples of such negotiations. What is unique to theological proposals



in the twentieth century is the rise of global theologies. The independent nations perceived the vigorous exertion of the Western global market, values, and imperialistic posture as a threat to their pre-existent cultures and local autonomy. This triggered a reactive force in the form of what Scholte call “micro-nations” or “region-nations” that sought to build national identities and protect local values (Scholte 2005:231–237). The exogenous force of globalization thus created endogenous challenges that the existing theology was not equipped to tackle. Perhaps the neatly defined epistemological categories that have a long pedigree in the Western philosophy and often communicated with Western forms did not immediately resonate with the experience of the global Christians, many of who were beginning to discover and experience the richness of the newfound faith. Whether the transition *caused* the “epistemological break” or whether it provided an *occasion* for the break is a topic of its own. What is relevant here is the recently “freed” independent colonies began to recontextualize the gospel in ways that bear more relevance to their daily lives. This transition led to the emergence of many forms of local theologies such as Liberation theology, *Minjung* theology, *Dalit* theology, Tribal theology, etc.

A subtle form of the interpretive view of reality found a welcoming home in some Third-World theologies. Per Frostin argues that amidst the differences of many contextual theologies resides a common characteristic: “a fresh epistemological approach which implies a new theological methodology” (Frostin 1985: 127). Bosch observed how various contextual theologies arose from the epistemological break from the commonly held belief that the world is a *static* object that human minds can understand. In the new paradigm, he continues, “the world is [seen as] an *unfinished* project being built” (Bosch 1995: 424). Our understanding then becomes a *process*, not the finished product or photograph of the original. Such a view affects the way mission is conceived and executed.

While each emphasis has its own place, misplacing them may be problematic. It seems obvious that when the subjectivity or situatedness is pushed to the extreme, the overarching interpretive lens comes to be identified with language, tradition, culture, gender, religion, etc. Depending on one’s epistemological leniency, we would shift towards either an “interpretive” or “dogmatic” view. There is place and time to be “dogmatic” and “interpretive.” Our challenge is to delineate when, where, and why.

Given the challenges that our epistemology influences, if not determines, our theology and mission, what are some steps we can take so

that we make a responsible decision? While there may be many answers to this question, I would like to consider one area: revisiting the concept of critical realism. The term “critical realism” is now an acceptable term in theology and mission but needs further discussion through interdisciplinary and intercultural lenses if it is to remain an effective tool for constructing a theology of mission.

Although our first reaction may be to label Hick’s position as non-realist, he might disagree with such categorization. After all, he claims to be a critical realist and strongly contends against the view of non-realist (1993:1–10). Granted his position is not consistent or that there are contradictions with his positions, yet he is more of a relativist than a non-realist. Nonetheless, appealing to or using critical realism, as he did, does not automatically settle the epistemological complexity because while most agree on the “realism,” many differ on the “critical” part. This principle applies to others as much as it does to Hick.

Some have challenged the way N.T. Wright and Paul Hiebert use critical realism.<sup>10</sup> Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts stress the ambiguities and inconsistencies in the version of Wright’s predecessors’ from which he (Wright) builds his case (Porter and Pitts 2015:276–306). Quoting Lonergan’s own words, Porter and Pitts sum up their view on Lonergan’s position: “What is grasped in insight, is neither an actually given datum of sense nor a creation of the imagination but an intelligible organization that may or may not be relevant to data” (Porter and Pitts 2015:289). They contend that the “internalist theory” upon which their (Wright et al.) critical realism is built is not without its challenge. They assert, “Wright’s epistemology, following Meyer, who follows Lonergan, picks up on this same self-reflective feature of internalism...” (Porter and Pitts 2015:292). Hence, Porter and Pitts call for return to a form of externalism or a reworking of internalism, which they think is more philosophically sustainable, chimes better with the current epistemological studies, and fulfills one of Wright’s original purposes for developing critical realist account, i.e., the historical study of Jesus (Porter and Pitts 2015:301–302). They reasoned that what many call naïve realism is not so naïve or else why would philosophers maintain a position that they think is naïve (Porter and Pitts 2015:286)?

While many missiologists have found Hiebert’s proposal of critical realism ingenious and embraced it, Normal Geisler, a theologian and philosopher, has pointed out the ambiguity, and consequently challenged the weakness, in Hiebert’s position (Geisler 2010:133–153). Geisler points

out, and I think rightly so, that although Hiebert repeatedly uses the term “critical realism” and warns of the danger of total skepticism and complete dogmatism, he does not clearly spell out how our talk about God and his Word could be analogically true (Geisler 2010:134).

The criticism against Wright’s and Hiebert’s use of critical realism reminds us of the seriousness of assessing one’s philosophical rationality in making epistemic claims. By “philosophical rationality,” I mean ways of reasoning that are coherent, consistent, and non-contradictory, reasoning that must undergird any culture and religion to have meaningful discourse. While it is true that the debate between different epistemological theories is complex and ongoing and the veracity of our truth claims may not always depend on our ability to make a comprehensive case for the theory we espouse, it also remains true that we need to give careful attention to the theory we espouse. Some form of critical realism is not without shortcoming.<sup>11</sup>

Brian Lee Goard, after surveying the different uses of critical realism in various disciplines reaffirms the argument of Paul Allen thus: “Critical realists do share a few common assumptions and a general definition, yet they draw different conclusions in their applications of critical realism” (Goard 2011:69; Allen 2006:49). Goard counsels that while critical realism has many potential elements for developing a robust theology, it can also become problematic if and when combined with ambiguous definitions of revelation, religious experience, God’s Word, etc. (Goard 2011:171–206). The issue is not so much that our understanding of reality is contextually mediated, but how exactly it is mediated is not always clarified just as was the case even among the earliest critical realists (Porter and Pitts 2015:281).<sup>12</sup>

My intention here is neither to make Hick appear more “conservative” than he really was, nor to portray that Wright and Hiebert are like Hick. Rather, it is to point out that ambiguity lurks behind the use of the term and when applied to missiology it could become problematic. Hiebert’s critical contextualization, developed from the notion of critical realism, was timely and provided a smoother and more acceptable path (for example, than that of Charles Kraft) to navigate the changing paradigm in the 1970s (Eunhye Chang et al. 2009:199–201). And now, we must continue to wrestle with what exactly critical realism looks like in developing a contemporary theology of mission. This is one area that deserves further investigations through a missiological lens as others have

attempted it through their respective vantage points (for example, McGrath 2002:195–244 and Goard 2011).

Kirk recognizes that accepting critical realism as a judicious position between naïve realism and skepticism does not solve the problem because critical realism gives the impression that we can comprehend reality only fallibly but never certainly (Kirk 2007: 173). Hence, he wants to avoid using the adjective “critical.” He asserts, “I wish to defend a position that equates my perception of reality with reality, per se, but always allowing for error on my part” (Kirk 2007:173 n. 19). He calls this position a correspondence theory of truth. After discussing various theories of knowledge, he wrote thus, “Understood as means for distinguishing between truth and error, some of these theories have merit. However, the correspondence theory is the only one that deals with the nature of truth as such” (Kirk 2007:167). Kirk’s explanation, however, has left us wondering how his theory of correspondence could be reconciled with the different epistemological stances that Christians bring into interpreting reality and the Word of God. Kirk, who has paid close attention to this aspect of missiology, has left the job for us to continue.

## **Conclusion**

I only hope to have raised the importance of epistemology in relation to mission. Perhaps I have raised more questions than is necessary or will be able to provide answers even in this regard. Even then, I would have accomplished something, i.e., to bring to awareness the importance of the epistemological posture in our mission. Some other questions need critical attention as well: epistemology and Bible, epistemology and hermeneutics, epistemology and theology, all of which are inter-related and relevant to mission.

However, in this article, we have focused on the importance of epistemology in the theology of mission. I have used Hick and Kirk to illustrate and emphasize the significance of our epistemology as it relates to mission. I have accentuated the importance of critically assessing the epistemological assumptions behind our theological positions so that we can effectively navigate the terrain of shifting theological paradigms in mission. In emphasizing my thesis, I have pointed to the need for ongoing

study in this area since there are some important questions and ambiguities related to this topic.

If the choice for me were to leave with you only one application, then it would be the importance of epistemology in the theology of mission. Our epistemological posture influences our theology of mission more than we realize or acknowledge. Hence, we ought to give more serious attention to that aspect. This does not mean that we have to know all the philosophical languages associated with epistemology or that we have to be aware of all the epistemological debates. Although such knowledge and awareness are desirable, they are not mandatory. After all, as D. C. Schindler rightly puts it, “epistemology need not be explicit to be operative in any given case...” (Schindler 2007: 183). However, it means that we have to be able to critically evaluate why we believe what we believe and whether we have reasonable grounds to hold our beliefs. Regardless of our knowledge of epistemological theory, we are already exercising our epistemic conviction, and it would benefit us to assess where we stand critically.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> This is not to claim that missiologists were unaware of the importance of epistemological grounding. As early as 1985, Paul Hiebert began to articulate the importance of epistemology in theology and mission (1985a and 1985b). Hendrick Kraemer shows deep awareness of the issue in discussing the interreligious relationships (Kraemer 1963 [1938]:61–100). Beginning from 1950’s Leslie Newbigin wrote and reflected on various issues with keen epistemological, theological, and philosophical awareness and grounding. However, it may be true that missiologists and mission practitioners were more focused on adopting a particular mission strategy than in resolving the underpinning epistemological tensions.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer interestingly notes that recent understanding of biblical theology, as articulated by James M. Hamilton (and others) as an attempt to understand the Bible on its own term before it could be meaningfully communicated, reverses Frei’s “great reversal” (2014:24, n 23).

<sup>3</sup> Kant’s postulation, according to Frederick Copleston, was not merely a synthesis of the opposing and irreconcilable views of the continental rationalism and British empiricism; rather it was, in important ways, superseding over the two by critically incorporating some elements from both (Copleston 1994:428–430). Although Copleston does not consider such stance as necessarily positive, he believes, “Kant in particular

exercised a most powerful influence in this respect [i.e., epistemology]” and this influence continued to be felt in the diverging schools of thoughts that were to come later (Copleston 1994:438–439).

<sup>4</sup> There is a danger in overstating Kant’s polarization of the phenomena and *noumena*; however, it is to the aspect of Kant’s epistemic uncertainty of the *noumena* that both are invoking.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Vogel, “Inferences to the Best Explanation.” <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/inference-to-the-best-explanation/v-1> (accessed September 30, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> J Andrew Kirk, “My Pilgrimage in Mission,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28, no. 2 (April 2004):70–74. John Hick: Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/hick/#H1> (accessed September 30, 2018).

<sup>7</sup> Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP).

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of Kuhnian paradigm in relation to theology, see Alasdair MacIntyre (1997:138–150), David Bosch (1995:181–189), Hans Küng (1989a:3–33).

<sup>9</sup> It was in the Willingen conference that the concept of *Missio Dei*—an idea that is to become key in theology of mission—was charted out in more detail, although the term was not used in the conference (Bosch 1995:390). The spread of the global Charismatic movements in the twentieth century and influence of the anthological insights in the mission studies are two other vital factors that contributed to the epistemological reorientation.

<sup>10</sup> Wright and Hiebert’s definitions are not very different from that of Hick’s. Consider Hick’s definition of critical realism as it relates to religious claims: “a critical religious realism affirms the transcendent divine reality which the theistic religions refer to as God; but is conscious that this reality *is always thought of and experienced by us in ways which are shaped and coloured by human concepts and images* [italics inserted]” (1993:7). Now compare Wright’s definition: “[Critical realism] is a way of describing the process of ‘knowing’ that acknowledges the *reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower* (hence ‘realism’), while we also fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiraling path of *appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known* (hence ‘critical’) . . . Knowledge, in other words, although in principle concerning realities independent of the knower, is never itself independent of the knower [italics original]” (Wright 1992:35). Hiebert’s definition of critical realism in 1985 (this is before Ben Meyer and Wright’s incorporation into their respective fields) is very close to Hick’s. Hiebert writes, “Critical realists hold to objective truth, but recognize that it is understood by humans in their contexts. There is, therefore, an element of faith, a personal commitment in the knowledge of truth” (Hiebert 1985b:16–17). Hick’s argument is that the epistemic distance between God and human is to be bridged by faith (Hick 1966:66–68). All of them admit

the existence of the Real, yet they acknowledge that the *only* access to the Real is mediated either through our experience or conceptual schema.

<sup>11</sup> Roy Bhasker, who is commonly associated with the term “critical realism,” was himself not a Christian and was more comfortable with an epistemological relativism (Bhasker 2008: 240–241).

<sup>12</sup> For example, in his widely accepted book, *Models of Contextual Theology* (2008), Bevans assumes a form of critical realism similar to Lonergan’s (Bevans 2008:4, 4n. 11). He explains that reality is mediated by meaning, “a meaning that we give it in the context of our historical period, interpreted from our own particular horizon and in our own particular thought forms” (Bevans 2008:4). While I agree with Bevans in some ways, I would add that we must also emphasize the shared commonality of human experience, rationality, God’s Word, Holy Spirit, and the possibility of bridging our differences through conversations.

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Kristina Whiteman

## *Blessed Is the Kingdom: The Divine Liturgy as Missional Act*

### **Abstract:**

In the last 20 years, the Protestant Church has undergone a revolution in its self-understanding through the Missional Church movement. However, with its emphasis on changing forms of worship and on sending people out from the Church, the Missional Church discussion has been inaccessible (or even antithetical) to Eastern Orthodox Christians. This paper proposes a new way for Orthodox to enter the conversation, to contribute in a spirit of collaboration. With the goal of overcoming East/West theological differences by recognizing the inherent missionality of Orthodoxy's most central service, the Divine Liturgy, this paper will: explain the centrality of the Divine Liturgy to Orthodoxy, describe the general missional flow of the Divine Liturgy, and give specific examples of ways that various parts of the Divine Liturgy directly contribute to the Inward-Outward missional nature of the Divine Liturgy. Finally, some conclusions will be offered as to what the Divine Liturgy as a Missional Act might mean in the daily lives of the Faithful.

**Keywords:** Eastern Orthodox, missional, Missional Church, Divine Liturgy, Orthodox mission.

**Kristina Whiteman** is a Ph.D. student in Intercultural Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, KY.

## Introduction

Prompted by changes in World Christianity and by the decline of the North American overseas missions movement, the book *Missional Church* sparked a conversation that continues some twenty years later. The Missional Church movement calls for a fundamental change in how Christians see themselves—from being people who *send* others to “missions” far away, to being people who are themselves *sent* by God into their own contexts to participate in His Mission.<sup>1</sup> The emphasis is on God’s Mission, from which the Christian church gets its identity. This has been an invaluable shift in how North American churches are invited to see themselves, and much fruit (not to mention many books) have come from this conversation; authors have used the Missional Church as a framework for leadership, biblical scholarship, understanding cultural context, social change, youth work, church planting, and more.

Because much of this conversation is taking place within (and for) the Protestant world, it is not surprising that there has been an emphasis on change: changes in form to be more culturally sensitive, to reach out to and to speak in ways that are new and different. Many house churches, for instance, or churches that meet at alternative times in alternative places, have arisen out of this desire to alter “how we do church.” Also, there has been an emphasis on mission as “sent-ness.” Because God’s Mission is perceived as being one of “going out,”<sup>2</sup> being “Missional” means leaving, moving, being sent forth.

Considering these two emphases, it is not a surprise that the Eastern Orthodox Church has either bypassed or fought against much of the Missional Church conversation. Many Orthodox shudder when they hear the word “change;” this is in part because a missionality of constant adjustment is simply inconsistent with Orthodox understanding of Holy Tradition. Part of “the point of” Orthodoxy, with its rules of prayer, liturgical services, and ageless cycles of feasting and fasting, is that it is *unchanging*. Additionally, Orthodox Tradition is centered in the temple—Orthodox join together, come in, gather—as part of our DNA. An ethos where sending out is almost solely emphasized, then, simply does not work for us.

So, then, what do Orthodox *do* with the Missional Church conversation? We cannot possibly be “missional” if that means we must meet at 2 am in the local bar after it closes. And yet, the core message—that the Christian Church is sent by God *to* the world, *for* the world—is

certainly a message that applies to us as well. Certainly we, as Christians, are also called to participate in God's Mission in the world. So, what do we do?

I would propose that it is time for the Orthodox Church to enter this conversation, not as combatants but as collaborators. We, as Orthodox, can offer something to the question "What does it mean to be Missional?" And we can do this in the knowledge that, while we may be late to the conversation, we are not late to the practice of being a Missional Church.

I base this statement in one truth: *the Divine Liturgy of the Eastern Orthodox Church is a profoundly Missional Act*. By "Missional Act," I mean that the Divine Liturgy itself: 1) provides the strength and energy for witness, as the faithful are nourished on the very Body and Blood of Christ.<sup>3</sup> 2) is witness itself, a sign of power expressed in the transformation of the lives of Christians.<sup>4</sup> 3) is eschatological, as a symbol of the Kingdom that is now and is not yet, *but will be fulfilled*.<sup>5</sup> 4) is a call to participation in God's Mission, in view of this eschatology and also out of love and thanksgiving for all that God has done for each of us.<sup>6</sup> In support of this proposal, this paper will: explain the centrality of the Divine Liturgy to Orthodoxy, describe the general missional flow of the Divine Liturgy, and give specific examples of ways that various parts of the Divine Liturgy directly contribute to the Inward-Outward missional nature of the Divine Liturgy. Finally, some conclusions will be offered as to what the Divine Liturgy as a Missional Act might mean in the daily lives of the Faithful.

### **The Divine Liturgy as Central to Orthodoxy**

In order to understand the Divine Liturgy as a Missional Act, one must first acknowledge its importance in the life of the Eastern Orthodox Church.<sup>7</sup> In Orthodox self-understanding, the Church at its most basic level is not defined by "doctrine or discipline" primarily, but by worship<sup>8</sup>—we pray as we believe. This gives heightened consequence to the services of the Orthodox Church in general.

In a Christian Tradition where worship is illuminating to the Church as a whole, the Divine Liturgy is the main worship service for the Orthodox Church. This is because it is the service of the sacrament of the Eucharist, which is the very heart of Orthodoxy.<sup>9</sup> The Eucharist is central because in it Orthodox Christians join in communion with Christ, "actualizing," or entering into his Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension.<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, by partaking of Christ's Body and Blood we are joined with him in a very special way,<sup>11</sup> united with him by literally taking him into ourselves as food that is more-than-food.<sup>12</sup> Christ's mission in the world is to be the "self-giving of the Trinity so that the world may become a participant in the divine life."<sup>13</sup> In the Eucharist, Christ literally offers himself,<sup>14</sup> and by partaking of the Eucharist, we are "united in the once-and-for-all offering of Christ himself."<sup>15</sup>

In fact, in the Eucharist we enter into communion with the entire Trinity.<sup>16</sup> The Eucharist is, itself, a "reflection of the communion that exists between the persons of the Holy Trinity."<sup>17</sup> Christ is, of course, present, but so is the Holy Spirit; the Spirit is at work transforming the gifts,<sup>18</sup> but also constituting the Church<sup>19</sup> and transforming the whole world through the sacrament.<sup>20</sup> Christ's coming into the world was "the inevitable consequence of the inner dynamics of the Holy Trinity."<sup>21</sup> The Eucharist, as the reenactment of Christ's whole earthly journey is part of that dynamic: the creative love of the Trinity overflows in redemptive renewal of right relationship, and through the Spirit, in the Son, we are united with the Father.

Through our communion with the Triune God in the Eucharist, we are also brought into communion with each other as the worshiping and witnessing community.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the Eucharist, in the Divine Liturgy, is where the Church most truly becomes Herself<sup>23</sup>—through the Body and Blood, we are ourselves forged into the Body of Christ.<sup>24</sup> This, then, is where our identity as the Church comes from:<sup>25</sup> each parish is the fullness of the Church, because each parish is the local Eucharistic gathering.<sup>26</sup>

### **Offering and Receiving: Drawing In**

The Divine Liturgy as a Missional Act takes place in repeating sequences of our offering to God, God's transformation of what is offered, and our receiving that which has been transformed back from God,<sup>27</sup> cycles which result in two general movements: Drawing in and Sending out. The Eucharist is a journey, of the world drawn into the Kingdom, and the Kingdom going out into the world.<sup>28</sup> The altar is both the destination and the starting point.

The altar is both the end and the beginning of the Eucharistic flow because it is where we offer the gifts, and where God offers them back to us. We often think of this act as beginning with bread and wine, offered by



the priest on behalf of all, but, in fact, the Eucharistic dance of offering and receiving goes much further back, all the way to the creation of the world, which God offers to all people. Receiving the earth, the water, the sun, the seed, human beings “offer” work to raise crops.

Any farmer can tell you, however, that they depend not only on their own work, but on God’s continuing provision of good weather, good health, and safety from pests—through God’s provision, human work is transformed, and a good crop is received from the Lord. Once the harvest is complete, people again work to create something new, fashioning bread from wheat and wine from grapes. This process, though, happens only through God’s transforming gifts of yeast and fermentation; and so the process of making bread and wine, too, is an act of receiving and offering.

When the bread and wine have been prepared, they are offered on the altar, and they are received back from God transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. This does not end the cycle of offering and receiving, however. As the faithful receive the Eucharist, they are transformed and so gratefully offer their lives, which God receives and offers back. Leaving the church, these lives themselves become sacramental, as they “continue the process of sanctifying all life and all time given to us as God’s gift.”<sup>29</sup> It is important to note that at each step in this process, that which human beings offer to God is far less than what is received back; in each exchange, the Holy Trinity is at work to amplify, to invigorate, to purify, to perfect that which humans have done. The result is always a new gift that would be impossible without God’s holy intervention.

The Drawing In, or inward flow of the Liturgy involves offering the bread and wine; in offering the gifts, we are offering our whole lives to God.<sup>30</sup> This is because we come into Church as holistic, embodied beings. Everything that is a part of us comes with us as we “constitute the Church” in the Divine Liturgy—our thoughts, our feelings, our bodies—all of it is brought in and offered on the altar with the bread and the wine. This is, in part, why it is important that we each attend Liturgy and genuinely, actively participate in it.<sup>31</sup> This is what makes Liturgy “the work of the people:”<sup>32</sup> each of us is offering and receiving a piece of the mosaic of redemption.

In fact, beyond even our individual lives, much more is offered to God in the Eucharist. Our embodiment includes our whole parish community, but also our State, societal structures, relationships, culture<sup>33</sup>—all of these are received from God and offered back to God in the Eucharist.

In fact, the whole world is offered in the gifts,<sup>34</sup> as humanity “acts as the priest of creation,”<sup>35</sup> offering to God “on behalf of all, and for all.”

This can be seen, in part, in the gifts themselves. Food is necessary for life, and so when we offer it to God we are symbolically offering all of life.<sup>36</sup> When we think about the process of making wheat and wine, both involve a transformation in themselves, in which individual grapes or individual grains of wheat are crushed, combined, and changed into something more—there is a divinely symbolic synergy involved that points us toward deep theological truths.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, the elements that are in the gifts are representative of the whole world: salt comes from the earth, yeast is a living organism that floats through the air, water is used for bread and wine, fire bakes the bread, grapes and wheat require the sun, and so on. In fact, it is difficult to think of any part of the entire created universe that is not present in some way in the gifts.

So, we offer our human lives in their completeness, and we offer gifts that represent the whole universe. The gifts are placed on the altar, where heaven and earth meet in a dual movement of the Kingdom:<sup>38</sup> the Church ascends through the gifts of bread, wine, and life into grace, and Grace descends from the Trinity to be infused into those gifts.<sup>39</sup> The moment when the gifts are lifted up, we and all of creation are lifted up;<sup>40</sup> thus it is at the altar that the movement of Drawing In is completed.

### **Offering and Receiving: Sending Out**

At the same time, as all things are offered to God, the Holy Spirit brings the Kingdom to be present in our midst through the transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood. But the flow of the Spirit does not stop there—it continues, in our very lives. Through the sacrament, our whole life and the whole world have been brought into the Kingdom, and now the Kingdom comes into the totality of what has been brought in.<sup>41</sup>

This is how the Eucharist is also a Sending Out, a flow that is the path for the transformation of the entire world. In much the same way that the inward flow can be thought of as having individual, corporate, and universal connotations, the outward flow of sending affects us as individuals, as community, and as part of the cosmos. The Eucharist is effective for our own *theosis*; communion with Christ is the source of our own joyful transformation more fully into God’s likeness, as we are “reconstituted” into the life of the Kingdom through partaking of the Body

and Blood.<sup>42</sup> But we do not receive sanctification for our own individual spiritual purposes, any more than it was solely our own individual spiritual problems that were offered in the gifts.

The life of the Kingdom, which we access through communion with God, continues to be a life based on and through relationship. In the Liturgy, we are transformed from individuals into a communal manifestation of the Kingdom.<sup>43</sup> This is possible for us because in uniting our selves with the Trinity we become participants in God's love.<sup>44</sup> We see this in our corporate nature as the Church; the parish is "the nucleus and foundation of our daily Christian witness."<sup>45</sup> It is in intimate relationships with each other that we live out Kingdom values, that we manifest the Kingdom.<sup>46</sup> In fact, Christianity can be defined as *common life*,<sup>47</sup> as community which is a lived experience.<sup>48</sup> The Church becomes a sacrament that anticipates the *parousia*, an icon of the Kingdom by which the rest of the world knows Christ.<sup>49</sup>

Even as we manifest the Kingdom, we are always aware that this is not the full extent of who we are as the Church—our identity comes not only from the Kingdom already present among us but also from the Kingdom yet to come.<sup>50</sup> At the same time that we experience the "now" of the Kingdom, we are made aware of the "not yet,"<sup>51</sup> of our role as an "eschatological community."<sup>52</sup> God's Kingdom has been announced, it has been manifest in the Eucharist, and we are its sign and announcement in the world.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, the whole world has not been healed, the cosmos not been renewed—it is waiting for the Kingdom to come in fullness.<sup>54</sup> Having tasted of the Kingdom, aware of "the Kingdom of God around and within us" and of the future full coming of the Kingdom at the end of all things,<sup>55</sup> Christians are "sent into the world in order to prepare it to become the Kingdom of God."<sup>56</sup> This is the cosmic dimension of the Kingdom in the Eucharist: the Sending Out of the Holy Trinity is for the entire world, through us.<sup>57</sup>

This brings us back to our role of witness. As a foretaste of the Kingdom, as a reminder of the Kingdom that is to come, the Eucharist is also a witness to the world.<sup>58</sup> Having entered into the joy of the sacrament,<sup>59</sup> having thus been forged into a sacramental community, we go forth from the church filled with the fruits of the Spirit to live lives that are a testimony to what we have experienced.<sup>60</sup> This, in fact, is the natural outpouring of our experience in the Eucharist—out of our abundance we naturally witness to others as we share the joy, freedom, and hope we ourselves have found in Christ.<sup>61</sup>

### **The Divine Liturgy and the Missional Flow**

Having described the importance of the Divine Liturgy to Orthodoxy, and having expressed the missional Drawing In, Sending Out flows of the Divine Liturgy, we now turn to the Liturgy itself.<sup>62</sup> While all parts of the service, including the preparatory prayers of the Proskomedia and the Post-Communion prayers, contribute to the sense of flow, space precludes descriptions of each part of the service. Instead, three examples will be discussed: the beginning of the Liturgy, the Anaphora, and the Prayer at the Ambo.

#### *The Liturgy Begins: Blessed Is the Kingdom, Lord Have Mercy*

The Liturgy begins with the phrase, “Blessed is the Kingdom, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” This opening clearly shows our goal—it is toward the Kingdom that the eucharistic journey is headed.<sup>63</sup> It also shows that the Kingdom is both present and coming, because Christ is both present and coming.<sup>64</sup> The phrase “blessed is” is a “basic Biblical form of adoration,”<sup>65</sup> used to say that we see the Kingdom as our “highest and ultimate value, the object of our desire, our love and our hope.”<sup>66</sup> Indeed, participation in the Kingdom, as the hope of the Divine Liturgy, is the aim of the Church as a whole, as we seek unity with God.<sup>67</sup>

After this opening, the prayers of the people begin with the Great Litany. In these prayers, we see a pattern that will continue during all the litanies of the Liturgy: asking everything from “the salvation of our souls” to “this city and country” to “the peace of the whole world,” the gathered congregation petitions God on behalf of the entire created universe.<sup>68</sup> By praying for each of these areas, we are, in some ways, making ourselves “spiritually responsible for them;”<sup>69</sup> the prayer for peace for the world, in particular, is both an offering of gratitude to God<sup>70</sup> and a prayer for the Church to be faithful to its mission—the spread of the gospel in word and deed—and for the fruit to be not just our individual salvation, but the universal Peace of the Kingdom.<sup>71</sup>

In the other side of this ongoing pattern, the people respond to the specific prayers lifted up by the priest or deacon by saying, “Lord, have mercy.” Orthodoxy teaches that such a prayer is simply asking God to “be Himself to us, and to lift us up—we who are fashioned in His image—that we may come to know Him and to do His will.”<sup>72</sup> In asking only for God’s mercy, we acknowledge that we do not make requests out of our own worthiness,

but out of absolute trust in God's love for us and desire to give us every good gift.<sup>73</sup> By saying "Amen" at the end, the people make the prayers of the priest their own,<sup>74</sup> seeking to become more like God in their thinking about, and responding to, each need.

### *Anaphora*

The Anaphora, also known as the "lifting up" and the "offering," is the "heart of the liturgy."<sup>75</sup> It is here that human beings act as priests of creation,<sup>76</sup> offering to and receiving from the Lord.<sup>77</sup> When the priest says, "Let us lift up our hearts," and the congregation replies, "We lift them up unto the Lord," it is customary in many parishes for the people raise their hands, showing that the faithful enter into worship, enter into offering, with the entirety of body and being.<sup>78</sup> God is praised, blessed, thanked, and worshiped, both for what He has done and for His Kingdom which is to come.

In the prayers recalling the Last Supper and all of the Christ-Act, there is a remembrance that is more than commemoration<sup>79</sup>—it is entrance into "all those things which have come to pass for us." The response to God's offering of the Eucharist is to offer back what the faithful have received. And so, at the height of the Anaphora, the gifts of wine and bread are lifted high over the altar as the priest prays, "*Thine own of thine own we offer unto thee, in behalf of all and for all.*"

Having made this offering, he asks the Holy Spirit to come down and change the gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ. Interestingly, supplication is made first for the Spirit to be sent upon the community, and then upon the Gifts.<sup>80</sup> The transformation of the bread and wine into the Body and the Blood does not happen because of the words that are spoken—this is not a magic spell—but through the movement of the Holy Spirit's will to come into the world and be joined to us through the Eucharist.<sup>81</sup> The aim and goal of the Eucharist is that it would be for "purification of soul, remission of sins" but also for communion of the Holy Spirit and for the fulfillment of the Kingdom.

This is the moment of simultaneity, of universal offering and receiving,<sup>82</sup> where the Inward and Outward movements of Mission are one in the power of the Holy Spirit. The gifts, representing the whole created universe, are offered on the altar and are imbued with the Holy Spirit. As the Liturgy progresses, the Spirit who has been sent is joined to those who

partake in the mystery of communion which leads to individual, corporate, and ultimately universal transformation.

### *Prayer before the Ambo*

In a clear call to missional witness,<sup>83</sup> the Liturgy ends with the words “Go forth in peace.”<sup>84</sup> These words evoke the idea of “making peace,” which is “the consequence of the cosmic effect of God’s power working in Christ and in his body, the church... It is Christ’s sovereignty over the entire cosmos, the cause, source, and manifestation (in concrete actions of his body, the church) of real peace.”<sup>85</sup> To go forth in peace, then, is to move from the church building prepared to behave in our actual lives in ways that proclaim God’s Kingdom.<sup>86</sup>

This dismissal is the call to each believer to go out and “be apostles for Christ, to continue the liturgy of martyrria (witness) and diakonia (service).”<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, this part of the service takes place only a few minutes after communion. It is as if, having seen that we are called to “herald the Kingdom,” and having experienced God’s work in our own lives, we are called to go immediately into the world and “proclaim the Kingdom to all nations.... The dismissal at the Divine Liturgy is not the beginning of the end, but merely the end of the beginning.”<sup>88</sup>

Having taken the Eucharist, the faithful simultaneously end the journey and begin it anew, going out as witnesses of “Light, as witnesses of the Spirit.”<sup>89</sup> This new journey is both individual and communal, and the Sending Out is clear: “Christians who have heard the word and received the bread of life should henceforth be living prophetic signs of the coming kingdom.”<sup>90</sup>

### *God’s Mission: Our Mission*

The ending of the Divine Liturgy confirms, then, the flow of whole service: we have been Drawn In, and now we are Sent Out. We have been given our mission of witness.<sup>91</sup> Everything about this mission flows from what we have experienced in the service, because it flows from our experience of Christ.<sup>92</sup> In the Liturgy, God “works to change the very core of our being, making us by grace what he is by nature (2 Pt. 1:4).”<sup>93</sup> If we have genuinely partaken of the Eucharist in its transforming power, then our hearts should be “set on fire...for God and for all of his creation.”<sup>94</sup>

By bringing us into God's Kingdom, the Divine Liturgy shows us God's beauty and glory, inviting us to be like Him,<sup>95</sup> first of all in his boundless Love.<sup>96</sup> Our missional witness has the same individual, corporate, and universal aspects that we have seen throughout the Liturgy. It begins with our own repentance and *theosis*,<sup>97</sup> but it is also for the whole worshipping community, as we are invited to become one Body made up of the pilgrim people of God.<sup>98</sup> As individuals and as a group, we have communion with God, and God invites us to be a part of His work in the whole world.<sup>99</sup>

God's desire is that the cosmos would be brought into His Kingdom;<sup>100</sup> this mission will last until Christ comes again to fulfill it. Since the Christian mission is incorporated into God's mission, the final goal of our mission surely cannot be different from His.<sup>101</sup> And this purpose...is the "*recapitulation of all things*" (Eph 1:10) *in Christ and our participation in the divine glory, the eternal, final glory of God.*"<sup>102</sup>

#### Life as Liturgy after Liturgy

This phenomenon, of Christians being sent out as witnesses to God's transforming love and to His Kingdom, has practical consequences—"all of life must be transfigured into a liturgy."<sup>103</sup> In fact, one can say that the Eucharist that we have received in the Church "should not be seen as separated from the eucharist, which is fulfilled outside the church on the altar of the world, as St. John Chrysostom so eloquently declared."<sup>104</sup> In Orthodox thought, daily living as Eucharist-outside-the-church can be thought of as the "Liturgy after the Liturgy."<sup>105</sup>

This happens in part through our personal prayer<sup>106</sup> and other spiritual practices that are a part of our personal effort to "bring into everyday life the liturgical rhythm of the consecration of time."<sup>107</sup> Indeed, even outside of what we might think of as "spiritual matters," we are called to continue the Liturgy in our everyday lives by making every decision, every choice, in the light of Christ.<sup>108</sup> Each of our actions should witness to the world that we have a "personal commitment to Jesus,"<sup>109</sup> and each interaction with others, particularly non-believers, is an opportunity to show his love.<sup>110</sup> This is how we continue the thanksgiving and praise of the Divine Liturgy out in the world, by loving God through loving others.

The Liturgy after the Liturgy involves not only our individual lives, but also how we participate in our culture, in our societal structures, in the

political life of our own and other countries.<sup>111</sup> Part of the Eucharistic dance is our obligation as members of the Church to “live in history in an active way.”<sup>112</sup> It is as local eucharistic communities that we engage socially and politically,<sup>113</sup> encountering others in a collaborative and loving witness.<sup>114</sup>

This includes, for the whole Body, a “commitment through Christ to the poor of this world,” which is a part of seeking the “creation of a better world.”<sup>115</sup> In the Liturgy after the Liturgy, the world is a “‘relevant’ place for Christian action,”<sup>116</sup> in which the Church understands the real needs of others and lives a holy life of service to them.<sup>117</sup> There is less meaning in what we think, or believe, but much in what we do—our actions in the world matter.<sup>118</sup> We are called to “proclaim the kingdom and to demonstrate its power” by actively fighting the idols of “racism, money, nationalism, ideologies, and the...exploitation of human beings;” by “healing of the sick,” which includes societal/structural sicknesses; by voluntary “identification with all those who go hungry;” and by practicing chastity, humility, freedom, and mutual submission.<sup>119</sup> The natural result of transformation through the Eucharist is action—witness through service.<sup>120</sup>

In the same way that the Divine Liturgy includes the communion of the Body, the Liturgy after the Liturgy is a group effort.<sup>121</sup> In part this is because the parish itself, full of imperfect people with whom we are in relationship, shows our witness of love for others.<sup>122</sup> Showing the world that we are one in Christ through communion with him<sup>123</sup> is vital—we must live as a “congregation of love,” because “Any amount of right doctrine is of no importance at all if it is not shared in love.”<sup>124</sup>

Our individual and communal witness of loving service happens through the power of the Holy Spirit, who works in us to make us more like Christ<sup>125</sup> and who continues the work begun at Pentecost through the sending out of the Church.<sup>126</sup> The Holy Spirit enables us to offer “ourselves and each other and all of our lives,” and in doing this we find salvation.<sup>127</sup> Because the Holy Spirit is always active, and because the Divine Liturgy is by nature formative and transformative,<sup>128</sup> any failure of the Liturgy to result in a life of Liturgy after the Liturgy is a failure on our part, “due to a lack or refusal on the human side to encounter God.”<sup>129</sup> If we are in tune with the Holy Spirit, in communion with the Trinity, rather than being an intellectual exercise, our lived theology will be “an invitation ‘to taste and see,’ an announcement and a promise to be fulfilled in communion, vision and life.”<sup>130</sup>



### Conclusion—Breathe In, Breathe Out

We have come full circle, from the Drawing In, the sacrifice of our lives and the whole world on the eucharistic altar, to the Sending Out, the sacrifice of our lives on the altar of the world. This idea of the dual motion of mission is one of the most important offerings Orthodox can make to the Missional Church conversation. In order to go forth, one must first gather and be changed by God; it is this that we offer to the world, not just a story of sin-forgiveness, but of our own transformation. We Draw In, and we are Sent Out, and both of these movements, couched in the never-ending cycle of offering to and receiving from the Holy Trinity, are vital to the Missional nature of the Divine Liturgy of the Orthodox Church.

We can think of these movements as being like breathing<sup>131</sup>—both breathing in and breathing out are necessary. In the same way that attempting to only breathe in will kill us, completing only the inward movement of the Divine Liturgy is deadly to our spiritual lives. Likewise, one cannot always breathe out, and neither can one only make the outward movement of sending. We must complete the circle, bringing all of life to God and receiving it back from Him, coming in in order to go out and going out in order to come in. In coming in we are transformed by communion with the Holy Trinity—we are given something to witness to, along with the power to live transformation in our actual lives. In going out we begin again the cycle, witnessing the Kingdom to the world in order that it may be gathered in.

*We breathe in. We breathe out.* And the breath of the Holy Spirit fills us and all creation, to the glory of God and the coming of His Kingdom.

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Darrell Guder, ed, *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ed Stetzer, "Monday is for Missiology: What is the Missional Church?—a New Series," *Christianity Today*, October 12, 2015, accessed December 14, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2015/october/missional-church-and-its-manifesto.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Ion Bria, *Martyria, Mission: The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 68; Ion Bria, *The Liturgy After the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996), 20, 27, 55; Anthony

Coniaris, *Sacred Symbols that Speak, Vol. I: A Study of the Major Symbols of the Orthodox Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Light & Life, 1981), 165, 166; James Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today* (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life, 1986), 93, 94.

<sup>4</sup> Ion Bria, ed, *Go Forth In Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986), 31; Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), 48, 82, 114; Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2010), 95, 242; Hilarion Alfeyev, *The Mysteries of Faith: An Introduction to the Teaching and Spirituality of the Orthodox Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2002), 141; Bria, *Liturgy After the Liturgy*, 20, 21, 30; Bria, *Martyria, Mission*, ix; Stamoolis, 95, 99; Coniaris, 167.

<sup>5</sup> Petros Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness: Orthodox Perspectives on the Unity and Mission of the Church* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 14, 52; Stamoolis, 101; Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 34.

<sup>6</sup> Bria, *Go Forth in Peace*, 22; Stamoolis, 87, 96.

<sup>7</sup> Patriarch Bartholomew, "The Wonder of Creation and Ecology," in *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, ed. Petros Vassiliadis (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 129; Petros Vassiliadis, ed., *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 50, 56; Anastasios Yannoulatos, "Discovering the Orthodox Missionary Ethos," in *Martyria, Mission: The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today*, ed. Ion Bria (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 27; John Erickson, *Orthodox Christians in America: A Short History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 2; Alkiviadis Calivas, *Aspects of Orthodox Worship* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2003), 176; Vassiliadis, *Orthodox Perspectives*, 4-6; Alfeyev, *Mysteries*, 137; Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 130, 148.

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission: Reflections on Orthodoxy in the West* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979), 129; Vassiliadis, *Orthodox Perspectives*, 4; Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 52; Erickson, 13; Calivas, xiii, 1; Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness*, 10, 50; Stamoolis, 87.

<sup>9</sup> Coniaris, 157-158; Vassiliadis, *Orthodox Perspectives*, 44; Yannoulatos, "Discovering," 27; Alfeyev, *Mysteries*, 137.

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin Williams and Harold Anstall, *Orthodox Worship: A Living Continuity With the Synagogue, the Temple, and the Early Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Light & Life, 1990), 172; Alexander Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life: Lectures and Essays on Christian Development Through Liturgical Experience* (New York: Orthodox Church in America, 1974), 51; Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 148; Bria, *Go Forth*, 6, 17; Bria, *Liturgy*, 1, 16; Coniaris, 161; Schmemmann, *Church*, 135, 142; Calivas, 175, 185.

<sup>11</sup> George Lemopoulos, *Your Will be Done: Orthodoxy in Mission* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 12; Georges Florovsky, "The Church: Her Nature and Task," in *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, ed. Petros Vassiliadis (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 39; Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 167; Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 23; Calivas, 165, 166, 173.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 41.

<sup>13</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Coniaris, 171; Calivas, 166.

<sup>15</sup> Lemopoulos, 53; See also Emmanuel Clapsis, "The Eucharist as Missionary Event in a Suffering World," in *Your Will Be Done: Orthodoxy in Mission*, ed. George Lemopoulos (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 165; Calivas, 13, 179, 184.

<sup>16</sup> Lemopoulos, 52; Clapsis, 165; Bria, *Liturgy*, 5; Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 36; Alfeyev, *Mysteries*, 139; Bria, *Go Forth*, 3; Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 149; Calivas, xiii, 9, 28, 167, 173; Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 49-50.

<sup>17</sup> Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Bria, *Liturgy*, 15; Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 52; Bria, *Go Forth*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Calivas, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 7, 8; Calivas, 182.

<sup>21</sup> Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness*, 34.

<sup>22</sup> Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 214; Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 3, 30; Florovsky, 36; Calivas, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 51; Schmemmann, *For The Life*, 26; Schmemmann, *Church*, 136, 137; Calivas, 1, 3, 35.

<sup>24</sup> Calivas, xiii, 171, 189.

<sup>25</sup> Vassiliadis, *Orthodox Perspectives*, viii; Erickson, 15; Calivas, xiii.

<sup>26</sup> Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 213; Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 24-25.

<sup>27</sup> Calivas, 9.

<sup>28</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life*, 26; Calivas, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Lemopoulos, 52; See also Calivas, 187.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Rommen, *Come and See: An Eastern Orthodox Perspective on Contextualization* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 91; Schmemmann, *For the Life*, 20-21; Calivas, 188.

<sup>31</sup> Meletios Webber, *Bread & Water, Wine & Oil: An Orthodox Christian Experience of God* (Chesterton, IN: Conciliar Press, 2007), 137; Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 15, 16; Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 21; Calivas, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Calivas, 162.

<sup>33</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 5, 6; Schmemmann, *Church*, 216.

<sup>34</sup> Lemopoulos, 49.

<sup>35</sup> Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness*, 15. See also Yannoulatos, "Discovering," 21, Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 141, 242; Schmemmann, *For the Life*, 55; Bria, *Go Forth*, 3, 17.

<sup>36</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life*, 35; Calivas, 183.

<sup>37</sup> For this concept I am indebted to Dr. Robert Danielson, whose insight has been invaluable on this topic.

<sup>38</sup> Calivas, 55.

<sup>39</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life*, 31, 42; Florovsky, 37; Coniaris, 159; Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 37.

<sup>40</sup> Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 23.

<sup>41</sup> Schmemmann, *Church*, 30.

<sup>42</sup> Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 13. See also Florovsky, 42, Bria, *Go Forth*, 19; Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 50; Williams and Anstall, 153, 172; Calivas, 27.

<sup>43</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 17, 19; Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 103.

<sup>44</sup> Petros Vassiliadis, "Theological Foundations of Mission: An Orthodox Perspective," in *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, ed. Petros Vassiliadis (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 194.

<sup>45</sup> Lemopoulos, 38.

<sup>46</sup> Lemopoulos, 38; Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness*, 56.

<sup>47</sup> Florovsky, 35.

<sup>48</sup> Schmemmann, *Church*, 20, 22, 133, 135; Rommen, 91.

<sup>49</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 10, 19; Schmemmann, *Church*, 29, 137, 151; Calivas, 18, 191.

<sup>50</sup> Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness*, 14, 35, 54; Calivas, 18, 36.

<sup>51</sup> Nicholas Cabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1960), 39-40; Schmemmann, *For the Life*, 39; Schmemmann, *Church*, 151; Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 41-42; Webber, 139; Coniaris, 159; Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 48.

<sup>52</sup> John Myendorff, "Unity of the Church—Unity of Mankind," in *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, ed. Petros Vassiliadis (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2013), 103; Bria, *Go Forth*, 10-11. See also Anastasios Yannoulatos, "Orthodox Mission: Past, Present, Future," in *Your Will Be Done: Orthodoxy in Mission*, ed. George Lemopoulos (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 83; Schmemmann, *Church*, 75; Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 16; Vassiliadis, *Orthodox Perspectives*, 6; Clapsis, 167, 168; Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 148.

<sup>53</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 6, 10; Yannoulatos, *Mission In Christ's Way*, 120; Clapsis, 165.

<sup>54</sup> Yannoulatos, *Mission In Christ's Way*, 48.

<sup>55</sup> Yannoulatos, *Mission In Christ's Way*, 103, 148.

<sup>56</sup> Myendorff, "Unity of the Church," 104. See also Calivas, 40-41.

<sup>57</sup> Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 22; Bria, *Martyria, Mission*, 7; Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 23; Yannoulatos, *Mission In Christ's Way*, 141, 221, 242; Schmemmann, *For the Life*, 36, 55; Stamoolis, 97; Bria, *Go Forth*, 29; Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness*, 42.

<sup>58</sup> Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 16; Bria, *Go Forth*, 17; Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 30; Vassiliadis, "Theological Foundations," 190; Calivas, 37, 39, 54.

<sup>59</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life*, 26.

<sup>60</sup> John Myendorff, *Witness to the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 180; Bria, *Liturgy*, 8.

<sup>61</sup> Lemopoulos, 55.

<sup>62</sup> For the purposes of this paper, we will be examining the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, since it is the most widely used, and since other versions of the Divine Liturgy contain similar parts. Some future project may incorporate the other common Liturgies, such as the Liturgy of St. Basil or the Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified gifts.

<sup>63</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 18.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>65</sup> Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 29.

<sup>66</sup> Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 47.

<sup>67</sup> Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness*, 15; Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 40; Williams and Anstall, 100—101, 126, 153; Bria, *Martyria*, 10. See also Bria, *Go Forth*, 17; Bria, *Liturgy*, 28.

<sup>68</sup> Cabasilas, 46; Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 56; Bria, *Liturgy After the Liturgy*, 2; Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 32; Williams and Anstall, 130; Theodore Bobosh, *The Divine Liturgy According to St. John Chrysostom, with Commentary and Biblical References* (Minneapolis, MN: Light and Life Publishing, 1989), 5.

<sup>69</sup> Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 44.

<sup>70</sup> Cabasilas, 44.

<sup>71</sup> Schmemmann, *Life and Liturgy*, 43; Cabasilas, 45, 47.

<sup>72</sup> Williams and Anstall, 142.

<sup>73</sup> Cabasilas, 45; Bobosh, 5.

<sup>74</sup> Cabasilas, 51.

<sup>75</sup> Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 4.

<sup>76</sup> Vassiliadis, 15.

<sup>77</sup> Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 6.

<sup>78</sup> Calivas, 201.

<sup>79</sup> Bobosh, 45; Freeman, 34.

<sup>80</sup> Vassiliadis, 13.

<sup>81</sup> Schmemmann, 43.

<sup>82</sup> Freeman, 32.

<sup>83</sup> Coniaris, 166.; Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 245.; Bria, *Go Forth in Peace*, 39.

<sup>84</sup> Bria, *Liturgy After the Liturgy*, 5, 87.

<sup>85</sup> Vassiliadis, *Eucharist and Witness*, 41.

<sup>86</sup> Webber, 146.

<sup>87</sup> Coniaris, 165.

<sup>88</sup> Webber, 146. See also Bria, *Go Forth*, 39.

<sup>89</sup> Schmemmann, *For the Life*, 46.

<sup>90</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 39.

<sup>91</sup> Calivas, 2.

<sup>92</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 3. See also Lemopoulos, 11; Bria, *Martyria, Mission*, 8; Clapsis, 162, 164; Bria, *Go Forth*, 41.

<sup>93</sup> Calivas, 12

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>97</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 9; Schmemmann, *Liturgy and Life*, 21; Webber, 137.

<sup>98</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 12, 18; Bria, *Martyria, Mission*, 9; Lemopoulos, 53.

<sup>99</sup> Lemopoulos, 10; Bria, *Go Forth*, 7; Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 185.

<sup>100</sup> Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 9.

<sup>101</sup> Athanasios Papathanasiou, *Future, the Background of History: Essays of Church Mission in an Age of Globalization* (Montreal: Alexander Press, 2005), 99.

<sup>102</sup> Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 46.

<sup>103</sup> Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 95. See also Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 243; Yannoulatos, "Discovering," 27-28.

<sup>104</sup> Joseph El-Zahlaoui, "Witnessing in the Islamic Context," in *Your Will Be Done: Orthodoxy in Mission*, ed. George Lemopoulos, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 97.

<sup>105</sup> Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 131, 95. See also Schmemmann, *Church*, 49; Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 28.

<sup>106</sup> Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 131, 149.

<sup>107</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 21.

<sup>108</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 13, 38; Calivas, 2, 173; Lemopoulos, 53; Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 20, 21.

<sup>109</sup> Ion Bria, "The Liturgy after the Liturgy," in *Martyria, Mission: The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today*, ed. Ion Bria, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 69.

<sup>110</sup> Bria, "Liturgy," 70; Bria, *Go Forth*, 22; Calivas, 17.

<sup>111</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 22, 50-51; Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 20.

<sup>112</sup> Papathanasiou, 20.

<sup>113</sup> Yannoulatos, "Orthodox Mission," 65; Bria, *Go Forth*, 47-48.

<sup>114</sup> El-Zahlaoui, 99.

<sup>115</sup> Clapsis, 164. See also Bria, *Go Forth*, 48.

<sup>116</sup> Schmemmann, *Church*, 49.

<sup>117</sup> Lemopoulos, 47; Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 96.

<sup>118</sup> Florovsky, 42.

<sup>119</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 39.

<sup>120</sup> Coniaris, 168.

<sup>121</sup> Bria, "Liturgy," 71; Bria, *Go Forth*, 12, 21; Florovsky, 35.

<sup>122</sup> Lemopoulos, 38.

<sup>123</sup> Florovsky, 36.

<sup>124</sup> Webber, 143.

<sup>125</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 38.

<sup>126</sup> Bria, *Go Forth*, 22; Bria, *Liturgy after Liturgy*, 8.

<sup>127</sup> Schmemmann, *The Eucharist*, 104, 93-94.

<sup>128</sup> Calivas, 10, 12.

<sup>129</sup> Clapsis, 166.

<sup>130</sup> Schmemmann, *Church*, 143.

<sup>131</sup> See Yannoulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way*, 150.



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Philip F. Hardt

*The Capital of Methodism: The New York Station:  
1800-1832*

**Abstract:**

For the first three decades of the nineteenth century, the New York Station could easily be considered the pre-eminent circuit in American Methodism. During this period, highly dedicated, extremely gifted, and deeply evangelistic preachers and laity and the newly relocated Book Concern joined forces in an unparalleled way to impact the station and, in some cases, the entire denomination. This occurred within a rapidly growing city with tremendous commercial importance, especially in shipping. As a result, the New York Station developed a uniqueness that was unmatched in the denomination. Two of the ways it differed from a more traditional circuit were its deployment of stationed and local preachers on the Lord's Day and its rapid response to benevolent, educational, evangelistic, and missional needs.

**Keywords:** New York Station, New York City Methodism, Methodism and Preaching, Wesleyan Seminary, Methodist Tract Society

**Philip Hardt** is pastor of Glendale Maspeth UMC in New York City. He has a Ph.D. in Historical Theology (American period) from Fordham University (1998). He has been an adjunct professor of Methodist Studies at New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

## **Introduction**

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the New York Station in lower Manhattan can, without doubt, be considered the “capital of Methodism” in America. A number of factors contributed to this such as the incredibly fruitful ministry of Reverend Nathan Bangs who remained in New York for nearly fifty years in different capacities, the relocation of the Book Concern which placed both the book agents and their publishing at the disposal of the station, and the seemingly endless supply of highly dedicated and deeply spiritual laity. To be sure, these factors, and others, led to its singular uniqueness as a circuit. As a result, the New York Station differed from a more traditional, four week circuit in at least two distinctive ways: preaching on the Lord’s Day and the sheer number of its ministries that impacted both the station and the entire church.

## **Preaching on the Lord’s Day**

The first way that the New York Station differed from a traditional circuit was the utilization of a high number of both stationed and local preachers on the Lord’s Day. For example, traditional circuits usually covered a large geographic area insuring that the itinerant preacher(s) would preach only infrequently and not every Sunday. According to Lester Ruth, “a circuit described the path of travel over which a traveling preacher went to preach his sermons each month including typically two dozen or more preaching sites.” Usually, two itinerant preachers, spaced two weeks apart, would be appointed to one circuit. In contrast, in a station, preaching occurred every Sunday in every congregation. This was possible since stations were usually confined to just one city. Ruth defined a station as “the assignment of responsibility for the societies of a small geographic area to an itinerant preacher or preachers, in essence collapsing a circuit to that area, even limiting it to the boundaries of one city or to one society.” Besides New York City, other stations included Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Charleston, South Carolina. Due to the smaller size of the circuit, each congregation had preaching two or three times every Sunday because of the constant rotation of all the stationed and local preachers assigned to the circuit. This rotation was called the “stational plan.”<sup>1</sup>

### *The Stational Plan*

The stational plan of preaching required each stationed preacher to preach three times every Sunday. In the 1790s, when only three

churches existed, this was fairly simply to execute. This is illustrated in a description of New York in 1794. "There were three sermons in each church, the effective ministers alternating, and after the evening service a general meeting of the whole society was held, conducted by the pastor." In contrast, as the New York Station ultimately grew to six or seven churches by 1832, it became somewhat more complicated. Examples come from the various "stational plans" of the New York Station from 1815 to 1829. These plans also reveal that the circuit went from west to east and back again to the west. This progression can be clearly seen in Appendix One. For example, Reverend Ebenezer Washburn gave this description of the New York Station in 1815; at that time the station contained eight churches: John Street, Duane Street, Forsyth Street, Allen Street, Two Mile Stone (later Bowery Village and then Seventh Street), Greenwich Village (later Bedford Street) and two African churches: Zion African Church and Asbury African Church. "All the Methodist congregations in the city were then in one charge, and the preachers traveled round in the regular form of a circuit. The preacher who was at John-street in the morning was at Forsyth-street in the afternoon and Allen-street in the evening. The next Sabbath he was at Forsyth-street in the morning, Allen-street in the afternoon, and Two-mile-stone in the evening; thus preaching three times regularly in each church every time he performed his tour around his circuit." A complete tour of the circuit took three complete rotations of the stational plan or eighteen Sundays.<sup>2</sup>

Reverend Tobias Spicer, appointed to the New York Station from 1819 to 1821, gave a similar account. "There were five stationed preachers, and we were assisted by the book agents (of the publishing house) and local preachers. We each preached but once in the same church on the same Sabbath, and once in five weeks, on a week evening, in the different churches." Again, three years later, Reverend Daniel DeVinne gave the following description. "The whole city then was in one circuit. Six preachers and six churches have special charge in his own locality, but rotating regularly to all the churches on the Sabbath. This year Willett street church was built, receiving the congregation from the Mission House, in Broome Street." Ten years later, when he was reappointed to New York City, it had been divided into two stations but the stational plan remained intact. In 1834, he wrote, "New York, at this time was divided into two large circuits, East and West. I was stationed in Duane Street...The ordinary routine of ministerial duties, at this time, was as laborious as it had been

ten years before. Three sermons on the Sabbath and a walk of from one to five miles." Some preachers, however, rode in a carriage due to winter conditions or simply to get to their appointment more quickly. For example, Reverend Coles noted that on a Sunday morning in March, Brother Worrall took him in a carriage to the Willett Street church (a west to east route) for his first preaching appointment. Another time, Brother Worrall took him to his afternoon preaching appointment in Rose Hill (a south to north route). At the same time, Reverend Coles would occasionally stay overnight at a member's home after preaching the evening service perhaps due to extremely cold weather or the lateness of the hour.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, this plan allowed the preacher to use the same sermon in all three services but with some variation. Regarding this, Reverend George Coles wrote that "...in the morning, when the mind is clear and calm, take care to 'feed the flock' with wisdom and knowledge; in the afternoon, when some of the hearers are apt to dose a little, we might give them a brief epitome of the morning's discourse, and wind up with a warm exhortation; and in the evening, when strangers are generally present, give them the best parts of the morning's and afternoon's efforts, and finish with a practical application."<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the stationary plan allowed the members of each church to hear a variety of preachers that was not possible in a traditional circuit. According to Reverend Coles, "they had an opportunity of hearing seven different preachers and no one twice the same day, unless they chose to follow a favorite from one church to another. If there happened to be one preacher more popular than the rest he was the common property of all the churches and each one had an equal share of his labors." Conversely, "if, among the seven there was one not so gifted as the rest, no objection was made to him on that account. There was no such thing as objecting to an appointment, either on the part of the preacher or people."<sup>5</sup>

Yet, the stationary plan could also be quite demanding on the preachers. For example, Reverend Heman Bangs, the brother of Nathan Bangs, who was appointed to the John Street Church in 1821 and 1822, described an apparently typical Sunday in the following way: "On my feet constantly, from ten in the morning until ten at night – preaching three times, baptizing, holding society meeting...No rest during the week – meeting of some kind each day and night." Again, a month later, he wrote that Sunday had been both "a day of labor and of joy. After preaching three times, praying ten times in public, and traveling five or six miles,



was too weary to sleep much. Truly, the life of a minister is the life of a servant. What but love to souls could induce me to go and forego, as I do." Similarly, seven years later, Reverend Coles described Sunday circuit preaching in almost identical language. He wrote that besides preaching three times, he also "prayed in public and in families twelve times, met one class, sung considerable and walked about four miles." Again, ten months later, he recorded that besides preaching, he "prayed fifteen times, baptized seven children, sang about one hour, married a couple, visited the sick, and walked three miles."<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, the arduous day-to-day demands on the preachers of the New York Station apparently, at times, adversely affected the quality of their preaching. These demands included afternoon and evening meetings, visitation, leading several class meetings, attending church trials, which sometimes lasted for seven hours, and weeknight preaching. For example, Reverend Coles periodically lamented that he simply did not have enough time to prepare adequately for Sunday. Besides, the daily demands on his schedule, Saturdays, too, were also extremely busy. His typical Saturday included the New York Preachers' Meeting (nine a.m. to one p.m.), lunch with a church member, visitation of the "sick poor" and other families, work at the Book Room, and perhaps one other appointment, and even people visiting him in the evening. On three separate occasions, he voiced his frustration. For example, on Saturday, March 21, 1829, he "returned home very weary and received several visits in the evening and thus ended the day and the week without much preparation for the approaching Sabbath." Again, on Saturday, October 10, he "closed the day without making any preparation for the Sabbath. No wonder our sermons are thin, poor, lean, incoherent, and wanting in grammatical accuracy, logical skill, rhetorical ornaments and sound, consistent, and profitable development." Finally, on Saturday, December 12, he lamented, "owing to a great many perplexing things I had no time until seven o'clock this evening to study anything for tomorrow. The interruption of company and domestic burdens have been a sore trial to my mind this afternoon. To have to saw and split wood, carry coal, and make fires and to be taken from my study on Saturday afternoon and to have no hours of retirement grieves me exceedingly and makes me ill both in body and mind. How I shall succeed tomorrow no living mortal knows." Reverend Heman Bangs, too, felt that he needed more time to prepare but noted, with some frustration, that "my duties are so many and onerous, that my time is all occupied."<sup>7</sup>

Sunday preaching, however, was not limited to just the churches in the station. As the station expanded in several different ways, especially in the 1820s, the stationed preachers were often asked to preach in primarily four other settings.. First, preachers were needed for the growing ministry to children and youth, which included periodic Sunday afternoon preaching Sabbath School anniversary services, Charity Sermons (in November and December) for the Methodist Free School, and Quarterly Sermons for the Sunday school. Second, stationed preachers also preached in new outreaches such as Broadway Hall (central lower Manhattan) and Rose Hill (northern Manhattan). Third, stationed preachers often preached at the Sunday evening service at the two African churches, Old Zion Church and Asbury African Church, both of which were often in need of preachers. Finally, stationed preachers took regular turns at various institutions such as the state prison (located in Manhattan), another prison on Bedloe's Island, and the House of Refuge for delinquent boys and girls. A Methodist layman, Nathaniel C. Hart, was superintendent of the House of Refuge from 1826 to 1836 and arranged for both stationed and local preachers to preach most every Sunday morning and afternoon.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, these additional requests drew them away from their regular Sunday circuit appointments. Yet, able substitutes came from three sources within the station: the "book agents" appointed to the Methodist publishing house in Manhattan, the local preachers, and, starting in 1826, the editor and assistant editor of the *Christian Advocate and Journal* (who were both preachers). Yet, it seems likely that the local preachers did the bulk of substitute preaching since there were at least fifteen in the station.

### *Local Preachers*

They were laymen who were employed full time in a variety of occupations. This is illustrated by the four extant lists of local preachers from 1820 to 1832. For example, the 1820 list indicated at least seven occupations that can be confirmed: machinist, whitesmith, printer, merchant, dry goods, mason, and physician. Another list from 1828 to 1829 contained the following occupations: physician, tinsmith, basket maker, grate maker, D.D. and tobacconist. Occupations from the 1831-1832 list included grocer, teacher, and cork storeowner. Finally, a list of local preachers from an 1831 preaching plan for June and July included a printer, physician, bookbinder, carpenter, bellows maker, and an editor of *The Genius of Temperance*.<sup>9</sup>

Besides preaching when the stationed preachers were ill or away at annual conference in May, several extant preaching plans for the station listed them as the regularly scheduled preacher at various Sunday services. These preaching plans were probably worked out in consultation with the Preacher-in-Charge and the New York Preachers' Meeting, which met every Saturday morning to handle various administrative and pastoral matters. The printed preaching plan for June and July of 1831 listed four local preachers with scheduled appointments at several of the churches on the station. For example, during June, James Collard, a printer, who had been a traveling elder and then located, preached once in the afternoon at Forsyth Street Church. Dr. Barrett preached once in the afternoon at Willett Street Church and Dr. David M. Reese preached once the afternoon at Allen Street Church. During July, Collard preached once in the evening at Allen Street, Nehemiah Tompkins preached once in the afternoon at Bowery Village, and Barrett preached in the afternoon at Duane Street Church and in the evening at Bowery Village.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, local preachers often preached in the churches that were near their own residences making the travel easier for them. For example, Dr. Barrett resided on Walker Street near the Bowery, which put him close to both Bowery Village and Willett Street. Nehemiah Tompkins, a physician, resided at 168 Division Street at the corner of Walker Street which was also close to Bowery Village. Dr. David Reese, who resided at 51 Crosby Street, was near the Allen Street Church where he sometimes preached.<sup>11</sup>

Local preachers, however, seemed to preach more extensively in the outlying areas of the station where new churches had not yet been built. Obviously, the demand for preaching would be significant since a stationed preacher had not yet been appointed to those missional places. An example comes from the 1831 preaching plan for June and July. For example, at Upper Greenwich Church (a relatively new church), local preachers preached twice on the first and third Sunday in June, and all three times on the second and fourth Sundays. The same pattern occurred in July. Another example comes from the Manhattan Island outreach on the lower east side. In June, they preached twice on the second Sunday and at all three services on the first, third, and fourth Sundays. In July, they preached once on the first Sunday, twice on the fourth Sunday, and at all three services on the second, third, and fifth Sundays. Finally, local preachers also assisted the stationed preachers at the House of Refuge.

This can be seen in the same 1831 preaching plan for June and July. For example, in June, local preachers preached every Sunday. In July, they again preached every Sunday except the fourth which Reverend Pease, a stationed preacher, conducted.<sup>12</sup>

Unlike Heman Bangs and George Coles who often diligently recorded their sermon texts, assessment of the sermon, and even the congregation's response, local preachers apparently did not leave such information making it difficult to determine the content and effectiveness of their sermons. One exception, however, was Dr. Thomas Barrett who preached in the circuit churches, outlying areas, and the House of Refuge where he was chaplain for twenty years. Evidence for his effectiveness comes from the journal of Reverend Coles. For example, on Sunday, October 19, 1828, he noted that Barrett preached in John Street Church on the text, "Master, what good thing must I do so that I may have eternal life?" and although "he did not rise to his usual eloquence...it was a good sermon." Again, on a Tuesday evening in October 1828, at Duane Street Church, "Dr. Barrett preached a beautiful sermon on 'Blessed are the pure in heart.'" One week later, he preached one of the several funeral sermons for Bishop George at Willett Street Church that "was not only most excellent but admirably delivered and produced a powerful effect on many present." Then, at the New Year's Eve Watchnight service at Duane Street, "Dr. Barrett preached a good sermon on 'The Barren Fig Tree.'" Furthermore, Coles noted that in April 1829, a woman joined the Duane Street Church who had been "awakened under this (i.e., New Year's Eve) sermon." Then, in February 1829, Coles "heard Dr. Barrett at Allen Street Church preach a first rate sermon on 'God so loved the world.'" He also heard him preach the following Sunday at the Bowery Village Church. Again, seven months later, he "heard Dr. Barrett preach an excellent sermon from 'Let a man examine himself and let him so eat.'" Finally, Coles recorded that on December 6, 1829, Barrett preached on Sunday afternoon at Bowery Village Church. At this service was a "converted Jew" whom Coles and Barrett both knew. Coles recorded that "Dr. Barrett preached an excellent sermon on Hebrews 4:9. His introductory remarks were very full of consolation to persons in the situation of the Jewish convert. The Jew was present and seemed to take deep interest in the discourse."<sup>13</sup>

While local preachers were essential to the station plan of preaching, tensions occasionally arose over the scheduling of their appointments. Apparently, either the preacher-in-charge of the station

or the stationed preachers themselves asked the local preachers to fill vacancies as they occurred. This arrangement, however, seems to have changed in 1829 or possibly earlier. At least by 1829, permission had been given to the local preachers to make their own appointments. Most likely, either the preacher-in-charge or the Quarterly Meeting Conference had approved this change. This policy, however, apparently caused tensions between the Board of Trustees and at least one or more of the local preachers. For many years, the trustees had not only dealt with property matters but also exercised a great amount of control over the preachers and Sunday services. For example, at a meeting in May 1829, they appointed a committee of three members to speak with the preacher-in-charge regarding this new policy. No action was taken until June probably due to the annual conference, which was held in May. Then, at the June Quarterly Meeting Conference, Dr. Thomas Pitts, a local preacher, was tried and acquitted. The charge may have been making his own appointments in the churches since the trustees passed the following resolution at a special meeting on June 23, 1829, stating “that the preacher-in-charge be required not to allow Dr. Pitts to officiate in any of our pulpits and appointed Nathaniel Jarvis, John Westfield, and James Donaldson to communicate this to Reverend Samuel Luckey (preacher-in-charge).” Then, at their next meeting, the minutes noted, “Brother Westfield from the committee to confer with the Preacher-in-charge, upon the propriety of allowing the local preachers to make their own appointments in our churches, reported that he had had an interview with Brother Luckey and had received an assurance that there would be an amendment of the process thereafter.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Major Initiatives**

The second way in which the New York Station differed from a more traditional circuit was in its ability to initiate at least five major projects, some of which impacted the entire church. These ministries included the New York Assistance Society (1808), the Methodist Branch of the Sabbath School Union (1816), the New York Methodist Tract Society (1816), the Wesleyan Seminary (1818), and the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church (1819). Most of these outreaches were originally aimed at local needs within the city but two had unforeseen national and international effects. The combination of outstanding and gifted stationed preachers, capable book agents, and dedicated laity such as Joseph Smith, Lancaster Burling, and Mary Morgan, to name just three,

contributed to this prolific output during a time of great need in the city of New York.<sup>15</sup>

### *Wesleyan Seminary*

One of the major ministries was the founding of an academy for the children of Methodist parents. Of course, the New York Station had already demonstrated an apostolic and benevolent interest in education. Like the other denominations in the city, it had maintained its own “Charity School” or “Free School” since the early 1790s. In addition, in 1816, under the leadership of Miss Mary Morgan, it had started its own “Sabbath Schools.” Although a few “public schools” had just started to open, at least some of the members wanted their children to be educated in a more intense religious environment. This attempt, however, to start the school took nearly two years to accomplish. The idea was first discussed at a General Leaders’ Meeting when Lancaster S. Burling, one of the key lay leaders in the station, suggested, “establishing a School, for the education of the children of Methodists.” In response, “a committee of five was appointed to draw up a plan for the school.” The committee included Burling and fellow class leaders Joseph Smith, Thomas Bakewell, John C. Totten, and John P. Morris. At the following meeting on November 18, “the committee to inquire about the expediency of establishing within the city of New York a Seminary where the children of pious parents may be educated gave a report and a short debate followed. The report went through several alterations and amendments and was brought before the ensuing Quarterly Conference, where it received sanction...” Then, at the January 20, 1817, Quarterly Conference, Reverend Soule, chairman of the School Committee, presented the committee’s proposed constitution, which was adopted without changes.<sup>16</sup>

Yet, the Quarterly Conference took no further action until its October 20, 1817, meeting when Joseph Smith made a motion concerning “the neglected business related to the organization of a school for children of Methodists in New York City.” The School Committee, however, was not prepared and the Quarterly Conference asked the committee to present a plan for the school, including its cost, at the next meeting. Finally, at its January meeting, Reverend Soule read the report for the school paragraph by paragraph. A motion to accept the report without resolutions passed. Then, four resolutions were read. Somewhat surprisingly, one resolution, which would have added candidates for ordained ministry, was defeated

forty-two to thirty-five; this apparently reflected the still strong bias against a formally educated clergy. The three remaining resolutions passed after more debate. The Quarterly Conference then directed that a committee of five to draft a memorial to the New York Annual Conference. Soule, Burling, Smith, Reverend Nathan Bangs, and Joel Ketchum formed the committee. At its April 1818, meeting, Soule read the "memorial" which was approved. The Quarterly Conference requested that the president and secretary sign it and have it printed and asked Soule to present it to the Annual Conference, which was meeting in May. On May 18, the New York Conference approved the request and adopted a constitution for the "Wesleyan Seminary" as the school was called.<sup>17</sup>

One article, however, of its constitution, which encouraged ministerial candidates to attend Wesleyan Seminary, was severely criticized and had to be quickly revised in the station. Article Seven stated that "Young men who shall have been approved according to the Methodist discipline as candidates for the itinerant ministry, and so commended by the New York Annual Conference, shall be admitted as Students in this seminary for any length of time to be determined by said conference." This article probably reflected Nathan Bangs' strong support of ministerial education, which he also tried unsuccessfully, at first, to have enacted at several General Conferences. At the same time, many preachers opposed it as being a dangerous innovation to Methodism (although Wesley himself had been an Oxford graduate who knew several languages!). Three months later, the trustees, with Bangs taking a leading role in the revision, approved the following resolution: "The Board deemed it expedient in order to quiet the fears expressed by certain individuals respecting the Seventh Article of the Constitution, that the same should be explained as to its true meaning." Bangs and Soule were then appointed to write an explanation for the board meeting. At the next meeting, Bangs' report was approved and two hundred copies were printed and distributed.<sup>18</sup>

The New York Annual Conference and the New York Station jointly shared in the oversight of the school. For its part, the annual conference yearly appointed the nine-member Board of Trustees, which included three preachers and six laymen, who were from the New York Station or its vicinity. The trustees nominated the candidates and the annual conference made the appointments. Moreover, the annual conference appointed a five-member Standing Committee and the principal who also had to be a preacher. This rule, however, was changed in the mid-1820s. At the

same time, the appointed representatives from the station handled the day-to-day operations. For example, the trustees, standing committee, and principal formed a board that made the rules for the school. In addition, the trustees were responsible for purchasing land for the school, erecting a building, reporting annually to the conference, and appointing teachers. The principal had oversight of the literary, moral, and religious concerns of the school. Finally, a rotating group of preachers and laymen made a weekly visitation of the school.<sup>19</sup>

The curriculum struck an ambitious balance between academic and practical subjects. For example, the “academic” offerings included Latin and Greek, French, spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, and geography. At the same time, it offered practical subjects such as bookkeeping, surveying, and the measurement of places. Methodist students, however, did not seem to be attracted to the more academic courses and, in 1827, the trustees noted with some concern that “less than half (of Methodist students) were in these higher branches of male and female education.”<sup>20</sup>

Despite its strong oversight and diversified curriculum, the school encountered three major difficulties that apparently led to its demise approximately ten years later. The first difficulty was its struggle to find a permanent home. Its first location was in a rented building on the corner of Pump and Eldridge Streets (on the east side of Manhattan). Then, in April 1820, two lots were leased on Crosby Street between Howard and Grand Streets which was another east side location. A forty by sixty-five foot building was erected with a chapel on the second floor. During this time, Sunday preaching was scheduled at the seminary and the annual conference even met for one of its yearly sessions. Yet, four years later, most likely due to dwindling finances, the building was sold to the Methodist Book Agents and a new building was purchased at 157 Mott Street, again on the east side. This location, however, was not a favorable one for some reason and may have also led to its eventual closing.<sup>21</sup>

The second difficulty was the relatively frequent change in principals. It seems probable that four different principals served over the ten-year period. The first, Reverend Nicholas Morris, served from 1818 to 1820 but in 1821, the New York Annual Conference expelled him. Yet, the next principal, Reverend John M. Smith, son of Joseph Smith, a trustee of the seminary, did an excellent job from 1820 to 1824. Smith had been educated at Columbia College and had initially considered a career in



medicine until he felt called to the traveling ministry. He left, however, to become principal of the Methodist academy in White Plains. His loss was greatly felt and Bangs even attributed his departure as the most significant reason for the school's closing. Reverend Henry Chase was the third principal for about a year before being appointed as chaplain to sailors and their families in Manhattan. The final principal was Ambrose White, a layman, who served until the school closed.<sup>22</sup>

Most importantly, the steadily plummeting finances added to its troubles. Although its enrollment – divided into male and female departments - remained around one hundred from at least 1821 to 1828, it was increasingly clear that the school was struggling financially. For example, in February 1820, a “collector” was appointed to collect unpaid tuitions. A month later, Nathan Bangs, a longtime trustee, had appealed to the “pious and well-disposed to help with costs.” Three months later, the trustees appointed another trustee, Dr. Nehemiah Gregory, and the principal, Morris, to try and get subscriptions (i.e., yearly donations) for the school. Then, in December of that same year, the trustees needed a three thousand five hundred dollar loan for expenses. A little more than two years later, Joseph Smith, presented a “memorial” or petition to the state legislature for the school's support. Again, at the 1823 annual conference, the board asked the conference to appoint a “General Agent” to solicit donations; in July, Reverend Brown was appointed.<sup>23</sup>

During the next four years, even more drastic measures were taken. For example, in July 1824, the principal, John Smith, “introduced a plan of instruction at lower prices.” Five thousand copies were printed and the “preachers in the station were requested to cooperate in recommending to the people of our churches the support of the above contemplated plan and to aid in the distribution of circulars.” Six months later, a five-member committee was appointed to recruit more students. Yet, despite these measures, by 1827, the seminary's debt was two thousand dollars. Another attempt was made to get more subscriptions in late 1827 through early 1828 but was not successful. A final attempt was made in February 1828, through an advertisement placed in the (Methodist weekly) *Christian Advocate and Journal* “in relation to the seminary soliciting an increased share of public patronage.”<sup>24</sup>

The financial struggle was also evident in the amount of salaries paid to the teachers. For example, the first principal's salary was eight hundred dollars; two years later it was reduced to seven hundred. Similarly,

the salary of the female teacher, Miss Thayer, was reduced from four hundred dollars to three hundred. Again, the assistant female teacher, Miss Susan Brewer, had her salary reduced from three hundred dollars in 1818 to two hundred fifty in 1820 and then to two hundred in 1823. Eventually, she had to be terminated to save money due to the “decline in scholars.”<sup>25</sup>

### *Methodist Tract Society*

Another ministry with far-reaching consequences for the entire church was the approval of a new tract society for the station in 1816. Sometime during that year, the Quarterly Conference appointed a committee to explore the possibility of forming a larger tract society than the small female-operated one that currently existed. At its January 1817, meeting, the conference approved the report of the committee and had it put on file. Ten months later, the minutes of the Methodist Tract Society recorded that an organizing meeting was held “according to a vote of a Quarterly Conference, previously held in the City.” At this meeting, it was resolved “that the Report of the Committee appointed by the Quarterly Meeting Conference to draft a Constitution to be presented to this meeting be read.” The proposed constitution was read article by article and, after some changes, it was referred to the same committee to make another report at the next meeting. It also resolved “that it is expedient to form a Tract Society in the City of New York in conformity to the principles of the Methodist Episcopal Church.” At the next meeting, on January 2, 1818, the revised constitution was read and adopted. Article One specified that its name was to be the “New York Methodist Tract Society.”<sup>26</sup>

Four factors apparently contributed to its astonishing impact on both the New York Station and the entire denomination. The first factor was its superb organization. For example, a constitution and by-laws governed the society. Its officers consisted of a president, vice-president, corresponding secretary, treasurer, and clerk. A twenty-four member Board of Managers composed of stationed preachers, book agents, and laymen from the station, met bi-monthly on the last Tuesday of the month. In addition, three “standing committees” directed its day-to-day operations: the Committee on Selection, the Committee on Printing and the Committee on Distribution. Finally, an annual meeting, which included an address, elections of various officers, and new business, was held either in June or July. Moreover, almost immediately, the Society developed a constitution for “auxiliary societies” which was then mailed to every preacher-in-charge

(of a circuit) in the entire United States. Over a fourteen-year period, from 1817 to 1831, an astounding one hundred twenty-three auxiliary societies had been formed along with several tract depositories in various key cities.<sup>27</sup>

The second factor that led to its success was its location. For example, for the first seven years, two local Methodist printers, John Harper and John C. Totten printed all the tracts in Manhattan. Local printing made it possible to quickly handle the various requests of the New York Station. These included its Sunday Schools, its Assistance Society (an outreach to the sick poor), its class leaders who requested the tracts, "On Dress," and "An Address to Class Leaders," and the "Exhorters' Association." Also, beginning in 1825, new members of the New York Station were given three of Wesley's publications in tract form: "Christian Perfection," "On Dress," and the "General Rules of the United Societies." Moreover, since New York was a thriving commercial seaport, it also quickly and efficiently responded to national and even international requests for tracts. Some of these requests included tracts for ships' crews, for Methodist preachers serving in Louisiana (tracts were also translated into the French and Indian languages), for Christians traveling to France and Italy, and for the Colonization Society's mission to Liberia on the West African coast.<sup>28</sup>

The third reason its growth and impact were so explosive in just a short time was its remarkable close connection to the Methodist Book Concern, the publishing arm of the denomination, which at that time was located in Manhattan. For example, at its January 1824, meeting, a three-member committee was appointed to "see how the New York Methodist Tract Society might be connected with the Book Concern in order to make it more useful." Three months later, the "Committee reported favorably on this venture" but decided to delay any action until its Annual Meeting in July. No action, however, was taken until May 1825, when the New York Methodist Tract Society decided to sell all their tracts to the Book Agents (of the Methodist Book Concern) at a one third discount. In addition, it was also decided, "the Tracts shall be printed, published, and distributed under the direction of the Agents for the Methodist Book Concern." Under this arrangement, the New York Society would now purchase its tracts from the Book Concern. At the same time, the New York Station continued to supply all the officers and managers.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, the New York Tract Society wisely decided to formally link up with the denomination. This is illustrated by its action at its July 1826, Annual Meeting where the Society voted to change its name to "The Tract

Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.” Then, the following May, the President, Reverend Nathan Bangs, “suggested a change in the Constitution in order to enlist all the Annual Conferences.” One month later, at the Annual Meeting, Bangs called for major changes since both the number of tract society members was growing and the demand for tracts was increasing. In order to transfer responsibility to the denomination Bangs made a resolution, which called for the “annual election of a president and five vice-presidents.” The president and four of the vice-presidents would be chosen from most senior bishops instead of from the New York Station. In addition, each annual conference would appoint an additional vice-president. These motions apparently were approved. A final link to the denomination occurred the following March when the Society made a resolution “that an address be prepared to lay before General Conference, soliciting that body to sanction by some public act the Tract Institute, and recommend its support to the members of our church throughout the United States.”<sup>30</sup>

## **Conclusion**

During the first three decades of the nineteenth century, the New York Station conducted its preaching and various outreaches in a way that greatly differed from other traditional circuits. To be sure, other stations in cities like Philadelphia and Baltimore utilized the stationary plan of preaching but did not equal the staggering number of local church Bible societies and circuit-wide ministries of the New York Station. Due to the unofficial partnership with the Methodist Book Concern, its evangelical and missional outreaches extended internationally. Moreover, the dedicated and self-sacrificing lay and clergy members of the circuit acted heroically in both spreading the Gospel and alleviating suffering. It can justly be said that, for at least the first part of the nineteenth century, the New York Station occupied the preeminent place in American Methodism.

## Stational Plans

*Reverend Ebenezer Washburn, 1815, New York Station*

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
<b>Morning</b>	John St.	Forsyth St.	Allen St.	Two Mile Stone	Greenwich Village	Duane St.
<b>Afternoon</b>	Forsyth	Allen St.	Two Mile Stone	Greenwich Village	Duane St.	John St.
<b>Evening</b>	Allen	Two Mile Stone	Greenwich Village	Duane St.	John St.	Forsyth St.

**Source:** “Narrative of Rev. Ebenezer Washburn,” *Christian Advocate and Journal*, April 12, 1843

*Reverend George Coles, 1828, New York Station*

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
<b>Morning</b>	Duane St.	John St.	Forsyth	Willett St.	Allen St.	Bowery Village	Bedford
<b>Afternoon</b>	John St.	Forsyth	Willett St.	Allen St.	Bowery Village	Bedford	Duane
<b>Evening</b>	Forsyth	Willett St.	Allen St.	Bowery Village	Bedford	Duane	John St.

**Source:** Reverend George Coles “Journal” (Madison, NJ: UMCA – GCAH. “Drew University Methodist Collection.” Drew University), 1828.

**Note:** John Street, Duane Street, and Greenwich Village (later Bedford Street) were located on the west side of lower Manhattan. Forsyth Street, Willett Street, Allen, and Two Mile Stone (later Bowery Village) were on the east side.

## **Constitution of the New York Methodist Tract Society (approved January 2, 1818)**

Article 1 – The association shall be denominated the “New York Methodist Tract Society.”

Article 2 – The business of the Society shall be conducted by a President, Vice-President, Clerk, Corresponding Secretary, Treasurer, and twenty-four Managers to be chosen at the annual meeting of the Society.

Article 3 – The board constituted according to the proceeding article shall make By-Laws for regulating their transactions shall fill up vacancies that may occur during the year, and shall lay a statement of their proceedings before the Society at their annual meeting.

Article 4 – Fifteen members present at any meeting of the Society and seven at any meeting of the Board shall be a quorum.

Article 5 – Ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church stationed in New York, for the time being, and the Book Agents, shall be ex-officio members of the Society.

Article 6 – Auxiliary societies that may be formed in other places on the same principles, and embracing the same objectives with this Society, shall be supported with Tracts by the Board at cost.

Article 7 – The Trustees, published or purchased by the Board shall be in no wise inconsistent with the doctrines and discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Article 8 – Every annual subscription paying one dollar in advance shall be a member, and the payment of ten dollars shall constitute a person a member for life.

Article 9 – Annual subscriptions shall be entitled to Tracts to the value of one half their annual subscription, and members for life to half a dollar per annum.

Article 10 – The Annual meeting of the Society shall be the third Monday in July.

Article 11 – The Board of Managers shall have authority to make any arrangement they make think proper with the Book Agents to facilitate the distribution of the Tracts of the Society.

(Articles 12 to 14 have been omitted)

**Source:** “Methodist Episcopal Church of New York. Methodist Tract Society. Board of Managers. Minutes 1817-1832” (New York, NY: New York Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, Methodist Episcopal Church Records, vol. 105, photocopied).

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lester Ruth, *A Little Heaven Below* (Nashville: Kingwood Books, 2000), 17, 29.

<sup>2</sup> Samuel A. Seaman, *Annals of New York Methodism* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1892), 129. “Reverend Ebenezer Washburn’s Narrative,” *Christian Advocate and Journal*, April 12, 1843.

<sup>3</sup> Tobias Spicer, *Autobiography of Tobias Spicer* (Boston: C. H. Pierce and Company, 1851), 71. Daniel Devinne, *Recollections of Fifty Years in the Ministry* (New York: N. Tibbals and Company, 1869), 34-35, 39-40. George Coles, “Journal” (Madison, NJ: United Methodist Commission on Archives – General Commission on Archives and History, Drew University Methodist Collection), November 30, 1828; April 26, 1829; March 7, 1830.

<sup>4</sup> Coles, “Journal.”

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Heman Bangs, *Autobiography and Journal of Reverend Heman Bangs* (New York: N. Tibbals and Son, 1872), 109-110. Coles, “Journal,” March 22, 1829; January 1, 1830.

<sup>7</sup> Coles, “Journal,” March 21, October 10, December 12 (all 1829); Heman Bangs, *Autobiography*, M105.

<sup>8</sup> “Preachers Meeting. Minutes. 1824-1831” (New York, NY: New York Public Library, rare Books and Manuscripts Division, *Methodist*

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<sup>10</sup> Seaman, *Annals*, 480-481. Longworth, *City Directory*, various years.

<sup>11</sup> Longworth, *City Directory*, various years.

<sup>12</sup> Seaman, *Annals*, 480-481. Society for the reformation of Juvenile Delinquency in the City of New York, *Documents Relative to the House of Refuge* (New York: Printed by Mahlon Day, 1832), 284.

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<sup>14</sup> "Board of Trustees. Minutes. 1820-1834," *MECR*, vol. 93, May 6, June 23, and July 1 (all 1829). Coles, "Journal," June 10, 1829.

<sup>15</sup> For an account of the Methodist Sabbath Schools, see "The Methodist Branch of the New York Sunday School Union," *Asbury Theological Journal*, fall, 2003, 37-56. For a brief account of the Missionary Society, see Abel Stevens, *Life and Times of Nathan Bangs* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1863), 226-229. The New York Assistance Society will be the subject of a forthcoming article.

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<sup>17</sup> "Quarterly Conference Minutes," *MECR*, vol. 247, October 20, 1817; January, 1818; April, 1818. Seaman, *Annals*, 207.

<sup>18</sup> "Wesleyan Seminary. Board of Trustees. Minutes. 1818-1832," *MECR*, vol. 124, June 13, September 28, and October 8 (all 1828).

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> "Wesleyan Seminary. Board of Trustees. Minutes," *MECR*, vol. 124. Seaman, *Annals*, 207.

<sup>22</sup> "Wesleyan Seminary. Board of Trustees. Minutes," *MECR*, vol. 124, June 13, 1818; March 22, 1820; December 22, 1825; August 16, 1827. Seaman, *Annals*, 207-208.



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<sup>27</sup> "Methodist Tract Society," *MECR*, vol. 105.

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Fred Guyette

*The Apostle Paul: A Transformed Heart,  
A Transformational Leader*

**Abstract:**

When we first meet Paul in Acts 8, his zeal for the Law leads him to persecute Christians. After Paul's conversion, however, his great zeal is transformed by God's love. Motivated by agape-love, he founds many new churches in the Mediterranean world. Throughout his letters, Paul makes use of the "one another" commands (*allemelon*) to help strengthen the solidarity of these communities, a message that the church in Corinth certainly needs to hear. The Letter to the Philippians describes Christ's "downward mobility," which runs counter to the shame/honor code that characterizes the Roman Empire. In a final section, I show how Paul is a transformative leader in three settings, micro, meso, and macro. (1) In his letter to Philemon, Paul seeks creative change at the level of face-to-face interaction. (2) When he works on the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, he is trying to transform relationships on a meso-level. (3) Paul's encounters with Greek philosophy (Acts 17) and Roman law (Acts 21-26) show how he seeks to transform discussion of public theology on a macro-level.

**Keywords:** Paul, zeal, transformational leadership, "one another" commands, small groups

**Fred Guyette** has served as Reference Librarian at Erskine College and Theological Seminary since 1995. His written work focuses mainly on the relationship between scripture and ethics, and on making connections between theology and the social sciences.

### **Saul of Tarsus: Zealous Enemy of the Church**

When we first catch sight of Saul, he is not in any sense a friend of Christians, but rather their sworn enemy. Being zealous for the Law of Moses, he is holding the cloaks of the men who are throwing stones at Stephen, the first Christian martyr (Acts 8:1; Acts 22:20). Saul does not merely give his consent to Stephen's death. He thinks it is necessary and fitting, because Stephen is one of the key spokesmen for this new religious movement that threatens to undermine the teachings of Moses and the rituals of the Temple in Jerusalem. They claim that they have found the long-expected Messiah, that most of Israel missed the inauguration of his kingdom, and that the nation's leaders conspired with the Roman Empire to have him put to death. That is why Acts 8:3 says, "Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison."<sup>1</sup>

As Christians fled from the violence in Jerusalem, they were scattered throughout the region. Saul believed it was his duty to pursue them wherever they might be.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1-2)

Many years later, he would review the qualifications that he had listed on that old resume: "Circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless."<sup>3</sup>

Saul of Tarsus was recognized as a leader, then, a zealous problem-solver. No doubt about that. But was he focused on trying to solve the *right* problem? Jesus did not think so.

### **Paul: From Zealot to Convert**

Saul set out on the road to Damascus, seeking to enlarge the scope of the persecution, and that is where his plans were interrupted.

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground

and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. (Acts 9:3-4)

In retrospect, he would say, "It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good..." (Gal. 4:18). But what counts as "a good purpose"? A good purpose is missing from Saul's campaign against the Christian church. Indeed, a good purpose seems to be missing from Saul's *character* before his conversion.<sup>4</sup>

John Wesley's sermon, "On Zeal" can help us identify what is missing from Saul's faith. Not everything that is called religious zeal is worthy of that name, says Wesley:

It is not properly religious or Christian zeal, if it be not joined with charity... the love of God and our neighbor. For it is a certain truth, (although little understood in the world) that Christian zeal is all love. It is nothing else. The love of God and man fills up its whole nature.<sup>5</sup>

With Wesley's definition of true Christian zeal before us, then, let us return to Acts 9 and continue to follow the action. Up to this point, Saul has been a fierce defender of Jewish traditions, but now he feels utterly helpless and vulnerable, because he cannot see.<sup>6</sup> His companions, not knowing what they ought to do for him, lead him by the hand into Damascus. For three days, he can see nothing. He eats nothing. He drinks nothing.

Meanwhile, God has been speaking to a man named Ananias, telling him that he needs to go and find this fellow Saul, a person he has never met, and teach him about what it means to follow Christ. We should not be surprised when Ananias expresses his doubts about the wisdom of this mission. "'Lord,' Ananias answered, 'I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name'" (Acts 9:14). Even though Ananias has serious fears and misgivings, he somehow summons the courage to do as God commands.<sup>7</sup>

Ananias went to the street called Straight and found the house where Saul was staying. He laid hands on him and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:18). Immediately, something like scales fell from Paul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then Saul was baptized into the Christian faith.

### **Paul: Troublemaker, or Problem-Solver?**

Soon – was it *too* soon? -- Paul began to preach about the risen Christ in a number of synagogues (Acts 9:20-24). His message was soundly rejected, however, and before long threats were being made against his life. Paul escaped from Damascus and made his way to Jerusalem, only to find that some Greek-speaking Jews were plotting to kill him there, also. Formerly, Paul had been the hunter, but since his conversion he had become the prey. Paul's allies, being concerned for his safety, hastily arranged for him to return quietly to Tarsus, his hometown.

Before long, however, Paul felt compelled by the Holy Spirit to go out on the road again, accompanied by his friend Barnabas. They traveled to Antioch to speak in a synagogue there. After encountering opposition in Antioch, they were forced to leave (Acts 13:13-52). Iconium was next, where they narrowly escaped death by stoning (Acts 14:1-7). Next stop: Lystra. There Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:8-20). In Philippi, Paul and Silas cast a demon out of a slave girl, a popular fortune-teller who had made quite a lot of money for her owners.<sup>8</sup> Having been deprived of their income, they were so angry that they stirred up a mob to come after Paul and Silas. After yet another narrow escape, they were flogged and thrown into prison (Acts 16:16-24).

When they were free again, they set out for Thessalonica. This time Paul managed to stay out of trouble for almost three weeks before his preaching caused a riot. In court, a threefold accusation was made against Paul and Silas: (1) they turned the world upside down, (2) they acted against Caesar's decrees, and (3) they claimed allegiance to another king, Jesus.<sup>9</sup> One way of reading the evidence, then, is that Paul is a troublemaker, and not a problem-solver.<sup>10</sup>

And yet, another reading of the evidence is possible. If we look more carefully at the narrative of Acts, a pattern begins to emerge in which (1) Paul goes first to a synagogue, where he encounters opposition. (2) Then the scene shifts and we find Paul speaking to a mixed audience in which there are both Jews and Gentiles. (3) What comes next is a dispute over religious or political matters, involving an accusation against Paul that is discussed in the public square. (4) This is followed by Paul's arrest and further public discussion of the Christian message, after which (5) Paul leaves town and moves on to evangelize new territory.<sup>11</sup>

On this reading of the evidence, Paul is a heroic missionary called by God to preach to both Jews and Gentiles. If he is arrested, if

controversy erupts, so much the better. It gives him a wider public forum in which he can explain the gospel.<sup>12</sup> The message God entrusted to him was new and startling. Thanks to the cross of Christ, the Kingdom of God has begun, and Gentiles and Jews are *both* being gathered into it.

This conviction must have been particularly strong in Paul, the former zealot for the law, who had received this revolutionary insight in his Christ-encounter in Damascus, that now, with the beginning of the new era, only the crucified and risen Messiah Jesus of Nazareth, rather than the fulfillment of Torah's commandments, was the true path of salvation.<sup>13</sup>

So we see Paul moving forward on an uncharted path. He is zealous, but his zeal has been transformed and his actions are being guided by love for God and neighbor.<sup>14</sup>

### **Transformational Leadership: 1 Thessalonians and Turning from Idols**

In 1 Thessalonians there are good indications that Paul's zeal, having been transformed by agape-love, is beginning to bear good fruit. In this letter of friendship, he urges them to "live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory."<sup>15</sup> Timothy had recently returned to Paul after a pastoral visit to their community, bringing news of their continued growth in faith, hope, and love (1 Thess. 5:16). Paul's aim is to encourage them: Keep on walking in the way of Christ.

You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven. (1 Thess. 1:9-10)

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. (1 Thess. 2:13)

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father. (1 Thess. 3:12-13)

Now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout

Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more. (1 Thess. 4:9-10)

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>16</sup> (1 Thess. 5:23)

Paul had hoped to be a catalyst for change among them, and the Holy Spirit was blessing his efforts. The Thessalonians had begun their new life in Christ with a profound change of belief and religious loyalty. They turned away from idols. They showed signs of growing in faith, hope, and love – the marks of “the new birth.”<sup>17</sup>

Thessalonians shows us that Paul can be thought of as a transformational leader.<sup>18</sup> The key characteristics of transformational leaders are:

1. Transformational leaders inspire confidence and trust by providing a role model that followers seek to imitate. Confidence in the leader provides a foundation for accepting radical change.<sup>19</sup>
2. Transformational leaders help redefine the group’s mission and vision. They make clear an appealing view of the future, offer followers the opportunity to see meaning in their work, and challenge them to meet high standards.<sup>20</sup>
3. Transformational leaders are able to change followers’ awareness of problems and their capacity to solve those problems. They question old assumptions and beliefs and encourage followers to be innovative and creative, approaching old problems in new ways.<sup>21</sup>
4. Transformational leaders make a point of knowing followers as individuals and coaching to their specific needs. They have knowledge of what motivates followers, and they do not hesitate to praise their efforts.<sup>22</sup>

Paul does not “lord it over” the Thessalonians or try to impose his own will on them the way a despotic leader would. Paul adopts a countercultural stance, making sure the Thessalonians understand the difference between the idolatry of imperial Rome and the humble way of Christ. It is likely



that when they turned away from Roman emperor-worship, they began to face significant pressure from the world around them- economic sanctions, verbal abuse, broken relationships and even acts of violence.<sup>23</sup> Paul's words and actions help them envision a new social world, one shaped decisively by their trust in Christ and his kingdom.

### **Transformational Leadership: Building a Cohesive Group in Corinth**

One of the signs that Paul's zeal has been transformed by God's love is the way he uses the "one another" (*allemelon*) imperatives in his letters.<sup>24</sup> These gentle commands help build up solidarity and a sense of mutual belonging in the churches he helped establish. These fledgling communities need to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to follow Christ and how important it is for the whole body to be "fitted and held together" in love (Ephesians 4:16). Examples include:

- Build one another up (Romans 4:19)
- Honor one another (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16)
- Love one another (Romans 13:8)
- Accept one another (Romans 15:7)
- Agree with one another (1 Corinthians 1:10)
- Show concern for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- Encourage one another (2 Corinthians 13:11)
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)
- Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- Show forbearance for one another (Colossians 3:13)
- Be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- Comfort one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- Be at peace with one another (1 Thessalonians 5:13)

Gerhard Lohfink refers to these *allemelon* commands as part of "the praxis of togetherness" in Paul's ecclesiology.<sup>25</sup>

The church in Corinth desperately needs to hear Paul's message about the importance of unity, because their fellowship is in danger of breaking down completely.<sup>26</sup> They are divided into factions based on who baptized them: "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas..." (1 Cor. 1:12). At the root of these divisions is pride and self-centered boasting, a spirit that says "we are better than you." However, if we contemplate Christ's suffering on the cross, we know that such boasting is not acceptable. Every follower of Christ ought to know that there is just "One Lord, one faith, one baptism."<sup>27</sup>

Another scenario of conflict comes to the foreground in 1 Corinthians 6. Paul has heard that believers are suing one another in court, trying to solve their problems in the same way “the world” does. In the secular courts of Corinth, justice is for sale. Judges, lawyers, and juries go to the highest bidder.<sup>28</sup> If you are resorting to secular courts to resolve disputes among yourselves, Paul says, it must mean that you have forgotten what we taught you about peacemaking and seeking reconciliation with each other in the Body of Christ.

Paul is also disappointed to hear that the Lord’s Supper is not being celebrated in the proper way (1 Cor. 11:18). Everyone is focused on his or her own needs, eating in private before the meeting where everyone assembles together. This means that they are not taking the needs of the poor into consideration (1 Cor. 11:21). But Christ teaches us to care for the poor.<sup>29</sup>

Others in the community at Corinth have been arguing with each other about whether meat sacrificed to pagan deities and sold in public markets can in good conscience be eaten by followers of Christ. One group, Paul identifies them as “the strong,” says this practice does no harm. Why? Because there is only one true God and the gods represented by pagan idols simply do not exist. Another group, identified as “the weak,” argues that Christians ought not to participate in idol worship in any way. Strictly speaking, the “strong” are right – the gods worshipped by the pagans are not real. However, the point the “weak” are trying to make is much more important in Paul’s estimation. The Eucharist is a sign of God’s kingdom, and Christians need to make it clear that in the marketplace of ideas, their sacred meal is different, very different from the worship of idols.<sup>30</sup>

There are also disagreements among the Corinthians about marriage and Christian sexual ethics. Under what conditions are followers of Christ allowed to engage in sex (1 Cor. 7:1–7)? Is it permitted for believers to divorce and then remarry (1 Cor. 7:10–11)? Would it be better for them not to get married in the first place (1 Cor. 7:25–38)? The spectrum of their attitudes on sexual matters is very wide, and Paul feels it is important to draw some distinct boundaries on these questions, or else the difference between the church and the anomie of the outside world might disappear altogether.<sup>31</sup>

Bruce Tuckman describes some typical stages in the life cycle of small groups.<sup>32</sup> First comes “forming” as a group. Then comes “storming”

(conflict). This is followed by “norming,” the stage in which moral and spiritual boundaries are set. Tuckman also speaks of groups as “performing” in an optimal way, after which we can expect that most groups will go through stages of “adjourning” and “mourning” when the group dissolves. Paul’s letter catches the Christian community in Corinthian at a poignant moment, in a liminal place between the stages of storming and norming. He prays that the community will accept his teaching and be strengthened by the Holy Spirit for performing their mission, before the stages of adjourning and mourning are set in motion. You have so many gifts from the Holy Spirit, says Paul, including those that truly abide: “faith, hope, and love” (1 Cor. 13:13). But the most desirable gift is one that has been given to everyone, and if you want your community to flourish, you will need to focus on it much more than you have in the past, and that is unselfish *love* for others.

### **Transformational Leadership: Philippians 2 and “Downward Mobility”**

The social world in which Paul’s communities found themselves was hierarchical, through and through. Roman society was stratified into groups that had different levels of power and status. If we list them in descending order of honor, the emperor was at the top, followed by the senatorial aristocracy, then the equestrian order, municipal bureaucrats, landowners, urban dwellers, freedmen and finally, slaves.<sup>33</sup> It would have been natural for anyone in that hierarchy to seek greater honor and advantage for themselves and their family members, even if it meant that others would have to suffer shame. If we recall how Jesus’ disciples argued among themselves about who was the greatest (Mark 9:33-34 and 10:35-45), it is clear that Christians were not exempt from the desire to gain an advantage over others.

However, Paul wants the Christians at Philippi to be animated by a different spirit, a spirit of servant leadership. The Christological hymn in Philippians 2:5-11 is a vivid description of a “downward mobility” that subverts the quest for honor in society. Christ, being equal with God the Father, easily could have refused to “put on flesh” and walk among human beings. But he did not count equality with God something to be grasped at:

Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being

found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! 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 acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

In this new scale of values, Christ is inexpressibly high, much higher than any human ruler. For our sake, however, he willingly became a δούλος (slave) and ἐκένωσε (emptied himself), not counting *ισότητος* (equality) with God a thing to be ἀρπαγμὸν (grasped at).<sup>34</sup> So δόξα (glory) has been redefined in the Christian community. In this “upside-down” community, whoever wants to be a leader must become the servant of all.<sup>35</sup>

### **Transformational Leadership on Three Levels: Micro, Meso, and Macro**

Paul can be seen as a transformational leader on three different levels: micro, meso, and macro. Paul’s Letter to Philemon provides an example of transformational leadership at the micro-level, where there is face-to-face interaction. The traditional interpretation of Paul’s letter to Philemon assumes that Onesimus was in the wrong, because he was a slave who had run away from his owner. But Lewis Brogdon asks us to begin with a different assumption.<sup>36</sup> Suppose we regard Onesimus instead as a man who was willing to stand up to Philemon and challenge *his* hypocrisy?

Philemon was a leader in the Christian community, someone who was supposed to practice agape-love, but he consistently refused to share the cup of fellowship with Onesimus and others, because they were socially inferior to him. When Onesimus met Paul, however, Paul welcomed him as a true brother, an equal according to the spirit of Galatians 3:28. “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” If this is the rhetorical strategy of the letter, then it is Philemon, a leader in the Christian community who needs to repent and seek God’s help so he can mend his ways. Paul’s letter is intended to enlarge Philemon’s conception of fellowship (*κοινωνία*) so that people like Onesimus are not excluded from full participation in the Christian community.

What does transformational leadership look like at the meso-level? While Paul is remembered today primarily as a theologian, a missionary, and a pastor, he was also involved in an important fund-raising project

that involved communicating with a network of churches. Once when he was at a conference in Jerusalem, he had accepted a charge “to remember the poor” (Gal. 2:10). Paul took this responsibility seriously, and labored diligently to persuade the Gentile Christian churches to contribute to a collection for the poor among the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.<sup>37</sup>

Paul asked the church at Corinth to set aside a certain amount each week to give to the church in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1-4). Then he devoted two full chapters of his next letter (2 Cor. 8 & 9) to this project, reminding them how Jesus became poor for their sake.<sup>38</sup> He also noted how generously the Macedonians had contributed to this fund, in spite of their poverty. When Paul wrote to the church at Rome, he tried to help them understand how they owed a symbolic debt to the saints in Jerusalem: “For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord’s people in Jerusalem, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings” (Romans 15:26-27). And if he could also persuade the *Jewish* Christians of Jerusalem to accept this kind of gift from *Gentile* donors, it would imply that they also accepted the Gentiles as full participants in the kingdom of God. So for Paul, the collection would help feed the poor, and it would also build up a spirit of unity and mutual recognition in a way that benefitted both Jewish and Gentile Christians.

When we consider Paul’s pioneering efforts to proclaim the gospel in the public sphere, in places such as Mars Hill in Athens (Acts 17) and the court of King Agrippa (Acts 26), then we can say that he is a transformational leader at the macro-level, as well.<sup>39</sup> It would be difficult for us to count all the conflicting interpretations of Paul’s Areopagus discourse in Acts 17:16-34.<sup>40</sup> Is it a radical critique of pagan polytheism? If we read it that way, it means Paul’s basic insight was that there were so many gods in the Graeco-Roman pantheon, and so many stories in which their gods flippantly entered into war and other forms of competition with each other, that they would never be capable of providing a coherent account of human existence. In that case, the altar dedicated “To an Unknown God” would have suggested to Paul the moral emptiness and the epistemological bankruptcy of Greek and Roman religion.

Or, is it the case that Paul’s speech on Mars Hill provides the first model for a friendly dialogue between Christian values and Greek philosophical thought?<sup>41</sup> If we read his words that way, it means that

Christians will find encouragement in Acts 17 for probing the strengths and weaknesses of Plato's account of truth, beauty and goodness, along with Aristotle's reflection on the ethics of virtue and his argument for the existence of an Unmoved Mover. Whichever approach we find more compelling, there is no denying that in Acts 17, Paul was seeking to bring the discussion of "public theology" to a new level.

In Paul's encounters with Lysias, Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa (Acts 21-26), we have another resource that shows Christian leaders the importance of defending their faith in various political and legal settings. This is a social drama in which there are overlapping domains of law and power. Lysias, the commander of a thousand Roman soldiers, arrested Paul after a tumult broke out near the Temple. Paul had been accused of bringing a Gentile into an area where they were forbidden to enter. In a very short time, the charges against Paul escalated into an accusation that he was teaching "against the people, the Temple, and the Law." On the following day, Lysias sent Paul to the Sanhedrin to sort out the charges. But when Paul came before them, he spoke of his belief in the resurrection. This caused an uproar between the Sadducees and the Pharisees, which meant that the case could not be decided there. So Lysias sent Paul to be judged by Felix, but Felix, like most Roman officials had very little emotional investment in what he perceived as a religious argument between one Jew and another. Felix hoped to receive a bribe from Paul's friends for his release, but the bribe never came. Paul had been in prison for two years when Festus replaced Felix, and then Festus was replaced by King Agrippa II. In his appearances before these judges, Paul continued to speak of the prophets, the Messiah, and his faith in Christ.

As a Roman citizen, Paul could appeal to have his case heard in Rome, and eventually he was sent there as a prisoner. In all these episodes, the flaws and fissures and power plays that characterize human governments are on display. Paul, however, shines throughout as an ambassador of the Kingdom of God.<sup>42</sup> What is becoming more evident in each scene is that the issues are much too big for *any* court to handle. At first, Paul says "I stand here today on trial..." But step by step he transforms the field of play so that by the end he can say, "I stand here today as a witness..."<sup>43</sup> And indeed he is a witness to what God has been doing in Jerusalem, Judea, and throughout the whole earth.

## End Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Brian J. Tabb, "Salvation, Spreading, and Suffering: God's Unfolding Plan in Luke-Acts," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58, no. 1 (2015):43-61.

<sup>3</sup> Philippians 3:5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Philip H. Kern, "Paul's Conversion and Luke's Portrayal of Character in Acts 8-10," *Tyndale Bulletin* 54, no. 2 (2003): 63-80.

<sup>5</sup> John Wesley. "Sermon 92: On Zeal." <https://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-92-On-Zeal>

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<sup>7</sup> J. L. Barber, "The Paradoxical Courage of Ananias," *Review for Religious* 56, no. 6 (1997): 571-577.

<sup>8</sup> John Byron, "Paul and the Python Girl (Acts 16:16-19)," *Ashland Theological Journal* 41 (2009): 5-10.

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<sup>10</sup> Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, *Paul the Accused: His Portrait in the Acts of the Apostles*. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 30.

<sup>11</sup> Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, Vol. 2 *The Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 222-224.

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<sup>16</sup> George Lyons, "Modeling the Holiness Ethos: A Study Based on First Thessalonians." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30, no. 1 (1995): 187–211.

<sup>17</sup> John Wesley, "Sermon 18: The Marks of the New Birth." <https://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-18-The-Marks-of-the-New-Birth> Natalya Cherry, "Wesley's Doctrinal Distinctions in Developing the Faith That Marks the New Birth," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 52, no. 1 (2017): 100–112.

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<sup>40</sup> Joshua Jipp, "Paul's Areopagus Speech of Acts 17:16-34 as Both Critique and Propaganda," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131, no. 3 (2012):567-588. To see how C. S. Lewis and Karl Barth differed on these questions, see Justin Buckley Dyer, "Lewis, Barth, and the Natural Law," *Journal of Church and State* 57, no. 1 (2013):1-17.

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Matt Ayars

## *Wesleyan Soteriology and the New Perspective of Paul: A Comparative Analysis*

### **Abstract:**

This essay offers a comparative analysis of Wesleyan soteriology and Pauline soteriology as interpreted by the New Perspective of Paul (NPP). The analysis unfolds against the backdrop of Wesley's and the NPP's mutual criticism of the reformed tradition's configuration of the forensic metaphor for justification at the center of biblical soteriology. The opening section surveys the various aspects of Wesley's and the NPP's criticism of reformed soteriology, namely, that the overemphasis on forensic justification leads to interpretive conclusions incongruent with an integrated biblical soteriology (i.e., a doctrine of salvation that is informed by the entire Christian canon) and particularly negligent of other biblical metaphors for salvation. The second section surveys key interpretive conclusions of the NPP for its reading of Pauline soteriology. The third section explores various commonalities and differences between Wesleyan soteriology and the NPP. The fourth and final section is a concluding summary of content discussed.

**Keywords:** New Perspective of Paul, soteriology, John Wesley, Kingdom of God, ecclesiology

**Matt Ayars** is the President and Professor of Old Testament at Emmaus University of Haiti, Vice President of Theological Leadership Education and Discipleship at the One Mission Society (OMS), and Secretary-Treasurer of the Caribbean Evangelical Theological Association (CETA).

## Wesley, The New Perspective of Paul, and the Reformed Tradition

In his book *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*, Kenneth J. Collins posits that Wesley was not a systematic theologian, nor a historian. Wesley was a practitioner. Collins writes:

...current scholarship suggests that Wesley's practical divinity is clearly a viable way of doing theology in its orientation to the mission of the church, in its attentiveness to the realization of scriptural truth, and in its service to the poor. And so when Outler made the claim many years ago that Wesley was "the most important Anglican theologian in his century," we must not mistake this claim for the assertion that Wesley was a systematic theologian or that he had attempted to synthesize all human knowledge and to demonstrate its unity in Christ in a thoroughgoing way. On the contrary, Wesley's practical divinity, fleshed out in a very Anglican way in sermons, liturgy, prayers, creeds, occasional pieces, journals, and letters had a decidedly soteriological, rather than epistemological, orientation (Collins 2007: 3).

This apt characterization of Wesley as first and foremost a *practical theologian* in no way diminishes the tremendous influence Wesley has had on systematic theologians and more broadly speaking evangelicalism since his time. To this day Wesleyan soteriology stands firm as one of the most consequential polemical partners of reformed theology that characterizes much of contemporary mainstream Protestant evangelicalism. Painting with a broad brush, Wesley developed a soteriology with the risen-ness of Christ—rather than the fallenness of man—at its center. This was a direct result of Wesley's holy love hermeneutical axis for reading NT soteriology.

As is to be expected, Wesley is not alone in his critique of reformed soteriology. In more recent years the movement broadly known as the "New Perspective of Paul" (NPP), or "New Perspectivism", has joined the likes of Wesley in his criticism of reformed soteriology. Affirming Wesley and the NPP's common ground, Michael Bird writes,

The NPP also presents a palpable attempt to better understand the relationship between righteousness and obedience in Paul's letters. By stressing the forensic nature of justification, reformed theology has always had a propensity to bruise the nerve that connects faith with obedience. Catholic and Wesleyan objections to

a strictly forensic definition of justification as fostering antinomianism are legitimate (Bird, 2007: 110).

Even with Wesley's and the NPP's mutual concern for reformed soteriology's biblical in-congruency along with a lack of resonance with the normative Christian experience, the NPP's criticism of reformed soteriology goes well beyond Wesley's concerns for an antinomian proclivity. The NPP claims that the reformed interpretation of Paul reads too much of the sixteenth century European Roman Catholic context into Paul rather than interpreting Paul on his own terms as a first century Mediterranean Jew. In doing such, the reformed tradition, argues the NPP, misses much of what Paul is saying by reading the Pauline corpus within the too-narrow framework of the forensic metaphor.

Broadly speaking, the NPP contends that Paul is not battling works righteousness as much as he is making a case for Gentile inclusion in the Abrahamic family by way of faith in Jesus (more on this below). Soteriology for first century Judaism was not spinning on the axis of works righteousness, but covenantal nomism directly linked to a long-awaited historical-political redemption (a second exodus, this time from exile). This means that covenant-family members are saved by grace but maintain their status as covenant people by way of obedience to the Torah.<sup>1</sup>

While this will be explored in greater detail below, let it be noted here that the NPP argues this more nuanced reading of first century Judaic covenantal nomism has far-reaching implications for understanding Paul and his doctrine of justification. This alleged misstep in the reformed reading of Paul's historical and cultural context results in a considerable lack of explanatory power in substantial segments of the Pauline corpus (as well as for the rest of the Christian canon) and more broadly speaking the gospel itself.

In response to criticism, the reformed tradition posits their concern that Wesley and the NPP threaten the integrity of the theological underpinnings of the corrective theology of the Reformation by putting up sign posts that lead back to Rome and synergistic works righteousness that come with it. Any teaching resembling works righteousness, argues the reformed tradition, is by nature pro-Rome, anti-Reformation, and likely an anathema. For the reformed tradition, any challenge to the reformers is a challenge to the sacred tradition itself. N. T. Wright highlights the rather obvious irony of this line of argumentation:

There is a considerable irony, at the level of method, when John Piper suggests that, according to me, the church has been ‘on the wrong foot for fifteen hundred years’. It isn’t so much that I don’t actually claim that. It is that that is exactly what people said to his heroes, to Luther, Calvin and the rest. Luther and Calvin answered from scripture; the Council of Trent responded by insisting on tradition (Wright 2009: 6–7).

While both Wesley and the NPP put pressure on certain aspects of the reformed reading of Pauline soteriology, they do it with very different orienting aims and methodological frameworks. The NPP, mostly made up of historians and Bible scholars, argues first and foremost from history and the scriptures. The NPP is concerned with “reading the New Testament with first-century eyes” (2009: 21). Wesley, on the other hand, was driven by missional and ministerial concerns as a *practical and missional theologian*. So, what else does Wesley and the NPP have in common? How are they complimentary? How are they different? More specifically still, what do the interpretive results of the NPP’s reading of Paul bring to bear on Wesleyan soteriology and vice versa? In order to answer these questions, we will first go into greater detail on the NPP and its interpretive results.

### **The New Perspective and Its Interpretive Conclusions**

1. *Integration of Old Testament theology.* In support of the claim for covenantal nomism the NPP aims to follow the lead of the New Testament authors’ thinking about salvation in terms of the *Old Testament theological heritage as deliverance from captivity* (first Egyptian captivity, then exile, and universally the tyrannical reign of sin resulting directly from idolatry). This means that the primary emphasis is on the role of the *covenant* and actual moral transformation in salvation (because of covenant being law-oriented) rather than an emphasis on escape from final wrath and judgment. Just as in the Old Testament, the covenant is the means through which God’s plan for redemption manifests in the world. It is only the covenant people of God who live under Yahweh’s reign, and it is only through the covenant and the covenant people that God’s redemptive plan reaches into the world and the new creation is launched. Obedience to God’s covenant code means bringing the Kingdom of Heaven and Christ’s reign back into the (new) creation.

2. *Ecclesiology: the collective versus the individual.* Once the covenant dimension is properly in place, emphasis on salvation of the individual shifts away from the individual to the collective (elect) people of God. Redemption, argues the NPP, is not as much about the sin crisis of the individual as it is about the tyrannical reign of sin within the creation that manifests as a result of the proclivity of the human heart for idolatry. When configured this way, redemption becomes much more about God fulfilling his promises and filling the creation once again with his glory by way of his image bearers than it is about individuals escaping eternal damnation.

3. *Salvation's eschatological frame.* This shift of emphasis away from the individual to the collective all unfolds within an eschatological framework with the specific aim to move Western Christianity's eschatology out of its reformed platonic underpinnings. N. T. Wright writes,

Election was closely bound up with eschatology: because Israel was the one people of the one creator God, this God would soon act to vindicate Israel by liberating it from its enemies. Different writers drew the conclusion in different ways. Some documents, like the *Psalms of Solomon*, envisaged a fulfilment of Psalm 2, with Israel under its Messiah smashing the Gentiles to pieces with a rod of iron. Others, not least some of the rabbis in the Hillelite tradition, envisaged a redemption which, once it had happened to Israel, would then spread to the nations as well. Both of these represent natural developments of the doctrine of election itself, the point being that because Israel was the chosen people of the one creator God, when God did for Israel what God was going to do for Israel—however that was conceived—then the Gentiles would be brought into the picture, whether in judgment or blessing or (somehow) both. One way or another, God's purpose in election, to root evil out of the world and to do so through Israel, would be fulfilled (Wright 2005: 110).

The NPP emphasizes Paul's conceptualization of time being divided into two eras: (1) the age of the flesh (or, "present evil age" (Gal. 1:4)) and (2) the age of the spirit. The former being characterized by the oppressive reign of Gentiles and sin over the covenant people, and the latter with freedom from such oppression *via* the righteous reign of King Jesus who is the creation's divine image bearer, in the kingdom that is the new creation (that is unfolding gradually through time). This emphasis for

the NPP means that the primary message of the cross, rather than being *simply* atonement, is *rebellion against the rulers and authorities of the old age so as to overthrow the tyrannical reign in order to launch the messianic kingdom that God had promised.*<sup>2</sup>

4. *Emphasis on the political dimension of salvation.* The NPP, in step with the controlling narrative of the Old and New Testaments, makes the political metaphor for salvation central and dominant. Bringing the political metaphor front-and-center likewise results in the accentuation of the following features of salvation:

a. *Emphasis on kingdom.* The NPP recalibrates the interpretive lens to the central role of the Kingdom of God in the Gospel narratives and to the messianic events (cross, resurrection, and Pentecost) collectively as the climatic redemptive event of scripture. Once again, the concept of kingdom, something that Jesus and the Gospel are much more concerned about than atonement, does not receive due emphasis in the reformed tradition. More than any other motif, the kingship and messianic identity of Jesus is placed at the center of the message of the four Gospels.

b. *Emphasis on the messianic office of king.* By thinking in terms of the covenant people of God and the role of the messianic king in leading and redeeming his people, the Israel piece falls naturally into place. The Messiah is the fulfillment of the righteousness of God to Israel (and David in particular) and to the world *through* Israel. This configuration harmonizes much better with the OT's emphasis on the Davidic messianic promise that becomes an essential element especially in the Psalter.<sup>3</sup>

c. *Integration of kingdom and new creation.* New Perspective of Paul proponent N. T. Wright in particular makes the link between the kingdom metaphor and the new creation. He writes,

When human beings come to believe this gospel they are precisely the first-fruits of redeemed creation; the phrase is that of James (1:18), but on this occasion at least the sentiment tallies exactly with that of Paul. Abraham and his seed are indeed to inherit the world, but Abraham's family has been redefined around Jesus as Israel's Messiah.

This hint of creation renewed through covenant renewal bursts out at the end of Romans 11, where Paul echoes some of the Old Testament's grandest celebrations of God as the wise, inscrutable creator [...] By coming



to a fresh understanding of God's faithful covenant justice, displayed in the story of Israel reshaped around Jesus the Messiah, Paul has arrived back at a primal, characteristically Jewish, praise of God the creator (Wright 2005: 33).

Wright draws together the themes of election, covenant, kingdom and new creation, all by way of Jesus as the Messiah. For Paul, argues Wright, all of the metaphors coalesce and flow in-and-out of one another to constitute the bigger picture. This is distinct from the reformed practice of hinging everything on forensic justification, which for the NPP is a much smaller piece within the bigger picture.

With these interpretive conclusions in place, we can turn to mapping Wesleyan soteriology against Pauline soteriology as interpreted by the NPP. Before jumping right into the comparative analysis, however, two last comments need to be made.

First, comparing Wesley and the NPP, in many ways, is like comparing apples to oranges, because—as mentioned above—each have different orienting aims and methodologies. Wesley, on the one hand, expresses *his* theology as a practical theologian in the Anglican tradition. The NPP, on the other hand, aims to describe *Paul's* theology (and how Paul's theology integrates with soteriology across the Christian canon). In light of this, it could at times seem like one is comparing Wesleyan soteriology with *biblical* soteriology, thereby implying that where Wesley differs from the NPP, he thereby must likewise differ with the scriptures themselves. I believe this is sometimes the case, but certainly is not always the case. It could also be that on certain points Wesley is closer to Paul than the NPP. It could also be that both are wrong about what Paul is saying about salvation and the reformed tradition was correct to begin with. So, for the sake of clarification on this particular point, the aim here is not to discuss which are more faithful readings of Paul and more broadly speaking the scriptures themselves, but simply to compare the respective soteriology of each.

Second, let it be noted that this comparative analysis is by no means exhaustive. Being mindful of this, I have done my best to be concise, yet selective in my choice of areas of comparison within a scope that is appropriate for an essay of this length. This being said, the analysis here limits its comparison between Wesley and the NPP to following points: (1) eschatology (and its impact on Pauline soteriology), (2) ecclesiology, (3)

(monergistic) imputed righteousness, (4) justification, (5) sanctification, (6) the image of God, and (7) glorification and pneumatology.

### **Wesley and the NPP: A Comparative Analysis**

1. *Eschatology and its impact on Pauline soteriology.* Aptly summarizing the broader strokes of Pauline eschatology as interpreted by the NPP, Michael Bird writes,

Paul formerly believed as a Pharisee that God would resurrect all humans at the end of history and vindicate those who had remained faithful to the covenant. Instead, God had raised up one man in the middle of history and vindicated him. Which is why Christ is the one through whom ‘the end of ages has come’ (1 Cor. 10:11), as his resurrection and the bequeathing of the Spirit mark the partial arrival of the future age in the here and now. This is confirmed by his remarks that Christ is the first fruits (1 Cor. 15:20, 23) or firstborn (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18) of the new creation, and the Spirit is the deposit of the new age yet to come in its fullness (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13–14). (Bird 2008: 36)

This eschatological frame for Paul’s soteriology, argues the NPP, is indispensable and must be the starting point for considering Paul’s soteriology. In fact, it is the axis on which Paul’s theology turns. This means that Paul interpreted the culmination of the covenant in Jesus in light of the ongoing metanarrative that begins in Genesis and continues on through the full establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven in the *parousia*. The significance of this is that every aspect of the gospel for Paul is an extension of God’s work and promises in history that began with Israel and ends in the new creation (thereby demonstrating God’s faithfulness to Israel and the creation itself). The death and resurrection of Jesus was, for Paul, above all else the beginning of the new age of God’s re-inaugurated righteous reign through his co-regent and image bearer and the launching of the new creation. Salvation, then, was liberation (escape) not *simply* from the guilt and power of sin in the lives of individuals, but a movement that embodied deliverance from the cosmic-wide tyrannical reign of the evil age of the flesh.

At the most basic level the gospel is power to liberate—to cleanse from sin guilt and to neutralize the power of sin—for both Wesley and the NPP. Wesley—with the reformed tradition—however, does not take this further step of framing salvation eschatologically this way nor of placing

the emphasis on the historical-political deliverance-from-exile component of salvation. The question is, what happens when the eschatological framework for thinking about sanctification is not properly in place? What damage is done if we lift salvation out of the context of Pauline eschatology?

First, and most important, missing this framework means the loss of the dominance of the political metaphor for salvation that is the primary metaphor creating cohesion across the entire Christian canon.<sup>4</sup> In other words, neglecting the political dimension of salvation means missing the Kingdom (combined with covenant) as the *dominant* metaphor for salvation holding the metanarrative together. At the very least, losing the dominance of the political metaphor means losing sight of Paul's view (and the Gospel writers' view) of the story. With the eschatological frame in place, however, the *political and covenantal aspects* of salvation rise to the top thereby displacing atonement theology as the central axis for biblical soteriology.

More specifically still, with the proper eschatological frame in place, one can land on a bit of a different reading of the relationship between justification and sanctification. Yes, justification is the forgiveness of sins. Justification is manifest both now and at the final judgment. Sanctification as the actual conforming of the heart of the believer to the image of Jesus is evidence of who in the future will be vindicated in final judgment. Yes, sanctification is impartation (Wesley), but taking this further still, sanctification is the mark of Christ's reign in the new age of the Spirit that is manifest in his covenant people, both Jew and Gentile (NPP). It is precisely here, within the dominant political metaphor and the proper eschatological frame that sanctification and *ecclesiology* find their strongest point of connection.

2. *Ecclesiology: corporate vs. individual salvation.* One of the greatest disparities between the NPP and Wesley is Wesley's emphasis on individual salvation. This is not surprising. Once again, the *political* metaphor for salvation (i.e., salvation means becoming a citizen in the Kingdom) lends itself more to the collective aspect of salvation than the forensic metaphor (i.e., forgiveness of sins of the individual). For the NPP, salvation is not nearly as much about how individuals make it to heaven as it is about re-establishing the reign of God in the creation through his co-regent who reigns over the creation and the *people of God*.

3. *Imputed righteousness.* The NPP is notorious in its criticism of the reformed doctrine of monergistic imputed righteousness and NPP sympathizers have drawn much criticism as a result.<sup>5</sup> Wright in particular

contends that the Reformed view of imputation is unbiblical and that the internal logic of the metaphor imagining that the judge both declares the accused innocent *and also* bestows his own righteousness upon the accused is unsound. Michael Bird summarizes Wright's position with this:

N. T. Wright advocates that justification is juridical (in a Jewish sense), covenantal and eschatological. Furthermore it is not about getting in but telling who is in. Thus justification is more about ecclesiology than soteriology (bearing in mind that Wright does think that justification confers a positive status of "righteous" on the believer). According to Wright it makes little sense to say that God, "like a judge, imputes, imparts, bequeaths, conveys or otherwise transfers his righteousness to either the plaintiff or the defendant." (Bird 2007: 66)

Dunn adds to this by arguing that the implications of the doctrine of imputed righteousness fail to harmonize with much of Paul's teaching about final judgment (Rom. 2:6–11; 2:13; 11:19–22; 14:10–12; 1 Cor. 3:8, 14; 9:24–25; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal 6:8; Col. 3:24–25; Phil. 2:12–13; 2 Tim. 4:8). Dunn writes,

Could Paul ever have agreed that to live as a Christian requires no effort or self-discipline, no hard work, from the individual Christian? And if he expected such, would it not follow that he fully expected that such effort, such work would be among the works to be judged on the day of the Lord? (Dunn 2013: 134–135)

Dunn highlights here the awkward gap in reformed soteriology and Paul's clear teaching on synergistic obedience. Accentuating the awkwardness is that few within the reformed tradition would affirm that the Christian life requires no effort or self-discipline. On this particular dynamic Dunn comments that inherent to imputation is "a danger of subtly magicking away what for Paul was an important emphasis" (Dunn 2013: 134). Dunn says,

Paul's ethical teaching consistently assumes that his readers were responsible people, who should be making effort—enabled by God's Spirit, of course—but nevertheless having the responsibility to walk by the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit, with the express corollary that failure to do so would have severe and possibly damning consequences. (Dunn 2013: 134–135)

But what about Wesley and imputation? It is well known that Wesley, like the NPP, drew criticism for allegedly denying imputation based on his concern for antinomianism along with its lack of congruency with much of the New Testament's teaching. Wesley, however, denied that he rejected the doctrine in "The Lord Our Righteousness." Wesley writes, "Neither do I deny imputed righteousness: this is another unkind and unjust accusation. I always did, and do still continually affirm, that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to every believer. But who do deny it?" (Outler 1991: 388). He goes on to add,

'But do not you believe *inherent* righteousness?' Yes, in its proper place; not as the *ground* of our acceptance with God, but as the fruit of it; not in the place of *imputed* righteousness, but as a consequent upon it. That is, I believe God *implants* righteousness in everyone whom he has *imputed* it...They to whom the righteousness of Christ is imputed are made righteous by the spirit of Christ, are renewed in the image of God 'after the likeness wherein they were created, in righteousness and true holiness.' (Outler 1991: 388)

Wesley's view of imputation, then, took on a slightly different shape than that of the reformed tradition in light of his sensitivity for antinomianism. In addition to this, the doctrine itself was a square peg for the round hole that was Wesley's way of conceptualizing salvation. Whidden states,

For Wesley, the reality of imputation dealt mainly with the sins of the past: sinners are reckoned to be something which in reality they are not, i.e., in Christ they are counted sinless, though their records testify otherwise. Thus imputation is a reckoned reality; but imputation is not a reality that may be viewed as a cover for attitudes and dispositions *that would tolerate sin in any form*. (Whidden 1997: 68)

Imputed righteousness, then, is yet another area of disagreement between the NPP and Wesley. The major difference between the NPP and Wesley on the issue of *actual righteousness* in the life of the church (individually and collectively) is that the NPP's read of it is much more *Judeo-eschatological* than Wesley's. Wesley's orientation to actual righteousness is driven by his concern for the personal experience of sanctification in the life of the believer. It is, for Wesley, a *pastoral* concern first and foremost.

For the NPP, however, sanctification leading to actual righteousness should be as *evidence of the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel and the manifestation of the righteousness of God in the creation.*

4. *Justification.* Having been influenced by continental Europe's reformed doctrine of justification *via* Peter Böhler and Martin Luther, Wesley squares with the traditional reformed view of justification. Wesley did not start out this way. Wesley initially inherited a two-fold justification from his Anglican tradition. Kenneth Collins writes,

Since the notion of a twofold justification had been a part of the Anglican witness, in the writings of Bull and Tillotson, for instance, Wesley made it clear in a letter to Thomas Church a few years later in 1745 "that the justification which is spoken of by St. Paul to the Romans and in our Articles is *not twofold*. It is one, and no more. It is the present remission of our sins, or our first acceptance with God." By making this distinction Wesley underscored the graciousness of God and maintained that the forgiveness of sins received by sinners is nothing less than a sheer, unmerited gift, and therefore could never be on the basis of their own working in the least. (Collins 2004: 184)

The issue that the NPP raises with the traditional reformed doctrine of justification is not at a point of disagreement over the fact that justification is certainly a forensic metaphor and present in Paul's writings. The place of protest for the NPP is regarding *where* and how *the reformed tradition finds proof for it in Paul*. The NPP argues that the reformed reading unduly reduces all of Paul into the forensic metaphor, which has devastating effects on a proper reading of Paul. Related to this is the critique of the reformed reading of "in Christ" passages. Dunn, speaking for the NPP argues that "in Christ" is not just another way of saying "imputed righteousness." He says,

But "in Christ" is a far more varied motif and gives more substance to the participationist way of reading Paul [...]. It is here I would again press for the relational dimension of the righteousness that is at the center of Paul's gospel. When the forensic imagery is stressed too much or given the sole role in understanding Paul's gospel, then it leaves itself too much open to the criticism of "legal fiction." Whereas a righteousness that does not count sin, embraces the lawless, gives the Spirit of adoption to those who simply trust, moves beyond the limitations

of the legal metaphor. We should never forget that Paul uses the forensic imagery to highlight how much the mercy of God upsets the legal process (he justifies the ungodly!) and transcends its logic. (Dunn 2011: 184)

Dunn further states,

The problem with pushing all of Paul through the narrow gauge of a strict forensic reading of justification is that it strips off so much of the fuller richness of the diversity of images and metaphors on which Paul draws to expound his gospel—including the “in Christ” language, the gift of the Spirit theme, and all that is involved in them. (Dunn 2011: 120–121)

The question, then, is what dimensions of Paul have been missed that need to be reintegrated? To start, the connection between justification (imputed righteousness) and sanctification (imparted righteousness). When one liberates Paul’s writing from the strict confines of the forensic metaphor, room is created for clarity over how Paul’s concern for transformed living empowered by the Holy Spirit fits into the bigger picture.

For the NPP, then, forgiveness of sins is the means to the larger goal of establishing the new creation/Kingdom of God through the resurrection. This is a dominant feature of biblical soteriology for the NPP. For the NPP, the doctrines of justification and sanctification are inextricably linked to eschatology and ecclesiology. Wesley no doubt connects these as well, but not in the same robust and nuanced manner as the NPP. In sum, Michal Bird, once again, describes the NPP’s take on justification: “Paul articulates his understanding of justification that accentuates the facets of divine vindication and covenant inclusion: God creates a new people, with a new status, in a new covenant, in the wake of the new age” (Bird 2007: 152–153).

5. *Sanctification*. The NPP links together sanctification and Passover within Paul’s eschatological frame. N. T. Wright in particular makes the connection between the Passover meal that Jesus shares with his disciples as a crucial element of the climactic messianic sequence of death, resurrection, and Pentecost. He writes, “First, the new Passover has occurred; therefore you are now living in the Spirit-driven ‘age to come’ and must, of course, behave appropriately. The ‘works of the flesh’ belong

in the ‘present evil age,’ so they must be left behind” (Wright 2018: 244). In discussing the moral pattern for living described in Galatians, Wright goes on to say,

All this, it seems, is once again in the service of what we think of as “ethical” imperatives, but that are perhaps better seen as “eschatological” instructions. Now that the “ends of the ages” have converged upon them, now (in other words) that the “present evil age” has been condemned and the “age to come” has been inaugurated, they must learn what it means to live in the latter rather than the former. (Wright 2018: 244)

Even within this eschatological frame, Wright still holds to the standard definition of sanctification as he says, “‘sanctification’ is in one sense their status as God’s holy people, but is also, and more particularly, their *actual* life of holiness through the power of God working in them by the Spirit” (Wright 2009: 156; emphasis added). Furthermore, in commenting on sanctification as one of the four different kinds of things being predicated of Jesus, and in Jesus, of believers, Wright writes,

He has become “sanctification”: at a guess, based on several other passages, Paul means by this that God has put to death all that is “fleshly” in him, and has raised him up in a new body which sin and death cannot touch, so that those who are “in him” now possess, as a reality and a possibility, the putting-to-death of sin and the coming-alive-to-God which plays such a strong role in the letter, not least in 1 Corinthians 6. (Wright 2009: 157)

Paul Ziesler too makes the connection between sanctification, the Passover, and final judgment. He writes,

When Paul in 1 Cor. 8:5f talks about ‘many gods and many lords’ he may be thinking of these cults, and the Christian sacraments of baptism and the eucharist may possibly indicate their impact. Above all it has been argued that in speaking of dying and rising with Christ, as in Rom. 6, he is presenting Christianity as such a cult. Yet the parallels are not as close as they at first seem. Unlike the cults, Paul mostly speaks of resurrection rather than rebirth. Unlike them, he invites participation in a real event of the recent past, not in a timeless but ever true death and rebirth. Above all, the basic orientation is



different. In baptism, the fundamental thing is entry into the New Age inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, meaning that those who belong to him are already tasting in advance the powers and reality of that New Age. Similarly, while the eucharist could be seen as a ritual sharing in the cult deity, it is more plausibly to be interpreted as a foretaste of the messianic banquet, the feast of the New Age, which is enjoyed by those who renounce the old age ('dying') and embrace the new by anticipation ('rising'). Rom. 6 on baptism and 1 Cor. 11 on the eucharist both fit more naturally into an eschatological and Jewish framework than into one derived from the Hellenistic mysteries. (Ziesler 1990: 15)

But what about Wesley's doctrine of Christian Perfection? N. T. Wright says this of Romans 6:6–11:

This has often been seriously misunderstood. People have sometimes supposed that Paul was referring to a fresh leap of faith, a leap by which we might attain a new kind of holiness, beyond the reach of temptation and sin. That might be very desirable for anyone—one hopes, most Christians—who, still troubled by sin, is eager to leave it behind. But this is not what Paul is talking about. (Wright 2004: 105)

While one cannot be certain, it does seem as if Wright is making a case against a Wesleyan reading of the passage. At the same time, Wright's comments elsewhere on Romans 6 seem a bit more harmonized with the victorious life in the Spirit. Commenting on Romans 6:1–5, he writes, "in becoming a Christian you move from one type of humanity to the other, and you should never think of yourself in the original mode again" (2004: 101). About the same passage, he adds, "[l]iving in accordance with a change of status requires that you recognize it and take steps to bring your actual life into line with the person you have become" (2004: 102).

Ultimately, one could guess that Wright's central argument would be that Wesley's doctrine of "total death to sin and a restoration of the image of God in the heart" is beside the point that Paul is making in terms of Christian maturity and putting sin to death (Peterson 1995: 51). Wesley's argument for the maturation of the believer through sequences of crises very well may be true, but that is not what Paul is talking about in the passages that the Wesleyan holiness tradition typically point to in support

of the doctrine. What Paul is addressing, however—argues Wright—is the story of Israel being freed from the exile—the story of those in Christ being delivered from the tyranny of sin in the world precisely by being in Christ and coming under the reign of a new master. Once again, Wright reads Paul to be arguing for the very real moral transformation in the lives of believers, but not having the question of entire sanctification as Wesley sees it in his purview. He writes, “The spirit works in the hearts of believers, to generate faith itself through the preaching of the gospel, then to generate the kind of life described in the second half of verses 4, 5 and 6, and then to work powerfully the other side of death to give new bodily life” (2004: 142).

6. *The image of God.* The concept of the image of God in salvation is crucial for both Wesley and the NPP. It is on this point that Wesley and the NPP have most in common. For Wesley the restoration of the image of God in humanity is the ultimate objective of salvation. This is not *altogether* different than the NPP. Dieter writes,

Wesley declared that the supreme and overruling purpose of God’s plan of salvation is to renew men’s and women’s hearts in His own image. It is a teleological theme, for he believed that all the grand currents of biblical salvation history moved toward this one end and had, in a restricted but definite manner, a fulfillment and perfection in this life. (Dieter 1987: 15)

It is well known that Wesley differentiated between three aspects of the image of God in humanity: (1) natural, (2) moral, and (3) political. It is Wesley’s political image of God that resonates quite well with the NPP’s concept of the image as relates to salvation. On the political image of God in humanity according to Wesley, Collins writes,

In defining and explaining the nature of this [political] aspect, Wesley appeals to the language of the Bible, the book of Genesis in particular, and observes that humanity was given “dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” Describing the order and government established in creation, Wesley writes that “Man was God’s vice-regent upon the earth, the prince and governor of this lower world.” This means, interestingly enough, that although God is the Governor of the earth *par excellence*, the supreme Being has not claimed exclusive prerogatives here, but has graciously allowed humanity to share in this rule and to exercise

an authority over the lower creation. Here humanity is distinguished in certain aspects from the rest of creation and a hierarchy of sorts is established. God as Governor does not rule in isolation, but governs through His appointed vice-regents. (Collins 1997: 23)

Wesley extends his theology of the political image beyond mere hierarchy and dominion to also include the *way in which* the world is to be governed according to the generous, kind, gracious, and merciful character of God. Wesley, like the NPP, clearly posits that the human regency is the means through which God's goodness is channeled into the world. Wesley writes,

As all the blessings of God in paradise flowed through the man to the inferior creation; as man was the great channel of communication between the Creator and the whole brute creation; so when man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off. (Outler 1985: 442)

The aspects of the political image of God that Wesley identifies are in many ways synonymous with what N. T. Wright designates as the vocational aspect of the image of God. Wright states rather comprehensively:

If the story stretches forwards from Abraham to David, to the promised return from exile and the 'new Exodus', and ultimately not only to the Messiah himself but to the extension of his rule across the world, then it also stretches back behind Abraham to Adam himself. Romans 5:12–21 is of course the classic passage, but we should not miss the point. Adam is not merely an example, or (as it were) a detached primal sinner. Genesis itself links Adam to Abraham through the words of command to the former and vocation to the latter. The Psalms, by implication at least, link Adam to the Messiah, through Psalm 8 in which the *image-bearing vocation* of Genesis 1 is repeated in relation to the 'son of man', a phrase whose residual indeterminacy cannot mask its use, in the first century at least, in relation to the long-awaited king. So when Paul strings together Adam and the Messiah in 1 Corinthians 15:20–28, drawing in Psalm 110:1 as well by means of its own echo of Psalm 8:6 ('he has put all his enemies under his feet' being picked up by 'he has put all things in order under his feet'), these are not just 'proof-texts'. Nor can one say that, because of the unsophistication of the Corinthian

audience (a point which could itself be challenged), Paul cannot actually intend to shower them with Genesis and the Psalms, and perhaps Daniel as well, in quite this way. Paul is expounding his central *messianic eschatology*, the point of which is precisely that the scriptural narrative is fulfilled in the new creation which *has* happened in Jesus' resurrection and *will* happen through his messianic reign. (Wright 2013: 1455)

And,

They [Christians] will be signs and foretastes of the new world that is to be, not least because of their unity across traditional boundaries, their holiness of life, their embracing of the *human* vocation to bear the divine image, and particularly their suffering. As in Romans 8, the renewal of humans is the prelude to, and the means of, the renewal of all creation. (Wright 2013: 1491)

Here Wright suggests that the purpose of humanity being created in the image of God is to function like an angled mirror that simultaneously reflects the love of God into the world (*via* humanity) and the love and worship of the world back up to God. Wright also makes the connection (and distinction) between God's people as image bearers and Jesus as The Image Bearer. Conforming to the character of Christ is to put on the image of God, to share in the co-regency over the creation, and to bring glory to Jesus and God as image bearers throughout the new creation. In short, putting on the character of Christ means fulfilling the righteousness of God in the world as walking testimonies of God's redemptive power made possible through his faithfulness to Abraham, David, and all of the creation.

While having much in common, the key difference between Wesley's political image and the NPP's vocational image is that for the NPP, this understanding of the image of God creates the crucial link for a *biblical soteriology* within Paul's worldview and compositional arc of the grand salvation narrative. That is, thinking of the image of God as *vocational* links NT soteriology with the narrative as it reaches back to Genesis; God's original intentions for humanity to have dominion over the creation, the fall, and God's strategy to rescue, redeem and return the creation to this model through co-regency with humanity, namely the Davidic Messiah. In other words, the NPP's reading of Paul demonstrates a more profound and nuanced iteration of the connection between the concepts of Messiah, New Creation, and *cosmos* rescue all within the eschatological framework.

Wesley's understanding of sanctification does not feature this. Wesley understands sanctification as the restoration of the image of God in humanity. This is undoubtedly true and the NPP does not reject such a claim. At the same time, the NPP's more robust doctrine of the image of God is couched in the broader biblical soteriology framework. That is, for the NPP, Paul is constantly thinking about justification, sanctification, and glorification in light of God's covenant faithfulness to both Abraham and all of the creation. Any talk of salvation that does not include these elements falls short of Paul's more robust and nuanced soteriology.

7. *Glorification and pneumatology.* Describing these very dynamics of first century Judaic eschatology and the hope for the coming of a new era of righteousness, Ziesler writes:

One regular element was the hope of resurrection. Those who believed in life after death at all, tended in the Palestinian tradition to believe in a general resurrection at the End, a resurrection to Judgment, when God would make his decisions on human beings. Thus anyone reared in this tradition who heard of the resurrection of Jesus would be apt to conclude that the general resurrection had begun and that the End was on the doorstep. The gift of the Spirit of God was another mark of the age: God would breathe not just on a few special servants, but on all his people. To talk as Christians did about the presence of the Holy Spirit implied at least the beginning of the new age. Again, although the Messiah belonged more naturally to the simpler nationalistic hope than to the cosmic apocalyptic one, he too could represent the End time. All together, these central elements in the Christian message must be understood in this eschatological or apocalyptic setting. (Ziesler 1990: 10)

Linking directly to eschatology and the resurrection is glorification and pneumatology. For Paul, the age of the spirit begins now *via* baptism in the Holy Spirit and the regeneration of the believer. This means freedom not only from the guilt of sin but also the power of sin. The age of the spirit will come to a climax with the resurrection of believers. In the same way that Jesus rose by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 1:4), believers will be raised, and the age of the spirit will have come in full force. This means that glorification is deeply eschatological in a way that is similar to Pentecost. Pentecost was the beginning of the End with the initial giving of the Spirit and the glorification of believers will mark the end of the end and the final

and most glorious stage of the establishment of the New Creation/Kingdom of God.

### Conclusion

While Wesley and the NPP share some commonalities, their differences prevail. Wesley's Anglican background paired with the influence of Peter Böhler and others championing essential doctrines of the (continental European) Reformation makes him a unique hybrid characterized by a combination of spirit of the *solas* and the practice of Rome. Such a description is not too far a cry from the NPP and its concerns for Paul's clear teaching on impartation and its impact on how the normal Christian life is expected to be lived out according to the scriptures. As such, Wesley and the NPP both emphasize Paul's understanding of the agency of the Holy Spirit in bringing about the new creation in the lives of the believers, which translates into freedom of sin, even if both come at the issue from different angles.

The tension between the NPP, Wesley, and the reformed tradition is a fruitful one. It forces us back into the scriptures to ask, "what *is* Paul saying?" Wesley in particular reminds us that the spiritual growth of the church and real change in the world through the righteousness of Christ in the people of God is always to be an orienting aim for reading Paul. Wesley's missional concern in particular, one could argue, makes him more like Paul than the others. This is where Wesley likely has a finger on the spiritual pulse of Paul more so than his counterparts. This, a Wesleyan could argue, is where the NPP and the reformed tradition do not go quite far enough—the very practical missional aspect of the righteousness of God in the world.

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> E. P. Sanders' *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, is typically identified as the seminal work on proposing covenantal nomism in place of works righteousness for first century Jewish soteriology.

<sup>2</sup> N. T. Wright's, *The Day the Revolution Began: Reconsidering the Meaning of Jesus's Crucifixion* (NY: HarperOne, 2016) is dedicated to expounding this interpretation of the cross.

<sup>3</sup> For a strong exposition on the case for the eschatological motif as the organizing feature of the canonical Psalter, see David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of*

*Psalms*, vol. 252 (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplemental Series; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> For an exposition on covenant as the cohesive device for the canonical message of salvation, see Sandra Richter, *Epic of Eden: A Christian Entry into the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> For a robust rebuttal to the NPP's criticism of imputed righteousness, see John Piper's, *Counted Righteous in Christ: Should We Abandon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002).

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R. Jeffrey Hiatt

## *Caring for the Masses: Insights from John Wesley on Spiritual and Physical Healing*

### **Abstract:**

John Wesley approached Christian mission through a therapeutic (in the biblical sense) motif. Wesley used physical, spiritual, and social healing to further Christian mission in England, Ireland, and America. The gospel informs, and Christian mission drives, Wesley's comprehension and practice of healing. This study illumines the ways and degrees that Wesley employed physical healing practices that helped him to care for and reach the masses in England with the gospel. Wesley demonstrated that medicine and medical intervention was an important element in the missionary/ministry work. God not only works through direct intervention but through medicine, as well. Wesley used whatever means was biblical, ethical, and theologically expedient for Christian mission. If it was "good," then it was fair game for use in reaching people for Christ and helping to heal their hurts, no matter what caused them.

**Keywords:** John Wesley, mission, healing, medicine, soteriology, holistic ministry

**R. Jeffrey Hiatt** is an Affiliate Professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, teaches Wesleyan Theology, Missiology, and Christian Spiritual Formation and Ministry type classes. As an ordained elder through the Church of the Nazarene, he ministered to the Lexington Japanese diasporic community for 12 years.

## **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

John Wesley approached Christian mission through a therapeutic (in the biblical sense) motif. Wesley used physical, spiritual, and social healing to further Christian mission in England, Ireland, and America. The gospel informs, and Christian mission drives, Wesley's comprehension and practice of healing. This study illumines the ways and degrees that Wesley employed physical healing practices that helped him to care for and reach the masses in England with the gospel.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century Anglican practice of the "cure of souls" and the rise of regulated medicine in 18<sup>th</sup> century England influenced John Wesley's emphasis on the therapeutic nature of the gospel of Christ and the character of his ministry.<sup>2</sup> It also provided a backdrop for Wesley's historical and pioneering work with medicine and the medical use of electricity as one element in treating the spiritual and physical needs of his people.

Wesley's own writings and pertinent secondary sources provided the resources for investigating and understanding his interpretation of God's healing mission to the world. Wesley was a pioneer in certain aspects of medicine. As Randy Maddox (2007:4) notes, "Wesley's interest in health and healing was a central dimension of his ministry and of the mission of early Methodism." This article attempts to show how this feature was integrated into his approach to Christian mission.

## **John Wesley's Theological Premises Concerning Healing**

John Wesley spent a lifetime of loving pastoral care responding to the desperate conditions faced by the poor in whatever country, city, village, or open-air venue he found them.<sup>3</sup> He sought to discover methods and means that worked in accord with scripture and apply it to the situation at hand. Wesley's application of healing love integrated the elements of holy attitudes that motivated the words and the tangible works (healing, salvation, food, money, etc.) for the beneficiary. This social action instilled in the Methodist movement sprang from an active faith in Christ, but was also informed by examples from the early Church (Madden 2004: 742, 752).

God's broad love for individuals was also for "the healing of the nations." Wesley's optimistic theology elucidated the bleak human condition without betraying the Christian's hope as he diagnosed the malady and suggested its cure:

It is certain that “God made man upright;” perfectly holy and perfectly happy: But by rebelling against God, he destroyed himself, lost the favour and the image of God, and entailed sin, with its attendant, pain, on himself and all his posterity. Yet his merciful Creator did not leave him in this helpless, hopeless state: He immediately appointed his Son, his well-beloved Son, “who is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person,” to be the Saviour of men; “the propitiation for the sins of the whole world;” the great Physician who, by his almighty Spirit, should heal the sickness of their souls, and restore them not only to the favour, but to “the image of God wherein they were created.” (WJW Sermon 61, 2:452)<sup>4 5</sup>

Wesley deliberately exhibited a positive view of life as he preached, “Rest not till you enjoy the privilege of humanity—the knowledge and love of God. Lift up your heads, ye creatures capable of God. Lift up your hearts to the Source of your being! Let your ‘fellowship be with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ’ [1 John 1:3]!” (WJW Sermon 60, “The General Deliverance” 2:450).

In John Wesley’s view, a key to bringing glory to God was “doing all the good” one could for others. Wesley intended to take care of the people within his charge in all of the ways at his disposal that were appropriate to the gospel.<sup>6</sup> One of Wesley’s approaches to mission was a visible, tangible avenue to reach many of the lost by offering Christ while helping restore people to health. Wesley’s rationale for his extensive emphasis on physical healing and the use of medicine can be seen in his interpretation of Mark 5:43. In his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, concerning Jesus’ raising of the girl, Wesley clarifies, “[Jesus] commanded something should be given her to eat—So that when either natural or spiritual life is restored, even by immediate miracle, all proper means are to be used in order to preserve it” (Wesley 1954:157). The emphasis is that life is to be taken as a whole, or holistically. Even in the account of physical wellness being restored to the girl, with no direct mention about her spiritual condition by Jesus, Wesley infers it, because he believed that Jesus works multi-dimensionally.<sup>7</sup> This lesser known feature of Wesley’s ministry relates the study of medicine to the practice of relief for the poor, both customary among many English clergy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Cule 1990:43-4, Macdonald 1982:106, Maddox 1994:146, Madden 2004:743).

### **John Wesley's Concept of Salvation as Healing**

Medicine did not, and does not, work by itself apart from the grace of God. Charles Wesley provided a poetical insight to this theological position in "A Hymn for One about to Take His Medicine:"

Hail, great Physician of mankind,  
 Jesus, Thou art from every ill.  
 Health in Thine only Name we find,  
 Thy name in the medicine doth heal.

(Rattenbury 1929:300)

"Wesley had no great problem demonstrating to his followers the relationship between spiritual care and the need for maintaining both a healthy mind and body" (Rogal 1978:83). One reason Wesley held these together was that he viewed a person as a whole.<sup>8</sup> Another reason Wesley had no trouble holding these together was a result of his view of humanity created in the image of God. Wesley understood this in a relational sense that takes into account the multidimensional nature of humanity. Wesley eschatologically envisioned, by the grace of God, a restored and healed world. The God who created the world in the first place is at work recreating it in the present. Physical healing is one signal that the Creator is still going about doing good.<sup>9</sup> Yet, God is not content to work alone. As noted above, this is the work of the church in tandem with the Holy Spirit.

To demonstrate the need for and potential of the spiritual and physical elements offered in the gospel of Christ, Wesley reminded his audiences of the present state of their spiritual and physical needs. To do this, he had to look no farther than London and the surrounding countryside to point to life's many jagged edges. For example, the laws favored the elite and wealthy. The major English political, financial, and social systems labored for their own good, often with little or no regard for those who served them. Many people mistreated one another. When Wesley reasoned and drew conclusions about the brutal behaviors and attitudes conveyed by the system toward individuals, particularly the poor, he turned to the Bible and the Church to see what God had to say about the matter. Reflecting on the generally negative state of affairs that he observed, Wesley declared plainly in his sermon, "The Mystery of Iniquity,"

I would now refer it to every man of reflection, who believes the Scriptures to be of God, whether this general apostasy does not imply the necessity of a general reformation? Without allowing this, how can we possibly justify either the wisdom or goodness of

God? According to Scripture, the Christian religion was designed for “the healing of the nations;” for the saving from sin by means of the Second Adam, all that were “constituted sinners” by the first . . . The time is coming, when not only “all Israel shall be saved,” but “the fullness of the Gentiles will come in.” The time cometh, when “violence shall no more be heard in the earth, wasting or destruction within our borders;” but every city shall call her “walls Salvation, and her gates Praise;” when the people, saith the Lord, “shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.” (Isaiah lx. 18, 21.) (*WJW* 6:264)

Wesley’s optimistic hopes for the universal redemption of a world marred by sin’s effects remained high. He believed the Methodist revival was both a sign of hope and a pattern of God’s design for “the general spread of the Gospel.” Wesley recorded preaching from Isaiah 11:9 seven times from 1747 to 1755 and wrote this sermon from Dublin in April 1783, as a reminder that God is at work in the world so that “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Is. 11:9). Wesley concluded, “The loving knowledge of God, producing uniform, uninterrupted holiness and happiness, shall cover the earth; shall fill every soul of man” (*WJW* Sermon 63, 2:488). Wesley practiced what he preached - a gospel that encompassed the needs of the people in the fullness of Christian love!

In the truest sense of the experience, all true healing is divine healing. Physical healing through physical means, e.g., medicines, may stand as an operative symbol because God performs an act of grace to the recipient(s) either immediately or mediated through the inherent nature of the created substance (Runyon 1998:132). This is analogous to how Christ is present as the source and goal in Holy Communion. Theodore Runyon provides these lines from a communion hymn of John Wesley that illuminates this emphasis,

His Body doth the Cure dispense,  
His Garment is the Ordinance,  
In which he deigns t’appear;  
The Word, the Prayer, the broken Bread,  
Virtue from Him doth here proceed,  
And I shall find Him here. (Runyon 1998:131)

Christ is present when healing takes place.

### **John Wesley's Insights on Ministry, Medicine, and His Practice of Healing**

Wesley seemed to be embroiled in one controversy after another throughout his ministry. The one that brought him as much notoriety as anything else was his involvement in providing “healthcare tips” to the poor. Eighteenth century England is not known for its great medical wisdom. Lester King, M.D., delineates the plight of the underclass who became ill: “There were simply not enough doctors to go around, and their services were too expensive, giving rise to the gibe that the physician was like Balaam’s ass, because he would not speak until he saw an angel (an archaic coin worth about ten shillings)” (King 1971:12). The poor fared no better in the hands of the apothecaries either. King recites a notorious case in which a patient was charged £132 12s. 8d. for medicines that actually cost less than £7 (King 1971:10). Wesley was not just indignant about such abuses, but resolved to do something personally to change the situation.

By Wesley’s own criteria,<sup>10</sup> he did not qualify as a professionally trained or certified physician (Bardell 1979:113). Although Wesley never attended a medical college, nor obtained a medical license, or degree, nor any recognition from an accrediting medical society, he read and learned as much about the most current ways to cure the simple, common diseases as most of the registered practicing physicians of his day (Donat and Maddox 2018:20). He saw the plight of the poor and wanted to provide a solution. Wesley explained the boundaries of his medical knowledge and skills and presented his compassionate rationale to aid the destitute of his parish:

But I was still in pain for many of the poor that were sick; there was so great expense, and so little profit [benefit]. And first, I resolved to try, whether they might not receive more benefit in the hospitals. Upon the trial, we found there was indeed less expense, but no more good done, than before. I then asked the advice of several Physicians for them; but still it profited not.<sup>11</sup> I saw the poor people pining away, and several families ruined, and that without remedy.

At length I thought of a kind of desperate expedient. “I will prepare, and give them physic myself.”<sup>12</sup> For six or seven and twenty years, I had made anatomy and physic the diversion of my leisure hours; though I never properly studied them, unless for a few months when I was going to America, where I imagined I might be of some service to those who had no regular Physician among them. I applied to it again. I took into my assistance an Apothecary, and an experienced Surgeon;

resolving, at the same time, not to go out of my depth, but to leave all difficult and complicated cases to such Physicians as the patients should choose.

I gave notice of this to the society; telling them, that all who were ill of chronical distempers (for I did not care to venture upon acute) might, if they pleased, come to me at such a time, and I would give them the best advice I could, and the best medicines I had. (*W/JW Letters* 8:263-4)

Wesley felt that he had no other recourse. He agonized over, and worked relentlessly to relieve the suffering of the poor. Wesley established three free clinics (London, Bristol, and Newcastle), orphanages, prison ministries, and a new method for visiting the sick (Ott 1980a:194).

Obviously, he could not attend to all of the sick persons in England, but Wesley proposed that a network of stewards and Methodist leaders could reach a large portion of the neglected population. John Wesley, following the admonition of scripture, specifically Matthew 25:36, resolved, "I am setting a regular method of visiting the sick here [London]." This was one of the chief functions of the Methodist Class Leaders.<sup>13</sup>

When Wesley obliged patients "to give them the best advice I could and the best medicines I had," he grasped that the process of healing came from God at work in the created order. If we fully grasp this truth, then we can employ the means to heal that God puts before us. Wesley drew this point out when explaining the use of electricity (see below) for healing, when he states, "We know that the Creator of the universe, is likewise a Governor of all things therein. But we know likewise, that he governs by second causes; and that accordingly it is his will, we should use all the probable means he has given us to attain every lawful end" (Wesley 1760:27). God employed medicine and other means to remedy the malady. Holistically for Wesley, this included healing anyone who was sick in body, mind, or spirit.<sup>14</sup>

Many people sought healing and wholeness through Wesley's ministry. Fallen and downtrodden people received help to transform their broken and miserable lives. Wesley used discernment and wisdom to direct people toward God to meet their lives' deepest and most urgent needs. Those who needed a cure for their sin sick souls gained solace from Jesus, whom Wesley preached. Some, who suffered from various chronic physical "distempers," often found relief and healing through Wesley's advice and

cures. Restoration and peace, “being in a state of equilibrium” called for a biblical concrete practice of health care (Ott 1995:180-81). Wesley urged them to have both inward and outward health (Ott 1980b:587).

Providing another nuance to holistic healing, what develops into health psychology and behavioral medicine, Newton Malony relates the insights of Wesley’s integrative ministry in “John Wesley’s Primitive Physic: An 18th-century Health Psychology,” a paper presented before the American Psychological Association in 1992 (1996:147). Malony suggests using Matarazzo’s standard definition of health psychology:

Health psychology is the aggregate of the specific educational, scientific, and professional contributions of the discipline of psychology to [1] the promotion and maintenance of health, [2] the prevention and treatment of illness, [3] the identification of etiologic and diagnostic correlates of health, illness, and related dysfunction, and [4] the analysis and improvement of the health care system and health policy formation. (Malony 1996:148, his numbers)

Malony contends that John Wesley made significant contributions according to these criteria. Four notable examples posited were 1) Wesley promoted George Cheyne’s health habits widely, 2) Wesley’s *Primitive Physic* dealt with treatment of diseases, 3) Wesley understood the interrelation of environment and psychosomatics on health, and 4) Wesley developed a method for visiting the sick and established the earliest free clinics in Bristol and London (1996:151, 154, 156). Malony observes that Wesley took his cue for these good works from a biblical understanding that “the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:9) and “earned an honored place in the history of all health professions and behavioral medicine, as well” (1996:158).

A current contributor to the body of literature analyzing the connection of physical and spiritual health influence of Wesley is Marie Griffith in *Born Again Bodies*. While delineating the historical roots of those ideas from Luigi Cornaro (fl. 1558), Griffith suggests connections between Wesley and the Oxford Methodists’ dietary regimens and spiritual health interrelatedness due to the influences of George Cheyne, M.D. (1671-1743), Jeremy Taylor, William Law, Thomas á Kempis, Jacob Boehm, and Jeanne Guyon—“all of whom wrote of suppressing the appetite so that the spirit could rise” (2004:29-30).<sup>15</sup>



Philip Ott affirms the attention of the regimen Wesley offers for good health of body and spirit in his articles “John Wesley on Health: A Word for Sensible Regimen” and “John Wesley and Non-naturals” (1980a, 1980b). Ott’s writings on “John Wesley on Health as Wholeness” and “Medicine as Metaphor: John Wesley on therapy of the Soul” deal more with the salvation theme imbedded in Wesley’s abundant references to therapeutic terminology to describe the holistic work of God among the people (1991, 1995).

Manfred Marquardt’s standard work on Wesley, *John Wesley’s Social Ethics: praxis and principles* notes, “Wesley’s basic thesis, that the sick will must first be healed, “confirmed in innumerable cases demonstrates that Wesley’s healing emphasis on restoring the individual carried the implications of social renewal as well (1992:120). “The ethical power thus awakened and preserved, and firmly founded in connection with Christ, ... enabled many to bring about social change in their vicinity” (Marquardt 1992:120).<sup>16</sup>

In this model, Wesley implores us to offer healing through the means available to us to all those to whom we minister. The marginalized of society have few options. The church needs to continue to provide them with competent therapeutic treatment to bring health into their lives.

Wesley promoted his method for visiting the sick, and the dispensary opened at the Foundery in 1746, by highlighting the amount of people who no longer suffered from their chronic illnesses because of his advice, medicines, and God’s blessings (Turrell 1921:362).<sup>17</sup> Even his opponents admitted that he had no aspirations to be a professional physician, but only that he earnestly labored for “the healing of disease” (Thomas 1906:987). Wesley challenged the physician detractors, who still derided him, to see who had cured more patients! They did not take him up on the offer.

In a letter to Vicar Perronet dated 1748, Wesley recounts that within 5 months over 500 people passed through the clinic, and 71 “were entirely cured of distempers long thought to be incurable” (*WJW Letters* 8:265). To say God granted success to his healing endeavors is an understatement. The point is not to defend Wesley’s use of medicine for its own sake; however, a gospel that provides for the spiritual well-being and relieves the suffering of the people without placing an economic burden on them is eye-catching! The gospel presents God as the Source who provides,

motivates, and sustains this work of love, beckoning them to come to Him for wholeness.

Wesley did not take this role of curing of souls and bodies lightly, nor did he just treat illnesses as some of his critics suppose, but *he treated whole persons*. In his journal entry for 21 June 1767, Wesley relates the recovery of Ellen Stanyers of Macclesfield, in Cheshire, from mental, physical and spiritual distress through the care of the Methodists discipling her, as follows:

While she was meditating on what she had heard, those words were brought to her mind, 'Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no Physician there?' With the words the Lord spoke peace to her soul; and in one and the same moment all pain and sorrow fled away, and she was entirely healed, both body and mind. Early in the morning she came to the house of one of our friends, and, clapping her hands together, cried out in an ecstasy of joy 'O my Jesus, my Jesus, my Jesus! What is it that he has done for me? I feel he has forgiven all my sins.' Taking up an hymnbook, she opened it on those words: —'I the chief of sinners am, But Jesus died for me!' She was quite transported, being overwhelmed with peace and joy unspeakable. At the same time she was restored to the full use of her reason, and in a little while was strong and healthy as ever. (*W/W Journals* 3:285)

### **Excurses on Healing with Electrostatic Shock Therapy**

John Wesley, "the brand plucked from the burning," was drawn to the new discoveries about electricity in the middle of the eighteenth century. "Brand from the Burning" is even more interesting because of the imagery associated with the description. It not only recalls Wesley's rescue as a six-year old from the burning Epworth rectory in 1709 or the later spiritual revival fire kindled through his ministry, but connects with "God's brand," "which is another ancient locution for 'lightning'" (*Schiller* 1981:162).

One of Wesley's pioneering endeavors was to apply mild, static electric shock to help cure patients physically and mentally. Whenever Wesley ran upon a new aid to humanity, he was quick to research it and employ its best gift for those associated with his ministry. Electricity as a new discovery fascinated John Wesley. He read and heard about an "electrical machine" as early as 1745, and later used it in treating the illnesses of the poor. Wesley mentioned electricity in his journal entry

for Friday, 16 October 1747, when he went with some friends to see “The Electrical Experiments.” “It is all a mystery,” Wesley quipped. He was content to leave its theoretical explanation there, but certainly not its practical use. Wesley envisioned a therapeutic labor for this late discovery:

Jan. 20, 1753. I advised one who had been troubled many years with a stubborn paralytic disorder to try a new remedy. Accordingly, she was electrified<sup>18</sup> and found immediate help. By the same means I have known two persons cured of an inveterate pain in the stomach, and another of a pain in his side which he had ever since he was a child. (W/W “Journal & Diaries III” 20:444, 1-20-1753)<sup>19</sup>

In November 1756, Wesley procured the use of an “electrical apparatus” which he had evidently designed (Madden 2007:247). He set up a schedule where people could receive daily applications of electricity. For several years, he says that hundreds, if not thousands, of persons had been “electrified” (a mild electrostatic shock). Wesley had directed several persons “to be electrified.” They had suffered from various disorders and some found a cure from the treatments (W/W “Journal & Diaries IV” 21:81). Wesley only allowed mild electrical shocks to be administered at such a low level that did not “frighten the patient.” He also believed that violent shocks were dangerous to the patient and forbade their use.

Turrell, in “Three Electrotherapists of the Eighteenth Century: John Wesley, Jean Paul Marat and James Graham,” places Wesley as one of the first practitioners of electrotherapy in London (1921:361). Although he does not deride Wesley’s work, he characterizes Wesley’s confidence in electricity as a panacea as gullibly optimistic (Turrell 1921:363). The importance of his paper read before the Royal Society of Medicine Section of the History of Medicine, January 19, 1921, establishes Wesley as one whose work “did a great deal for the early development of a science” and indirectly highlights Wesley’s integrated approach to bringing healing to the whole person (Turrell 1921:364).

Electricity for Wesley was just one more arrow in his quiver to reverse the onslaught of the ills employed by the enemy. With the efficacy of electricity in treating myriad illnesses, Wesley could make headway in alleviating the suffering of the disadvantaged of society in accessing and affording healthcare. In his later editions of *Primitive Physic* (1760 on), Wesley asserted the efficacy of electricity in curing about twenty different

ailments (Rousseau 1968:247; see *PMT* website, for a list of the increased available treatments through electrotherapy).

### ***Primitive Physic for the Masses***

John Wesley perceived that his writings could circulate in places where he could not go. Therefore, he published literature on curing simple diseases. Starting in 1747, he collected the most useful medicines and their recipes that could be prepared simply by an average adult in his or her own home, and published them in the little book *Primitive Physic Or An Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases*.<sup>20</sup>

Wesley understood the predicament that he combated. He commented in the preface of *Primitive Physic*, “[S]ince man rebelled against the Sovereign of heaven and earth...[t]he seeds of weakness and pain, of sickness and death, are now lodged in our inmost substance; whence a thousand disorders continually spring” (*WJW* Letters 14:308).

William Riddell, F.B.S., Edin., analyzes Wesley’s *Primitive Physic* in “Wesley’s System of Medicine” in the *New York Medical Journal*, recounting many of Wesley’s suggestions as “at least as reconcilable with common sense as that of the contemporary regular practitioner, much more so in most cases” (Riddell 1914:68). Burton G. Thomas viewpoint in *The British Medical Journal (BMJ)* of 1906 is not as flattering. After citing examples of Wesley’s advice found in *Primitive Physic*, he demeans Wesley and his work: “There is nothing in the book of any value whatsoever, and curiously enough, nothing that might not have been written by a person with the slightest education and the meanest intellect” (Thomas 1906:988). This essay, however, confirms Wesley’s wide impact on persons seeking cures for ill health through the sale of hundreds of copies of *Primitive Physic*, albeit from a negative perspective. Ironically, the essay misses that most of Wesley’s sources for suggested cures were gleaned from the contemporary elite of the European medical profession.

A complimentary assessment interpreting Wesley’s work on healing diseases appeared four years earlier in the *BMJ* as “A Medical Tract by John Wesley.” Wesley dealt with most of the known diseases treated by the medical establishment of the eighteenth century. He drew on the learned medical practitioners, common sense, and “the clinical observations of divers wise women of the shires” (*BMJ* 1902:799). The analyses on Wesley and his healing work suggested that Wesley applied the method of experiment on treating diseases, leaning on common sense, and offering

easy and natural cures to the suffers. “The same cannot unfortunately be said of the remedies of the faculty of the period”—a surprising closing quip on the general state of the medical profession of Wesley’s contemporaries (*BMJ* 1902:800).

Another physician amenable to Wesley’s contribution to blending an emphasis on public health and individual and social virtues, Robert Morison, in *The Hastings Center Report* concludes: “Wesley awakened an interest in sanitation (long absent from the Christian world) with the revival of an ancient Hebrew dictum that “cleanliness is next to godliness.” More important, perhaps, were the weekly class meetings for increasing individual social virtues” (Morison 1974:3).

In an address before the Osler Club of Winnipeg, Oct. 13, 1926, Medical Superintendent of Brandon Hospital for Mental Diseases, C. A. Baragar, M.D extols Wesley’s contribution to the care for the ill of the eighteenth century, especially complimenting Wesley’s *Primitive Physic*. Baragar remarks that Wesley’s “treatise on Medicine, a booklet couched in such simple language as to be easily understood by the unlettered poor and yet in the treatment prescribed in accord with that of the foremost physicians<sup>21</sup> of his day and in some of its definitions delightfully succinct and clear” (Baragar 1928:59).

After describing many of Wesley’s examples related to gleanings from the medical literature and supported from his theology, Baragar concludes, “[Wesley] did much to direct the attention of the public to the importance of health, and he pointed to the [S]ource from which help must come” (1928:65). Baragar lauds Wesley’s professional theological stance and medical efforts as lay skills worthy of “an honored place in the history of medicine” (1928:65).

David Stewart, M.D., believes that Wesley’s *Primitive Physic* is one of the “all-time medical best sellers,” producing the equivalent revenue of about \$150,000 that Wesley either gave away to the poor or used to underwrite the cost of producing more copies of the book (1969:34).<sup>22</sup> King is a little more cautious, but allows, “Even the most critical would admit that the book was a success . . . It is] a medical text which enjoyed a fabulous popularity” (1971:34). Before Wesley’s death, there were twenty-three editions produced with many more afterwards, including “at least seven American editions between 1764 and 1839,” and translations into other languages (King 1971:34).<sup>23</sup>

*“Primitive Physic* was Wesley’s way of utilizing an active faith to provide much needed medical advice to the laboring poor. In so doing, he managed to tackle the interrelated problems of health, hygiene, and nutrition while addressing the crucial issues of accessibility and cost” (Madden 2004:757-8). This kind of compassionate advocacy, intercession, and provision through medicine is at the heart of healing-as-salvation “religion” for Wesley.<sup>24</sup> Wesley demonstrated that medicine and medical intervention was an important element in the missionary/ministry work. God not only works through direct intervention but through medicine, as well. Wesley used whatever means was biblical, ethical, and theologically expedient for Christian mission. If it was “good,” then it was fair game for use in reaching people for Christ and helping to heal their hurts, no matter what caused them.

## **Conclusion**

John Wesley approached Christian mission through a biblically understood therapeutic motif (salvation-as-healing). Wesley’s comprehension, discovery, development, and practice of healing concepts shaped his thoughts, words, and activities in applying holistic salvation in his context. Wesley and the Methodists used physical, spiritual, and social healing to further Christian mission. Wesley’s healing practices highlighted the ways and degrees of care for people that allowed him to reach the masses in 18th Century England, and beyond.

The Methodist movement promoted social reform, welfare provision, schools, prison reform, hygiene movements, nutrition, exercise, medical dispensaries, medical advice, financial loans, and more, but especially focused on the spiritual health and vitality of people as their chief aim in Christ’s name. The church should be involved in healing ministries like Wesley advocated and exemplified—but not practicing medicine without a license! Although the major stress is laid on the eternal spiritual nature of Salvation as Healing to bring persons into a right relationship with God, the outflow of the healing of that breach is the consequential healings in the other dimensions and arenas of the human theater. People listened to Wesley and the Methodists in general, because they could see in his/their lives a consistency with the glad tidings of the gospel message and their actions of loving-kindness.

Thus, Wesley and the Methodist stand in their era as shining examples of the effect of the gospel to bring healing to the neglected

masses while contributing to nation-wide reform movements. This legacy calls, at least, Wesley's ecclesiastical heirs in the contemporary churches, to evaluate our reasons, levels of compassion, efforts, methods, and means to touch the depth of human need with Christ's transforming love.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> This paper was excerpted from a presentation given to the Yale-Edinburgh Group meeting from June 27-29, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Maddox calls attention to "how offering medical advice is central to the role of a parson in George Herbert, *A Priest to the Temple; or the Country Parson* (London: T. Garthwaite, 1652), ch. 23 (Wesley read Herbert in July 1730). Cf. A.W. Sloan, *English Medicine in the Seventeenth Century* (Durham: Durham Academic Press, 1996), 138–140; and Robert Heller, "'Priest-Doctors' as a Rural Health Service in the Age of the Enlightenment," *Medical History* 20 (1976): 361–383" (2007:5).

<sup>3</sup> See Ken Collins, *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley* for a brief overview of Wesley's life & ministry.

<sup>4</sup> In this short paragraph from "The Mystery of Iniquity" (2 Thessalonians 2:7), Wesley is drawing on at least Ecclesiastes 7:29, Hebrews 1:3, 1 John 2:2, Colossians 3:10 and Revelation 13:8 for his remarks.

<sup>5</sup> This paper acknowledges gender equality, but does not adjust Wesley's use of masculine pronouns.

<sup>6</sup> See letter of Mar. 28, 1739. Albert Outler noted that tradition incorrectly dated this letter as March 20 and written to James Hervey. He believed it was addressed "to some clergyman (possibly John Clayton) who had already raised the issue of Wesley's right to invade other men's parishes without invitation (see Letters, Vol. 25 in this edition, pp. 614, 616). See also Wesley's conversation with Bishop Butler of Bristol, August 16, 1739, in WHS, XLII.93-100" (*WJW* (Bicentennial Edition) CD-ROM. Richard P. Heitzenrater, ed. "Introduction", Part 1, footnote 47).

<sup>7</sup> *Wellness* refers to that quality of life that we experience lived in Christlikeness and the image of God. A right relationship with God centers us, makes us whole, and brings healing. This is a relationship of love that entails God justifying us, regenerating us, adopting us, sanctifying us, and making us whole persons.

<sup>8</sup> Wesley wrote to Miss Bishop in the words of the archbishop mentor to Madam Guion [sic], "TRUE simplicity," Fenelon says, "is that grace whereby the soul is delivered from all unprofitable reflections upon itself." I add, "and upon all other persons and things." (*WJW* Letters 13:24). He applies this principle to his medical tips to include finding which "medicine relieves which pain."

<sup>9</sup> For Wesley, this is a work of mercy. “[Our Lord] has laid before us those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity; the inward tempers contained in that “holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;” the affections which, when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good, and acceptable to God. . . [and so is] everything which we give, or speak, or do, whereby our neighbour may be profited; whereby another man may receive any advantage, either in his body or soul. The feeding the hungry, the clothing the naked, the entertaining or assisting the stranger, *the visiting those that are sick* or in prison, the comforting the afflicted, the instructing the ignorant, the reproving the wicked, the exhorting and encouraging the well-doer; and if there be any other work of mercy, it is equally included in this direction.” (*W/JW Sermons* 5:328-9) (Emphasis mine)

<sup>10</sup> Wesley offers these four points as the standard for professional medical practice: 1. Seeing life and health are things of so great importance . . . Physicians should have all possible advantages of learning and education. 2. That trial should be made of them, by competent judges, before they practice publicly. 3. That after such trial, they be authorized to practice by those who are empowered to convey that authority. 4. And that, while they are preserving the lives of others, they should have what is sufficient to sustain their own.

<sup>11</sup> Fifty-three physicians of the College of Physicians established a dispensary to aid the poor by selling their own prescriptions at a minimal cost compared to the apothecary charges. However, this was not adequate to meet the needs of the poorest of London (King 1971:13).

<sup>12</sup> *Physic* is the eighteenth century word for medicine. Wesley stated in Sermon 95, “On the Education of Children”, “*Physic* may justly be called the art of restoring health” (*W/JW* 3:349).

<sup>13</sup> In Methodism, the division of the society into classes is an important branch . . . Opportunities are also thus afforded for ascertaining the wants of the poorer members, and obtaining relief for them, and *for visiting the sick*; the duty of a Leader being to see the members once in the week, either at the meeting, or, if absent from that, at home . . . Mr. Wesley remarked, “. . . this is the very thing which was from the beginning of Christianity (*Disc* 5:518) ( my emphasis).

<sup>14</sup> See Sermon 98 “On Visiting the Sick” 11:118ff for a full explanation.

<sup>15</sup> Cornaro, an Italian nobleman, relates in *Trattato de la vita sobrina* (1558) how he became obese through overeating, but reversed his condition by an abstemious lifestyle.

<sup>16</sup> Prison renewal through converted jailers, social welfare work by the Mayor of Cork, improved conditions at the workhouses, instructions for visiting the sick in hospitals, and various kinds of assistance until self-help was attained (Marquardt 1992:184).



<sup>17</sup> Wesley's clinic was so successful that within two months, he opened a second one in Bristol.

<sup>18</sup> Refers to a mild static shock, not a lethal jolt.

<sup>19</sup> He concludes this journal entry with a bit of typical wry Wesley humor with pun intended, including tossing caustic critique at some of the elite medical practitioners and their avarice.

<sup>20</sup> It contained no less than 829 cures (Wesley 1992:169) and went through 23 editions in his lifetime (Maddox 2007:4, Donat and Maddox 2018:20). Referred to hereafter by its shorter title of *Primitive Physic*.

<sup>21</sup> Baragar colorfully depicted these eminent physicians: "Tissot (1728-1797) of Lausanne, noted chiefly for his advocacy of variolation [smallpox inoculation] and his treatise on epilepsy and nervous diseases; Thomas Dover (1660-1742) of Dover's Powder fame, buccaneer physician and the rescuer of Alexander Selkirk in 1709; Boerhaave (1668-1738) of Leyden, a famous physician; Richard Mead (1673-1754), heir to Radcliffe's wealthy practice and the gold headed cane; Cheyne, a celebrated Scottish contemporary of Mead's...noted chiefly for his work on gout and scurvy; Huxham who recommended a vegetable diet for Admiral Martin's 1200 scorbutic sailors in 1747; John Lind (1716-1794), the father of Naval Hygiene; Sydenham (1624-1689) the great clinician of Rivière, Hill and Macbride, not to mention Galen and Paré" (60).

<sup>22</sup> Today's equivalent is about \$950,000 (based on the cost of living being 7 times higher than it was in the 1960s.)

<sup>23</sup> Between 1776 and 1791, five new editions were printed in London and two in the American colonies (Rousseau 1968:252).

<sup>24</sup> In "On Former Times" (1787) Wesley clarifies, "By religion I mean the love of God and man filling the heart and governing the life. The sure effect of this is the uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth. This is the very essence of it; the height and depth of religion, detached from this or that opinion, and from all particular modes of worship" (*WJW Sermon*102, 3:448).

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James Patole

*Towards an Understanding of the New Middle Classes in India: Missiological Perspective and Implications*

**Abstract:**

One of the distinguishing features of contemporary India is the emergence and the rise of the new middle class/es (hereafter NMC). The confident and ambitious NMC has sprouted up across the country, now numbering about 300-400 million people and the number is increasing rapidly. The purpose of the article is to demonstrate that the emerging NMC is relatively an unexplored and unengaged people group in urban missions in India and beyond. It is a contemporary movement that is fluid and still in the process of emerging. In further exploration of the NMC, this article provides few key implications for an effective engagement with the NMC both in India and abroad. Recognizing that a sizable majority of the NMC are transnational, the NMC represents the Indian diaspora globally.

**Keywords:** urbanization, Neoliberalization, New Middle Class, urban missions, Indian Church.

**James Patole** was a chemical engineer turned missiologist. He is presently Associate Director for North India Urban Ministry for Evangelical Fellowship of India's National Centre for Urban Transformation, Bangalore/Pune, India and is also an ordained minister of Christian and Missionary Alliance. He received his PhD (Globalization and Urban Missiology) from South Asia Institute of Advanced Christian Studies, Bangalore.

## **Introduction**

For the first time in human history, around half of the world is middle class, with the majority being in Western countries (Bhatt et. al. 2010:127-152). One of the most distinguishing features of contemporary India is the emergence and rise of the new middle class/es<sup>1</sup> (henceforth NMC). Today, the NMC is the fastest growing segment of the Indian population (Saxena 2010). Madhukar Sabnavis asserts that the “big Indian middle class” is anywhere between 300 to 400 million and growing (2010:4). By all reasonable estimates, the Indian middle class is bigger than the entire population of many nations (Bhavan 2009:1). The middle class, especially the new middle class which is categorized on the basis of income, social status, education, occupation, and consumerism has significantly emerged as a powerful, influential, and dominant class in urban India who largely determine India’s economy, polity, culture, education and social relationships.

In such a changing scenario, the NMC remains one of the most unengaged sections of Indian missions. K. Rajendran accurately remarked that “the educated middle class seem reached and yet not reached” (2005:8-17). David Bennett, in his nationwide research in India, concluded that many Indian churches and other related institutions had not significantly engaged with the emerging urban middle classes. He suggests that the India Missions Association (IMA) and a few others are making some attempts to engage with them (2011:51).

Similarly, John Amalraj, Mohan Patnail and Anand Mahadevan (2011:293) along with Herbert Hoefler (2001:12-15) contend that the Christian ministry in India has not significantly impacted its urban society, except for the needy and poverty-stricken. Although some mission practitioners and scholars have shown a perpetual concern and have written about this urban movement, missions among the NMC have been mostly neglected, except to the Christian middle class. Even though there have been sporadic attempts made by a few ministries, there is very restricted consistent work among the secular NMC. The present article is an attempt to understand the NMCs and their present sociological as well as religious reality and their missiological implications.

## **The Emergence of the NMC: History in Perspective**

Karl Marx and Max Weber, widely accepted classical sociological thinkers, have written extensively on class in an analysis of human history

and sociology. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early parts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during the time of British rule, the Indian middle classes in India began to emerge and thrive in the field of education, consequently creating new job opportunities which moved them upward towards economic mobility. Sanjeeb Mukherjee, rightly asserts that Colonialism and Capitalist developments gave rise to dominant all-India classes (Mukherjee 1989:100). British rule made inroads to form a capitalist economy while establishing a new administrative system and promoting English education, which resulted in a tiny educated class in urban areas (Shah 1990:162).

In the contemporary literature, the NMC emerges with the background of the discourses on economic liberalization.<sup>2</sup> Mainstream economists and policy-makers have deliberated on this and have contended that the augmentation of this new economy was interrelated to the expansion of the urban middle class, referring to this as the “new” middle class (Sinha 2014:40). Liberalization, according to S.P. Aiyar is the philosophy of modernization in India (1973:9) which brought economic, social, and political changes. Liberalization, undoubtedly, has not only significantly improved the Indian economy, educational opportunities (both locally and globally), and the rise of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) but it has also paved the way for upward mobility for hundreds of thousands of Indians especially, the NMC.

### *The NMC: Concept and Various Definitions*

There is no unanimity in understanding the NMCs since it is a contemporary, fluid and still emerging movement. The contours of the NMC are increasingly perceived as a “class-in-practice,” which is marked by its economic mobility, politics and the regular practices through which it reconstructs its affluent position. Some argue that the NMC is “a tangible and significant phenomenon, but one whose boundaries are constantly being defined and tested” (Fernandes and Heller 2006:495). The size and definition of the middle class are the subject of incongruity and depend on several aspects such as income, status, identity and power, consumption, occupation, and lifestyle. Hence, there is no single standard definition of India’s middle class. Moreover, there are different NMC categories which are different from the NMCs in other parts of the world, especially North America and Europe. Gaining an accurate understanding of the Indian NMC is further complicated particularly by the caste structure and its dominance in the class system.

In the contemporary scenario, the term 'middle class' is defined and expressed in various terms. Bibek Debroy in *Indian Express* states,

The "middle class" is an over-used expression and difficult to pin down, since it is defined not just in terms of income, but also as values, cultural affinities, lifestyles, educational attainments and service sector employment. Using income, one way of defining a middle class is in terms of how much of income is left over for discretionary expenditure, after paying for food and shelter. If more than one-third is left, that qualifies one for inclusion in the "middle class". (2009:1-2)

Carol Upadhyia suggests that the "new" middle class is a product of the 1990s neo-liberal policies and their outcome (Upadhyia, 2011:190). For a few others, the middle class/es are those who have emerged because of social mobility and status attainment.<sup>3</sup>

#### *NMC and Castes in Contemporary Urban India*

The contemporary Indian society is undergoing significant changes. One crucial change is a slow but steady erosion of the caste system (Finny 1993:14-15). For instance, a person's status is assessed on the basis of his education, occupation, and income, whereas caste is considered only during marriage (Kuppuswamy, 1975:359). Raj Gandhi (1989:41) further asserts, "If one wants to discern the direction of change in the social stratification of urban India, the most logical step is to think in terms of change from caste to class." Although it is an accepted change, it has not profoundly penetrated India's social system and dynamics among other Indian populations.

Further, the NMCs are a heterogeneous group. Due to the strong influence of caste it is primarily dominated by the traditional upper castes (Kuppuswamy 1975:348). M.N. Panini (1997:60) foresees, economic liberalization, which in the long run, will generate job opportunities to an extent that workers will cease from using their caste as a license to get jobs. It seems that the caste-based occupations are perhaps eroding in India due to urbanization, globalization, and modernization, subsequently resulting in multiple job opportunities outside of traditional occupations, both locally and globally, particularly in private, ITC and related sectors. Conversely, caste continues to 'cluster' in occupations with higher influential levels such as in government services like managerial and professional occupations,



and in the 'industrial milieu' between the organized and the unorganized sector (Panini 1997:32-33).

### *The NMC Categories and Characteristics*

According to B.B. Misra (1978:7), the middle class has an occupational interest but it is bound together by a typical style of living and behavioral patterns, and stands for democratic values, which they express in their social and political lives. Moreover, the NMCs are classified into various groups or categories by various sociologists. Bhagavan Prasad (1968:9-11) divides the NMC's into four groups based on occupation: 1. Salaried persons, including administrative employees, postal and other institutional and government officials; 2. Independent occupations such as medical practitioners, lawyers, armed forces officers, teachers, artists, actors, journalists, and other consultants; 3. The non-salaried such as those involved in entrepreneurial or business activities like a private business, and directors in business firms; 4. Retired persons and widows from wealthy families. Income, social status, consumerism, and lifestyle are a few other key criteria used to categorize the NMCs in India.

Furthermore, although the Hindu percentage is on the higher side compared to other social groups, the NMC comprises people from all spheres of the social structure. According to Sudeshna Maitra (2007:3), Muslims and Christians form a more substantial segment of the lower class (18% and 11% respectively) than the middle and upper classes (15% and 4% of the middle class and 10% and 4% of the upper class). Recent economic developments are significant for Christians, as a sizeable portion made substantial socio-economic progress during the last two to three decades, primarily due to education and public and service sector employment.

The NMCs are recognized on the basis of their earnings, mostly from the higher and middle castes. In the era of contemporary globalization, dual-earning couples have increased among the NMC. In addition, an increasing percentage of women and youth representation in the private and IT-related sectors has been observed, and they are increasingly global in nature and lifestyle. The following are few key characteristics of the NMCs:

#### 1. Increasingly Consumerist Lifestyle and Identity

In a contemporary study of the middle classes, consumerism is the single most consistent theme (Fernandes 2006) that has repeatedly shown

the link between middle class formation and the emergence of consumer cultures (Heiman et al. 2012:23-24). The NMCs are perhaps the most significant consumers of “high-end” goods such as cars, air conditioners, designer clothes, computers, mobile telephones, gadgets and much more. In short, consumption has become their *status quo*.

## 2. Technologically Savvy: “Knowledge Class”

The NMCs are also called the “knowledge class” because of their specialized, advanced education, technological expertise, and much greater knowledge in different fields. Their dependence on technological gadgets like mobile phones, the internet, laptops, iPods, tablets, etc. is exceptional and proves how this class is conversant, and has been exposed to new and modern technology.

The Indian IT industry has become the new great hope of the Indian middle class (EPW Editorial 2001:5). According to Gurcharan Das (2002a:245-253), IT entrepreneurs and professionals are considered the new middle-class heroes. Das, even proposes that India can leapfrog the industrial age while embracing information technology that can drive India’s economic growth and transform the country (2002b: xvii.).

## 3. Aspirational and Career-Oriented

The NMCs perspective about overall life is increasingly money centered. The argument of Robert Wuthnow about American *middle class* categorically applies to a certain extent to the NMCs in India. He states:

The distinguishing feature of the middle class is its obsession with work and money...middle class is fundamentally defined by its pursuit of careers, the preparation of its children to participate in the labour market, and the close connection between its material well-being and its values. (Wuthnow 1993:192)

The NMCs, their upbringing and enculturation have tuned them to the single-minded pursuit of material success and career growth for the acquisition of a comfortable lifestyle, more wealth, and prestige.

### *The NMC Culture and Society: More Globalized than Localized*

The NMC, mainly, the IT and related sector professionals, are increasingly seen to aspire to international job opportunities and immigration to developed countries. As a result, they have developed

a global worldview while embracing technological advancement and advanced language skills and expertise. The NMCs maintain a professional lifestyle, they are fast-paced, demand a modern, western standard of living and have a keen global perspective. Incidentally, the NMCs are emerging as a transnational and a global phenomenon.

Furthermore, Chowdhury and Halarnkar (1998:58) observe that globalization is ushering in unprecedented transformation by altering old prejudices thus demonstrating the confidence to adopt new and innovative lifestyles, cultural standards, and global mindsets. However, such changes are the exceptions rather than the rule and have not actually loosened the hold of caste, particularly over marriage relationships, specific religious traditions, and institutions where caste bonds are yet being valued and practiced.

Purnima Mankekar (1999:9) notes that, "If the middle classes seemed eager to adopt modern lifestyles through the acquisition of consumer goods, they also became the self-appointed protectors of tradition." Although the NMCs are certainly becoming more globalized and modern in their entire outlook, they do continue to value and practice specific traditional and ancient cultural practices despite their conservative nature in correspondence with kinship relationships, family values, religious beliefs, and so on. This situation has undoubtedly positioned them to be "glocal", allowing them to be both "local" and "global" at the same time.

### *The NMCs Worldviews*

The NMCs worldviews are different from other classes and are changing rapidly due to various factors. L.W. Bryce (1961:84) asserts that urbanization brings cultural change in the ways of thinking, lifestyle, and the point of view of populations. The NMC has changed over the years, though there are tensions and some continuity with old traditions, beliefs, and lifestyle. The NMCs who are predominantly English educated, often in private and even international schools and colleges, are profoundly impacted by the western, scientific, secular, "enlightenment" ideologies and worldviews. Consequently, this has had a far-reaching influence on the NMCs political consciousness, religious beliefs, gender relationships, and other socio-cultural perspectives.

Moreover, segments of the NMC who are secular, are primarily concerned with the matters of this world as they strive to bypass religion. It is a process which brings gradual changes in the thinking and practices of

people that is seen especially among the NMCs who are more exposed to secular ideals and practices (Aghamkar 2011:6-7). In this respect, the NMC has undoubtedly become more secular, although not all segments of it and not in equal measure. The NMCs who are influenced by western education and modernity are also exposed to liberal, secular, and rational concepts and morals. However, they still keep themselves rooted in the traditional and religious social structures (Misra 2010:152).

According to Robert B. Talisse and Scott F. Aikin (2008:1) the terms “pragmatism” or “pragmatic” usually denotes:

...a commitment to success in practical affairs, to “getting things done.” Pragmatists are driven not by principle, but by the desire to achieve their ends. Hence pragmatists have little interest in abstraction, idealization, nitpicking argument, or theory of any sort; they have no time for these because they are fixed on practical tasks. A pragmatist is hence a bargainer, a negotiator, a doer, rather than a seeker of truth, a wonderer, or a thinker.

Likewise, “what works for me, is right,” is a way of life for most of the NMC and they tend to judge everything from that perspective. What appeals to the intellect is generally accepted, as most of them are inclined to evaluate everything by its relevance and applicability according to their felt needs and aspirations.

### *The NMCs Spirituality and Religious Diversity*

In contemporary India, religion continues to have an influential role in personal, family, and business affairs, and continues to influence and shape their overall development in cognizance of self-identity, god, and society (Tirimanna 2011:5). Today, a large number of religious, cultural, philosophical, and spiritual institutions and various ideologies are practiced by the NMC along with their traditional Hindu faith and temple worship. The worship places such as: Sri Satya Sai Baba Ashram, the ISKCON temple, OSHO ashram, *Yoga* centers, *Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's Art of Living* and many other such centers have become famous destinations not only among the NMC but also for people from all over the world.

It is generally perceived that in the cities people are not religious, however, the NMC, though not very religious in strict terms, do adhere to their religious faith and spirituality. Raj Gandhi (Gandhi 1989:56) focuses on the popularity of religion in cities. He contends, “it is futile to argue that religion is disappearing from Indian cities.” Hinduism has ancient roots that

are presently undergoing a transformation in which Neo-Hinduism, Neo-Vedanta and New Guru movements, along with several other New Religious Movements, both local and global, are playing a vital role. Their religious nature and practices are complex, fluid and exceptionally intermingled at times. Consequently, the NMC is evolving with “hybridization”, while maintaining a tightrope balance in their religiosity.

#### *The NMC and the Anubhava Phenomenon*

In the contemporary scene, almost all religions seem to be promoting the experiential religious aspects of their various faiths. In the case of Hinduism, while presenting a profound belief in the *anubhava*-experiential spirituality found among Hindus, Herbert Hoefler (2001:12-15) notes,

Traditional Hindu religiosity emphasizes three sources of authority in discovering the religious truth: *Srti* or ancient writings; *Yukti* or rational thought; and the most important *Anubhava* or experience. The purpose of using *srti* and *yukti* is only to get to one’s own *anubhav*-and only then, Hindus believe, do they know the writings and teachings are true. Of course, this emphasis on *anubhava* is central to Pentecostal theology and practice as well. An Indian seeker will commonly want confirmation through visions, miracles, answered prayers and healings. Most other denominations are uncomfortable with all this subjectivity. They prefer to remain at *srti*-in this case the Bible-and *yukti*-the dogma, but the Indian drive is for *anubhava*.

The NMC, being pragmatic seekers of religious vitality long for some divine *anubhava* in their life, career, business, and family. To experience the reality and divine power of god, the NMCs perform various rituals, *poojas*, and *bhakti*, as well as following various *gurus*, going for pilgrimages, holy baths and pursuing different religious rites.

Thus, we may construe that Hindu faith is being redefined, but has not lost its influence among the NMC. The popularity of neo-Hinduism<sup>4</sup> and the guru movement among the NMC is noteworthy as an indicator that the Hindu faith endures and flourishes although the methods of worship and teaching have undergone numerous changes over the years.

### **Proposed Missiological Implications**

The missiological implications proposed here are not an explicit framework, but rather ways of engaging with the NMC more effectively.

#### *Present the Uniqueness of Christ in the Pluralistic Context of the NMC*

Indian Hindus have a pluralistic and secular worldview. For most Indians, Jesus Christ is one among other gods, a divine guru, and unique teacher. This pluralistic perception demands active engagement and clear dialog. Such a context, poses a huge challenge in presenting the uniqueness of Christ and the Gospel. Needless to say, there are suspicious attitudes towards Christians by Hindus during the period of “effective engagement.” Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that there is good rapport between Christians and Hindus in most urban contexts. There seems to be mutual respect towards each other’s faith and religious practices. However, insensitivity and conceited behavior can incite hatred and negative attitudes towards the other group.

Samuel Escobar implies that globalization is a “*fait accompli*”<sup>5</sup> and exhorts the church to strive to understand pluralism and globalization and respond to it positively in order to demonstrate God’s goodwill towards humanity. He further appeals to churches to recognize this situation and change accordingly, to be relevant to the sociocultural and religious context, while making use of its positive features and neutralizing negative ones (Escobar 2003:53). In such scenarios, it is vital to redefine the Christian approach and move forward with the uniqueness of Christ by exemplifying a biblical Christian identity through servanthood, purity, and sacrificial living.

#### *Recognize the Stress and other Psychological Problems of the NMC*

For most of the NMC, peace of mind, good health, and the family’s comfort are fundamental concerns. However, urban life has been infested with daily hassles, stress, and other psychological problems. One of the reasons is the 24/7 work culture. The NMC is not excluded from urban life and its predicaments. The high level of competition, rapid social changes, loneliness, tedious work demands, the disintegration of the family, attitudinal and habitual changes among the youth, and relationship problems have significantly affected the NMC, resulting in anger, disputes, frustration, isolation, and hopelessness. In such scenarios, they seek for a new channel of interaction which would offer peace, hope, and love.

Appropriate and godly engagement, counseling, healthy dialogue, and interaction, providing necessary practical help, speaking about God's promises from the Bible and other such initiatives to meet their felt needs would be very effective.

*Challenge Christian Professionals to be a Witness in the Public Square*

It must be pointed out that the Christian NMC and their professionals have excellent skills, education, and communication capabilities, and have access to secular NMC groups. Thus, they are the natural and best anchors to present the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the unconditional love of God. Depending upon the response by the NMC professionals, these opportunities can be channeled for the launching of new ministries catering specifically to this segment of the society. Christian professionals must be challenged and strategically equipped to engage with the secular NMC through their walk of integrity and excellence in work ethics. The Church at large needs to address how Christian life can be lived in the public square with lessons drawn from biblical narratives, history, and characters who lived and served God in similar political, social, and power structures.

*Focus on Young Professionals*

Indian cities are increasingly young. Hence focusing on young professionals is strategic since their representation in the NMC population is growing. Presently, urban India provides ample opportunities for education, investment, and professional growth. This has resulted in the rapid influx of young professionals in the urban metropolises from all over the country. This influx further provides opportunities for the Indian Church to appropriately engage with the thriving and exploding NMC. Innovative approaches and tools, and efforts to engage with young NMC professionals as well as NMC migrants will have a positive result for the extension of God's kingdom.

*Encourage House Churches and Utilize Family Networks among the NMC*

House fellowships are another effective way to communicate the Gospel with the NMC. With relevant and contextualized approaches, such fellowships can be very effective since they are non-threatening, friendly, and relationship-based. These suggested implications are effective methods however not significantly developed in the context of the NMC.

House churches also provide anonymity to individuals. Thus an individual can conceal their whereabouts from their acquaintances if they feel threatened. Further, there are some who seem to be uncomfortable with the structured and organized form of Christianity. Such NMC aspirants who respect independence and openness can be absorbed in house churches where they can enjoy the freedom of seeking new levels of spirituality and become spiritually mature until they eventually become part of the organized Church and its fellowships. There is a need to identify and reach out to receptive segments of the NMC. Mainly among the educated young professionals and their families who have just migrated to the city and are willing to explore new ideologies.

#### *Emphasize Friendship and Incarnational Witness*

The gospel is communicated more effectively among friends and colleagues. This approach could be useful in engaging with the NMC as friendships in cities mutually reinforce fields of social action that define the middle class in India. Witnessing to friends can involve discussing personal, family, marriage, career, relationships, and other issues that matter the most to them. These friendships are fundamentally anti-hierarchical; mutual and life sharing, while offering valuable time and friendship in a time of need and urgency.

#### *Recognize that the NMC are Intellectual and Highly Educated*

The NMC are much more globalized than localized. Today's majority of the NMC are becoming more global than local. The church and its mission need to recognize that the NMC are highly educated and modern in the way they approach life. They are more intellectual and philosophical. Aghamkar rightly asserts that culturally relevant evangelism, undergirded by apologetic discourses, as well as relevant literature that presents the uniqueness of Christ and attempts to clarify misconceptions about Christianity are generally well received (Aghamkar 2011:7). Intellectual dialogue and healthy discussion regarding each other's ideologies can create an opportunity to present the gospel. However, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the person.

#### *Focus More on "Here and Now" than Eternal Rewards*

The NMC are pragmatic and prefer experience (*anubhava*), over faith and hope. For most of them, materialistic and practical needs, and the



mundane realities of life matter most. They seem to be more attracted to experiential events such as miracles, prosperity, healing, and deliverance from the evil powers. Thus, the focus should be more on the “here and now” without neglecting the hope of “eternal life.” It is necessary to avoid overemphasizing Christian dogma, rituals, traditional beliefs and practices and rather focus on experiential theology.

#### *Initiate a Missional Approach for Migrant NMC*

The NMCs, most of them, are an increasingly migratory category of urban population. Migrants who are uprooted and isolated from their homes and cultures are suddenly exposed to a new culture, people, and environment. In such disorientation and emptiness, they seek moral and even religious support. In such a time of need, the Church could strategically follow them by helping in several ways: for example, help to find an affordable place to rent or buy, to navigate the city and update on cultural norms or to make them comfortable and secure while sharing resources and practical help during a crisis time.

Developing a missional approach for a migrant section of the NMC has great potential for engaging and becoming involved in their lives, as most of them seem to be more open while in transition and in the settling process. How can the Church understand such dynamics, migrants’ ongoing pressing issues, insecurity, emotional trauma, fear, and so on? A “transnational anthropology” would help, to study the life of these NMC transnationals (or those who cross between states), where globalization has repositioned them. Here, select Christian NMCs who are, or have been, similarly on the move both nationally and internationally could be equipped to engage while providing them necessary specialized training, equipping, and motivation.

#### **Conclusion**

The NMC has emerged as a growing, but unengaged mission field. This calls for an urgent and serious paradigm shift in the approach from the Indian church and its missions. There are other possible missiological implications which could be drawn. Nevertheless, the implications noted in this article are those necessary for active engagement with the NMC. God loves the city and desires them to be reconciled, transformed, and utilized as a channel for his great mission for humankind. The NMC Christian professionals are perhaps a vital bridge to crossover to the secular

NMC. When the NMC has been effectively and adequately presented with the gospel, it will pave the way for engaging with the upper class and its castes more effectively.

In embracing the city and urban missions, there is also a need for restructuring the theological, ecclesiological, and practical aspects of the Indian Church and its missions in order to effectively engage with the NMC and their ongoing struggles, issues, and challenges. The new epoch of mission is urban and the focus on the NMC is one of the key strategies for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century missions in India and beyond.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> The “new middle class” and its plural form, “new middle classes,” are used interchangeably and the reader should not make a distinction in meaning between the two terms. When the term “*middle class*” is italicized; it refers to the Western ideal type of the concept “middle class.” One need not assume that India’s middle class is like the Western *middle class* and can be analyzed by using simple sociological or economic constructs. In much of the existing literature, the “new” middle class refers to the English-speaking, securely propertied elite, and professionals. However, the actual *middle* middle class and lower middle class bear little cultural resemblance to the elite. For further see. Leela Fernandes, *India’s New Middle Class: Democratic Politics in an Era of Economic Reforms* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 196.

<sup>2</sup> The Indian government initiated the economic liberalization program in the mid-1980s. However, its development with specific resources and reforms were realized more from 1991 onwards (Soumodip Sinha 2014:2).

<sup>3</sup> For further see, Donald J. Treiman, *Occupational Prestige in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Academic Press, 1977 and Melvin M. Tumin, *Social Stratification: The Forms and Functions of Inequality*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall. 1967.

<sup>4</sup> According to Frank Morales, Neo-Hinduism was an “artificial religious construct used as a paradigmatic juxtaposition to the legitimate traditional Hinduism that had been the religion and culture of the people for thousands of years. Neo-Hinduism was used as an effective weapon to replace authentic Hinduism with a British invented version designed to make a subjugated people easier to manage and control.” For further see, <http://hinduism.about.com/od/history/a/neohinduism.htm>(accessed 2 November 2017).

<sup>5</sup> French, literally meaning “accomplished fact”. A thing that has already happened or been decided before those affected hear about it, leaving them with no option but to accept it. See, [www.oxforddictionary.com](http://www.oxforddictionary.com)

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*From the Archives: Leander Lycurgus Pickett- Hymns, Holiness, and Wilmore*

This year marks the 160<sup>th</sup> birthday of Leander Lycurgus Pickett (1859-1928).<sup>1</sup> He may not be a name that is all that familiar today, but in his generation he was one of the foremost hymn writers of the Holiness Movement. Born February 27, 1859 in Burnside, Mississippi, L.L. Pickett (as he is more commonly known) would ultimately move to Wilmore, Kentucky where he would play several key roles in the religious history of the Holiness Movement and Wilmore itself, before being buried in the Wilmore Cemetery after his death on May 9, 1928.<sup>2</sup> He is an important figure for Wilmore and also for Asbury University, and so the Archives and Special Collections of Asbury Theological Seminary wants to take a moment to remember his contributions.



**Leander Lycurgus Pickett at his desk. He was a renowned speaker, leader, and hymn writer of the Holiness Movement and an important part of the history of Asbury University and Wilmore itself. (image in the public domain))**

The best of all friends is Jesus, my Lord,  
A wonderful Saviour is He;  
He pardons my guilt and cleanses my soul,  
And makes me both happy and free.

*Chorus:*  
*A wonderful Saviour is Jesus,*  
*A wonderful Saviour is He;*  
*I'll love Him and serve Him forever,*  
*For He is the Saviour for me.*

From *A Wonderful Saviour is Jesus*  
(Words and lyrics by L.L. Pickett)  
1913



117      **A WONDERFUL SAVIOUR IS JESUS.**  
 Copyright, 1913, by L. L. Pickett      L. L. PICKETT.

L. L. P.

1. The best of all friends is Je-sus, my Lord, A won-der-ful  
 2. No oth-er like He can dwell in the heart; Re-veal-ing His  
 3. He know-eth my frame, that I am but dust, Re-mem-ber the  
 4. O sin-ner make haste, now come to my Lord, A ref-uge He'll

Sav-iour is He; He par-dons my guilt and cleans-es my soul,  
 love to the soul; Thus mak-ing Him-self a part of one's life,  
 tri-als that sweep Like bil-lows of hell down-o-ver my head,  
 be un-to you; He'll save you from sin, will com-fort be-stow,

CHORUS.

And makes me both hap-py and free. A won-der-ful Sav-iour is  
 And stay-ing the bil-lows that roll.  
 Thank God! He is a-ble to keep.  
 And prove a Re-deem-er most true.

Je-sus, A won-der-ful Sav-iour is He; I'll love Him and

*Rit.*  
 serve Him for-ev-er, For He is the Sav-iour for me.

The son of James Cochran Pickett and Sarah Villers Walker, L.L. Pickett started his ministry in northeast Texas. According to Arthur McPhee in his book on L.L. Pickett's son, Waskom Pickett, L.L. Pickett had only five months of formal education. Nevertheless, he was fluent in his knowledge of the Bible and even mastered the reading of the Greek New Testament. This evangelist published his first book of hymns in Texas, started his own publishing company, and edited a weekly publication, the *King's Herald*. L.L. and his first wife, Mellie Dorough had two sons before she passed away. He met his second wife, Ludie Carrington Day, while preaching in Louisiana in the 1880's and they would have six sons who survived infancy.

In 1890 the family moved to Columbia, South Carolina where L.L. became the pastor of the Gospel Mission Tabernacle and edited the holiness paper, *The Way of Faith*. Around 1894, the family moved again to Wilmore, Kentucky.

**20**  
L. L. P.  
**MAY THE FIRE FALL.**  
Copyright, 1922, by L. L. Pickett.  
L. L. PICKETT.

1. May the fire fall from heav-en to-day, Fall a sin-purg-ing flame  
2. When the day of the Pen-te-cost came, The dis-ci-ples were gath-  
3. Let us gath-er to-day as of old, Join-ing hearts in a pray'r  
4. O send down the fire, send it, Lord, Quick-ly kin-die a flame

on each soul; (on each soul;) Civ-ing vic-t'ry and grace all the way,  
ered as one; (just as one;) Pour-ing out all their hearts for the flame,  
that pre-vails; (that prevails;) Je-sus pledg-es to meet with His fold,  
from on high; (from on high;) Till our souls to Thine im-age re-stored,

CHORUS

Bring-ing us where the joy-tides roll.  
Pray'r was heard and the thing was done. May the fire fall, may the fire fall,  
And His promise we know ne'er fails.  
Live the life that shall nev-er die.

May the sin-consuming fire now fall; May the sanc-ti-fy-ing fire now fall.

L.L. Pickett was a common name in hymnbooks of the Holiness Movement, with strong holiness messages, such as this hymn, *May the Fire Fall* from 1922.)

May the fire fall from heaven today,  
 Fall a sin-purging flame on each soul;  
 Giving vict'ry and grace all the way,  
 Bringing us where the joy-tides roll.

*Chorus:*

*May the fire fall, may the fire fall,  
 May the sin-consuming fire now fall;  
 May the fire fall, may the fire fall,  
 May the sanctifying fire now fall.*

O send down the fire, send it, Lord,  
 Quickly kindle a flame from on high;  
 Till our souls to Thine image restored,  
 Live the life that shall never die.

From *May the Fire Fall*  
 (Words and lyrics by L.L. Pickett)  
 1922

In 1903, L.L. Pickett's young son, Waskom entered Asbury College, the holiness college founded by John Wesley Hughes in Wilmore. The overcrowded dormitories encouraged several students to seek new housing arrangements. Two of them moved into the Pickett home with a young E. Stanley Jones sharing a room with young Waskom. Both boys were strongly impacted by a revival at the college in 1905 and would go on to become major Methodist missionary figures in India after they graduated in 1907. Bishop J. Waskom Pickett would become better known than his father, but the impact of L.L. Pickett and his holiness teachings would last throughout the lives of both Bishop Pickett and E. Stanley Jones.



**Bishop Waskom Pickett, the son of L.L. Pickett, would become a major Methodist figure in India and in the Church Growth Movement (image in the public domain))**

When the Bridegroom shall come at the midnight hour,  
He will call for His ready ones;  
They shall rise to meet Him with a joyous shout,  
And their faces be shining like the sun's.

*Chorus:*  
*We shall shine, we shall shine,*  
*With heavenly glory we shall shine;*  
*For we are told we shall be like Him,*  
*Hallelujah! We shall shine.*

From *Hallelujah! We Shall Shine*  
(Words and lyrics by L.L. Pickett)  
1922

4. **HALLELUJAH! WE SHALL SHINE.**  
 Copyright, 1922, by L. L. Pickett, Wilmore, Ky.

L. L. P. *Joyously, but not fast.* REV. L. L. PICKETT

1. When the Bridegroom shall come at the midnight hour, He will call for His  
 2. He has promised that those who are His a-lone, Those who walk in the  
 3. O my mind is made up, I must win the crown, With His faithful must  
 4. Will you come, brother, dear, choose the lone-ly way, Walk with Je-sus, our

read-y ones; They shall rise to meet Him with a joy-ous shout, And their  
 ho-ly way, Shall ap-pear with Him in king-ly glo-ry then, Hal-le-  
 then ap-pear; Let it cost deep sor-row, let it try my soul, I must  
 lov-er, friend; He will give sweet peace and needed strength supply, He will

REFRAIN.

fac-es be shin-ing like the suns. We shall shine, we shall  
 lu-jah! what glo-ry in that day.  
 walk a-mid dan-gers with-out fear.  
 com-fort and keep you to the end. we shall shine,

*rit.*  
 shine; With heav'n-ly glo-ry we shall shine; For  
 we shall shine, shall shine,

*rit.*  
 we are told we shall be like Him, Hal-le-lu-jah! we shall shine.  
 we shall shine.

L.L. Pickett even entered politics, running for governor of the state of Kentucky for the Prohibition Party, despite initial opposition from his wife. Strongly opposed to alcohol and tobacco, L.L. Pickett wrote against these vices in true holiness style, while his wife helped run the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Kentucky for many years. L.L. lost his bid for governor of the state known for bourbon and tobacco, but he never lost his passion for fighting these aspects of daily life, including writing a book entitled, *My Gatling Gun, or Some Straight Shots at the Whiskey Devil*.



**Ludie Carrington Day Pickett was the wife of L.L. Pickett and a leader in the Women's Christian Temperance union in Kentucky (image in the public domain))**

*Chorus:*  
*Speak Thou in softest whispers,*  
*Whispers of love to me:*  
*"Thou shalt be always conq'ror,*  
*Thou shalt be always free;"*  
*Speak Thou to me each day, Lord,*  
*Always in tend'rest tone;*  
*Let me now hear Thy whisper,*  
*"Thou art not left alone."*

*From Speak To Me, Jesus*  
*(Words and lyrics by L.L. Pickett)*  
1897

L.L. Pickett managed to write 49 books, and around 440 hymns (either words or music, or both). As a preacher, evangelist, and hymn writer Pickett had a major influence on the development of the Holiness Movement. As a publisher, the early Pickett Publishing Company would merge under H.C. Morrison to become the Pentecostal Publishing Company, and his holiness publication, *The Way of Faith* would merge with Morrison's holiness paper to ultimately become *The Pentecostal Herald*. In 1904, L.L. Pickett was one of the founding five members of the Board of Trustees when Asbury College became a formally incorporated institution of higher learning. Pickett was the principal fundraiser for the fledgling college, but was also involved in the removal of John Wesley Hughes as president and ultimately a supporter for H. C. Morrison as president of the institution.

Trust in the Lord, forever, Lean on His loving breast;  
 He will sustain in sorrow, Help thee in times of test.  
 There is no other refuge, Shelter in time of storm,  
 Hidden within His bosom, Nothing can ever harm.

*Chorus:*

*Hidden, hidden, Safe in His arms are we,  
 Having no fear forever, Happy we are and free.*

From *Hidden*

(Words and lyrics by L.L. Pickett)

1922

**9. HIDDEN.**

L. L. P.                      Copyright, 1922, by L. L. Pickett.                      L. L. PICKETT.

1. Trust in the Lord for - ev - er, Lean on His lov - ing breast; He will sus -  
 2. For - ces of hell may gath - er, Shad - ows lay dense a - round, Bur - dens may  
 3. Friends may forsake and grieve thee, Low ones may frown and scold, Christ will prove

tain in sor - row, Help thee in times of test. There is no oth - er  
 pile up - on thee, Pressing thee to the ground. Sick - ness may o - ver -  
 ev - er faith - ful, Nor will His heart grow cold. He will give joy and

ref - uge, Shel - ter in time of storm, Hid - den with - in His bo - som,  
 whelm thee, Sor - rows may mul - ti - ply; Still He will ne'er for - sake thee,  
 glad - ness, Com - fort He will im - part; Spreading in boundless full - ness

CHORUS.

Nothing can ev - er harm. Hid - den, hid - den, Safe in His  
 Strengthen you from on high.  
 Per - fect love thru thy heart. Hid - den, safely hid - den,

arms are we, Hav - ing no fear for - ev - er, Hap - py we are and free.

It is questionable if Wilmore as we know it today, and the influence of Asbury University and Asbury Theological Seminary would be the same without men like L.L. Pickett. While his hymns are gone from the hymnbooks and his writings mostly consigned to archives of the Holiness Movement, his influence was profound, not only with his own life, but in the influence of his legacy in the lives of Bishop Waskom Pickett and E. Stanley Jones. Lives such as his, should remind us of those who went before us in ministry, and also remind us that our true legacy is not in worldly fame and fortune, but in how we live our lives for Christ.





**L.L. Pickett allowed E. Stanley Jones to room in the Pickett house in Wilmore during his time at Asbury College, where E. Stanley Jones and Waskom Pickett became good friends as well as roommates.)**

The archives of the B.L. Fisher library are open to researchers and works to promote research in the history of Methodism and the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. Images, such as these, provide one vital way to bring history to life. Preservation of such material is often time consuming and costly, but are essential to helping fulfill Asbury Theological Seminary's mission. If you are interested in donating items of historic significance to the archives of the B.L. Fisher Library, or in donating funds to help purchase or process significant collections, please contact the archivist at [archives@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:archives@asburyseminary.edu).

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> 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, unless otherwise noted. Please contact them directly if interested in obtaining permission to reuse these images.

<sup>2</sup> *The Road to Delhi: Bishop Pickett Remembered 1890-1981*, Arthur G. McPhee SAIACS Press: Bangalore, India 2005: 17-18. Much of the basic information we have on the life of L.L. Pickett comes from Dr. McPhee's research into the life of Bishop Waskom Pickett. The Archives and Special Collections of Asbury Theological Seminary houses the material Dr. McPhee collected during his research, proving that not all of the valuable materials in Archives needs to be primary documents or photographs.

## *Book Reviews*

### **The Works of John Wesley: Medical Writings, Vol. 32**

Edited by James G. Donat and Randy L. Maddox  
Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books  
2018, 788 pp., hardcover, \$59.99  
ISBN: 978-1-501-85901-4

*Reviewed by R. Jeffrey Hiatt*

*Medical and Health Writings* is volume 32 of the *Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*. It is a critical edition, with annotations and comments by noted Wesley scholars of the last 60 years. This work is offered to the Church, scholars, and novices as the new standard resource in Wesley studies.

This latest volume by Donat and Maddox of the *Medical and Health Writings* of John Wesley, one of England's most noteworthy 18th century personalities, is the focus of this 788-page exhaustive tome. It details the historic tug-of-war between medicine and religion as medicine struggled to stand as its own field. This salient work draws heavily upon Wesley's own writings, as well as other pertinent period writings, to illumine the context for Wesley's study and use of medicine in his practice of ministry (20). It provides an array of technical and specialized appendices to allow either novice or veteran scholar to dig deeper into the fine details on subjects such as 18th century diseases (Appendix E) or herbs (Appendix F) (731, 741 respectively).

This monograph highlights Wesley's decidedly theological concern for the spiritual, physical, mental, and social health needs of those who had no regular access to doctors, priests, affordable medicines, or

regular clergy care (21). The Methodist system to “visit the sick” was in place (1740s to early 1770s), including medical advice (c.1750), especially to the poor (23). In this volume, it is showcased in the examples of personal letters to and from Wesley (Appendix C), articles, tracts, and books written or summarized by Wesley that are collected or referred to in this volume (373, 389, 653, et al).

Wesley drew from sacred Christian writ and his Anglican ministerial training and heritage for his understanding of both physical and spiritual healing, rooted in the Church’s long established teaching of *caritas* (27). This part of Wesley’s ministry relates the study of medicine and the practice of relief to the poor, as both customary among many English priests of the 17th and 18th centuries. Wesley believed that Christ’s healing work conveyed the multidimensional work of the gospel. Thus, one of Wesley’s approaches to his mission, helping restore people to health, was a visible, tangible expression to “offer them Christ” in a practical way (16).

Wesley made the art of “physic” a life-long focus (23). He was expected to pray with, and advise the people within his sphere of ministry on health (as well as, work, financial, and political) matters, or any other subject related to living the Christian life (28). The rural and urban poor, who could not afford nor had limited access to, “regular” physicians, or other clergy, responded joyfully to being visited, prayed for, and advised on matters of health by a trusted cleric who loved them enough to help (13). Donat and Maddox discuss those who supported Wesley’s theological presuppositions, and personal dedication to be an instrument for making people whole as part of a minister’s sacred responsibilities (11ff). It also provides the counterpoints of the detractors, pointing to both real issues, (e.g. the issue of a “receipt” that could be fatal if followed), the need to be corrected, and to those detractors who wished to sideline Wesley’s influence in matters of theology and politics (Appendix D, 675ff). The analytic comparisons and multiple editions of his writings allow the serious student of either Wesley or medical history to cover significant ground (389, 397, etc.).

Far from being an amusing avocation, John Wesley’s interest in health and healing was a central dimension of his ministry and of the mission of early Methodism (24, 392). Moreover, when considered in its historical context, Wesley’s precedent provides an impetus of the concern for holistic health and healing, and faithful theological creativity that is instructive for his present ecclesial heirs, but does not suggest practicing

medicine without a license! Although the text refers to “Wesley’s work as a priest/physician,” (612, et al.,) I caution using the terminology this way, because Wesley never explicitly accepts “physician” as an official moniker, since he was never “certified.” However, I agree with the authors that since Wesley had done extensive medical reading and more, and since he knew as much or more than many of the certified physicians of his day that, *de facto*, the description is accurate.

This secondary reference preserves and analyzes the primary records of the founder of the Wesleyan/Methodist movement, John Wesley’s medical writings, as crucial to an understanding of the beginnings of that movement, its reflection of the context from which it emerged, and its lasting impact on English and American Methodism within the broader cultures. It is an important contribution to the “History of Medicine and Wesley Studies” (ix). It is likewise essential for anyone who wants to understand the context and sensibility issues of human health and Christian salvation with respect to Euro-American 18th century medical developments (including electricity) (311), and its impact on Wesleyan theology, spirituality, hymnody, worship, conferencing, and other practical ministry concerns (30).

For a church or movement that declares salvation and wholeness as works of divine presence impacting embodied life in the real world, Wesley’s reflections on human health and salvation are not just vestiges of a bygone era, but expose a deeper sensibility about spiritual health, principles, and practices pertinent to the contemporary church’s ongoing commitment to a holistic approach for ministry in the global arena.

## **Public Faith in Action: How to Engage with Commitment, Conviction, and Courage**

Miroslav Volf and Ryan McAnnally-Linz

Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press

2017, 256 pp., paperback, \$19.99

ISBN: 978-1-58743-410-5

*Reviewed by Zachariah S. Motts*

In a politically polarized time, there are issues of great ethical and religious import to Christians that cannot be neglected but are also volatile and difficult to broach. It is easy to recognize our need to foster more open and respectful conversations yet, seemingly, difficult to create a safe space for those encounters which does not devolve into shouting and defensive tribalism. In these times, we are in great need of the soft, wise voices of gently challenging friends like Miroslav Volf and Ryan McAnnally-Linz. If you are looking for a book to guide a careful and sensitive discussion with a small group on the major issues of our time, I would seriously recommend *Public Faith in Action*.

When I first scanned *Public Faith in Action*, one of my initial concerns was that the format of the main chapters on current issues would push the ethical balance of the book toward a wishy-washy relativism. Each chapter on issues like borrowing and lending, new life, migration, policing, war, and torture begins with a thesis, leads the reader through an exploration of the issue in the main body of the chapter, has a section called “Room for Debate,” and then closes with a nicely annotated bibliography divided between books for introductory reading and those for more advanced study. My concern was that the “Room for Debate” section would come across as contrived or end up putting more gray into the conversation just for the sake of making things more gray.

However, on that point I was happily surprised by the way the authors push each conversation into a Christian ethical range before allowing for the fact that there are debated positions within that range. This is not a wide-open field where anything goes. In many chapters the authors narrow the debate in such a way that many positions, which pass for conservative, American evangelical political stances, would be obviously defined as insufficient. One example of this is the chapter on the environment. After looking at multiple objections to “making ecological

preservation a public priority" (43), the authors judge that these objections are not morally sufficient for a Christian interacting in the public square. The "Room for Debate" section at the end of the discussion is not about whether or not we should do something about the degradation of the environment; it is about what environmental issues should be addressed first and when legal coercion should be used to enforce care for the environment (47). Chapter by chapter, the reader is led through a conversation where the ethical focus is sharpened and refined before the debate is opened. I am sure that the range of the room for debate would itself become a topic of debate in many small groups reading this book together, but *Public Faith in Action* at least gives a solid starting point for those conversations to begin.

The selection of issues, background information, and illustrations is very contextually situated in the debates that are currently on going in the United States. Because of that, I think there is value in reading this book now with a few other people rather than waiting to pick it up in ten years. It will still be a good book in ten years, but a great part of its value is in the way the authors skillfully navigate the hard questions being asked today.

### **Preaching with Empathy: Crafting Sermons in a Callous Culture**

Lenny Luchetti

Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press

2018, 112 pp., paper, \$19.99

ISBN: 978-1-5018-4172-9

*Reviewed by Scott Donahue-Martens*

Lenny Luchetti continues to contribute meaningfully to the practice of preaching with his newest book. He shows how a callous apathetic culture has created a dire need for empathy. Empathy is crucial to the task of preaching because empathy fosters loving connections between the pulpit and the pews. One definition of empathy explored is "the skill and... grace that bridges the gap of distance between my reality and another's" (11). Empathy can be developed within people and communities. The work is driven by the hope that preaching can respond to cultural apathy with Christian empathy.

Chapter one reveals the need for empathy to address widespread apathy. Luchetti explores how culture and relationships have become

divisive. Apathy has seeped into the pulpit, leading many to question whether preaching can adequately respond to modern life. Preaching can only respond if it is rooted in God and God's loving empathy. The second chapter addresses how empathy in the pulpit can respond to affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of people. Empathy can help bridge cultural, racial, economic, and other factors in the preaching event. The work turns to theological anthropology to envision how grace can transform sin and bitterness into love and empathy that is grounded in the empathic God.

The third chapter focuses on the relationships between theology, preaching, and empathy. Preaching is a theological task and theological beliefs impact preaching. Luchetti shows that empathy is in God's nature, which can be seen in the incarnate Christ. *Perichoresis* within God draws people into empathic relationships. The theological engagement in this chapter is rich without ever losing sight of the practice of preaching. The focus on the practice of preaching is extended into chapter four which describes the lives of John Wesley and Martin Luther King Jr. Luchetti explores how their theological beliefs and contexts shaped their empathic preaching in distinct manners. The final two chapters focus on cultivating and incorporating empathy in the life of the preacher and the practice of preaching. Luchetti offers practices to grow and barriers to overcome for embracing empathy as a way of life, ministry, and preaching.

The work reflects wisdom gleaned from years of preaching and teaching preaching. These insights are communicated theologically, clearly, and practically. For those struggling to connect or communicate with parishioners, this book offers a fresh approach. Empathic preaching seeks to connect the word of God with the people of God. Luchetti offers an approach to preaching that illustrates how the people of God can be in faithful relationships with God and each other. I would recommend this book to any preacher, especially to preachers who feel burdened by the demands of the preaching task. Empathy is not a panacea to the difficulties of the preaching task, nor is it a replacement of exegetical engagement. Empathy is a crucial ingredient of a sustainable preaching life and effective preaching ministry. Preaching has the power to transform people through empathic participation with God and humanity.



## **Introducing the Old Testament**

Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. and J. Andrew Dearman

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans

2018, 560 pp., hardcover, \$40.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-6790-2

*Reviewed by David Nonnenmacher, Jr.*

It would be an understatement to say that there is an abundance of preliminary literature on the Old Testament. As the conversations surrounding method and biblical interpretation grow and change, so too must the way in which one is introduced to them. Robert Hubbard, professor of biblical literature at North Park Seminary, and Andrew Dearman, professor of Old Testament studies at Fuller Seminary, combine their efforts in their latest work, *Introducing the Old Testament*. They establish early on in their text that their goal is akin to a swimming curriculum: one must first learn how to wade in the shallows before diving into the deep end. The basics (or shallows) in this case are mentioned as being “how [each] book originated, its historical and culture background, its literary features and main characters, and its structure” (3). The goal (or deep end) is the invitation to the reader to engage with the biblical text itself and grapple with “every chapter, warts and all” (4).

*Introducing the Old Testament* is divided into six parts. Part one, appropriately labeled “Getting Started,” makes more transparent the authors’ tilt toward a historical-critical methodology that seeks to illuminate the context of the Old Testament in the subsequent chapters. Beginning with part two, each part is further divided into introductory chapters and single-book analyses. For example, chapter two’s coverage of the Torah begins with a section labeled “What is the Torah?” before granting a brief yet concise chapter for each of the books therein. This structure remains consistent until the book’s conclusion in part six. Part three, after providing a discussion on historiography and classical use of the text, carries the reader over from the Torah into the Historical Books, all the while staying in line with the ordering of texts set forth by the Protestant canon.

Parts four and five address the prophets and biblical poetry, respectively, though in some ways these two parts operate hand-in-hand. For example, the chapter labeled “What is Hebrew Poetry” is found in part

four. This was done intentionally in order to study the more poetic elements of the prophets before arriving at the traditionally recognized poetic books such as the Psalms (261). This chapter especially shines in its discussion on Hebrew parallelism and its comparisons with English poetry. Finally, part six finishes the book with a detailed conversation on canonization and textual transmission. It also takes some time to discuss the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the benefits of utilizing extra-biblical texts in research, thus making the reader more aware of both the internal *and* external influences that played a role in the compilation and canonization of the Old Testament.

Of this publication's many strengths, the two that are especially conspicuous include its diverse chapter features and its continuous emphasis on the Old Testament's original context. The benefits of the former make themselves known within the first few chapters of the text. Colorful maps, timelines, and charts are thoughtfully placed in a user-friendly fashion. Most notably, however, are the discussion questions that follow up on each chapter's reading which prompt the reader to engage with its contents on a critical level. At times, however, it feels as if the preference given to historical context supplants rather than supplements theological discussion. Issues on the more controversial end of Old Testament Studies are glossed over more quickly (or not at all) with assumed confirmation (i.e. the enforcement of the Deuteronomistic History, the belief that Jonah is merely a parable, and the assertion of the three-fold division of Isaiah, amongst others).

Hubbard and Dearman's *Introducing the Old Testament* is very approachable by both lay persons and students of the Bible. Its concise chapter lineup provides just enough information to the reader about a given topic without overburdening them in exhaustive fashion or wordiness. While this text could absolutely be used in a seminary environment, it would perhaps be best to pair it with other resources that address the more practical side of biblical interpretation. Overall, this book undoubtedly accomplishes the goal that it set for itself in chapter one: to impart a valuable "swimming lesson" to its reader and provide a connection with the several-millennia-old conversations surrounding the Old Testament.

## **Approaching the Study of Theology: An Introduction to Key Thinkers, Concepts, Methods and Debates**

Anthony C. Thiselton

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic

2018, 255 pp., paperback, \$24.00

ISBN: 978-0-8308-5219-2

*Reviewed by Zachariah S. Motts*

*Approaching the Study of Theology* is part of Anthony Thiselton's recent offerings for students and teachers of theology. I had previously reviewed Thiselton's *Systematic Theology* and *The Thiselton Companion to Christian Theology*, both of which were insightful and eminently useful books. While *Approaching* is also a useful book, there are a few points where I found myself disappointed. Even with its weak points, though, it will still be a useful quick-reference book in the classroom for giving students historical and contextual orientation to many theological discussions.

At 255 pages, *Approaching* is not a large book, but it is a book that covers a massive amount of content within that space. It begins with a largely chronological survey of theology before entering the three main sections of the book. The first section covers different approaches to theology (biblical, hermeneutical, historical, etc.), the second, "Concepts and Issues," is a tour of twenty major themes in theology, while the third is a glossary of key terms. Both the second and third sections are very similar to Thiselton's *Companion*, providing reworked and abbreviated versions of the articles found in that much larger work (over 800 pages).

It is in the introductory survey and the first section, though, that I found myself most disappointed. The text here is very dense and moves at a breathless pace. Basically, Thiselton attempts to survey the entire history of Christian theology within a thirty-one-page introduction. This is a nigh impossible task and the style of the text tends to move very abruptly from one extremely brief summary to the next. The balance of the history is also uneven, giving twelve pages to the modern era and more emphasis to those theologians in which Thiselton is most interested. The first section on approaches slows down and opens up slightly, but it still gives the impression of a person rushing to hit all the highlights on a given topic.

These sections are meant to give the student a kind of outline to the context of theology, and it succeeds on that count. However, the abrupt

style and pacing of the text make it often little more than an outline. There were many places where Thiselton brings up a very interesting point in these sections but does not expand on those ideas and leaves the reader wanting. For example, in a chapter on historical theology, he starts a paragraph with a note on how it is valuable to compare Tertullian and Origen, which sounds like the opening of an interesting discussion. Five sentences follow on that topic before the reader is whisked into a discussion of creeds in the next paragraph (51). It succeeds at being an outline for theology students but may be frustrating reading for those expecting more thorough discussions and development.

In the last two sections where space is devoted to narrower topics, though, the writing returns to Thiselton's usual style. Because these issues and terms are covered in his *Companion* in a more expanded form, though, I would recommend that the avid reader of theology pick up that book over this one. For an introductory theology course, though, this is a cheaper and more accessible format. The issues and terms covered, of course, show the preferences of the author, but the range of entries is wide enough to provide a strong starting point for many theological discussions.

### **Integrative Preaching: A Comprehensive Model for Transformational Proclamation**

Kenton C. Anderson

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2017, 208 pp., paper, \$23.00

ISBN: 978-0-8010-9887-1

*Reviewed by Michael Whitcomb-Tavey*

Ever since the inception of the Church, the word of God has been preached. Depending on the culture and generation, there have been books written with the sole purpose of giving guidance toward how one ought to preach. In modern times, there have been quite a number of books written that address this topic. *Integrative Preaching. A Comprehensive Model for Transformational Proclamation*, by Kenton C. Anderson, is one of those books. However, whereas other books focus more on the mechanics of preaching, Anderson focuses more on the philosophy of preaching, teaching various aspects of it. Afterward, he gives instruction on how to

integrate these aspects into a practical model for preaching. Thus, as the name implies, his book is more a model for preaching, than a mechanical guide for it. His book is separated into four sections, with each section having four segments.

The first section addresses the *fundamental elements* of his model. These elements are the essential foundations for preaching. The first foundation of preaching is an integrative one, whereby much of the concepts of the Bible are cohesively understood. Therefore, as we preach from the word of God, we are reminded to think in a “both-and” fashion when exploring certain Biblical ideas and concepts. The second foundation is a human one, whereby preaching engages both the head and heart of a person. The third foundation is a heavenly one, whereby preaching primarily should point one toward God, specifically Jesus Christ. The final foundation is effective, whereby one incorporates certain *functional elements* of preaching, thereby giving the sermon its force and power.

The second section elucidates these functional elements. This section addresses engagement, instruction, conviction, and inspiration. Anderson postulates that a sermon ought to engage the congregation in a meaningful way. He advocates story telling as an effective means to do so. Secondly, he states that a sermon ought to instruct the congregation. Such instruction is intended to teach the congregation Biblical truth. This is connected to the third functional element. According to Anderson, all Biblical truth ought to lead to Christ, which is understood as conviction. Thus, preaching ought to both teach the congregation of Biblical truth, whilst also convicting them toward the person of Truth: Jesus Christ. Finally, a sermon ought to inspire the congregation toward Christian living, in all its vast nuances and understanding. Such living is not imprisoned in mere behavior, but toward an orientation toward kingdom living and the emulation of Christ.

The third section of his book addresses how one understands “preacher” as it relates to preaching. The first segment addresses the preacher as pastor. As a pastor, the preacher engages the congregation in both word and life. Secondly, the preacher is a theologian, with the sole task of teaching the congregation. Thirdly, the preacher is a worshipper, who along with the congregation, convicts him/herself toward Christ. Lastly, the preacher is a prophet, given the responsibility of inspiring the congregation toward Holy living. As can be observed, there is a strong connection between sections two and three. Section three builds upon section two,

explaining how the functional elements of preaching personally relate to the preacher him/herself.

The last section addresses the actual method of preaching. This section takes all the previous instruction and seeks to create an effective model for preaching. The first segment addresses prayer and exegesis as the proper way of discovering the content of the preaching. Secondly, Anderson postulates that one needs to craft the sermon, which is based on the exegesis. This is typically done by writing the sermon out. Third, the preacher is encouraged to apply the sermon into his/her own life, and to also practice it before actually preaching it to a congregation. In this way, the preacher embodies that which he/she seeks to preach. Finally, Anderson addresses how to enhance the sermon through various techniques, like dress and prop use.

Anderson's book will provide teachers, students, pastors, non-pastors, and others with an acute understanding of the Biblical philosophy of preaching. This is especially helpful to the pastor and preacher, who will primarily benefit from this book as they continue to improve upon their preaching skills and habits. His integrative model is an insightful and informative one, and will be a great boon for anyone seeking to preach in a more effective manner.

### **Preaching by the Book: Developing and Delivering Text-Driven Sermons**

R. Scott Pace

Nashville, TN: B&H Academic

2018, 144 pp., paper, \$19.99

ISBN: 978-1-4627-7334-3

*Reviewed by Scott Donahue-Martens*

*Preaching by the Book* is an introduction to a textual method of preaching. While preaching involves human and divine elements, Pace situates the task of preaching with God's Word. He notes that the preacher's approach and relationship to scripture greatly impact preaching. Pace describes the Bible as the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God that provides the content, form, and rationale for preaching. Scripture is the revelation of God's redemptive work in the world in which preaching can participate. In delineating between human and divine elements of

preaching, this work serves as a careful reminder of the limitations of the human preacher. At the same time, the Spirit works with preachers enabling preaching to be more than what would otherwise be humanly possible.

Given Pace's theological beliefs and commitments to scripture, it is natural to see why the textual approach to preaching is essential for him. The hermeneutical method suggested seeks to be receptive to the unchanging divine truth of the text. This attempts to uncover the authorial intent and how the original audiences would have interpreted the text. Pace provides seven steps to help preachers interpret scripture and craft textual sermons. Sermon formation must begin with prayer before moving to the chosen passage. These first two steps, along with the other five, intentionally put the preacher in a place of reception to the Spirit and the text. The third step is to determine the point of the selected passage. Pace offers guidance on how this is done and what needs to happen once the point is uncovered. In step four preachers seek to understand the form and context of the passage by studying its parts. This is helpful for the next step, discerning the precepts of the passage by identifying theological, doctrinal, and spiritual truths. The final two steps, applying the principles and developing the plan, consider how to preach the text in the context effectively. Ultimately, the sermon culminates with an application from the text that leads people to action. After explaining the method, Pace offers guidance on sermon introductions, illustrations, and invitations. These practical sections compliment the wealth of wisdom provided earlier.

One of the most helpful elements of this work is its discussion on a theology of preaching. The integrative method allows the reader to see how theological beliefs shape what a person preaches and how they preach. However, Pace's assertion that preaching needs to uncover an unchanging divine point, linked with authorial intent, can be tenuous hermeneutically. Besides historical limitations, the issue of what constitutes a text is problematic. For example, the process of choosing a text, and which verses are considered to be that text as distinct from other texts, is subjective. While Pace accounts for human and divine elements in preaching, his method fails to recognize how the subjectivity of the preacher shapes preaching.

For those with a high view of scripture looking for an introduction to textually based preaching, this work provides a coherent text to sermon method. I would recommend this work for an undergraduate preaching course or for new preachers, who have not been exposed to textual preaching methods. Preachers with different beliefs about scripture may

find the theological and hermeneutical approaches challenging. Overall, Pace offers a concise introduction to textual preaching that places preaching in God's redemptive work.



## *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.

- Beale, G. K.  
2019 *Colossians and Philemon*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-2667-6. Price: \$54.99.
- Bevins, Winfield  
2019 *Ever Ancient, Ever New: The Allure of Liturgy for a New Generation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN: 978-0-310-56613-7. Price: \$16.99.
- Blumer, Bruce L.  
2019 *Simply Grace: Everyday Glimpses of God*. Nashville, TN: Wesley's Foundery Books. ISBN: 978-1-9459-3538-1. Price: \$16.99.
- Boyd, Craig A. and Don Thorsen  
2018 *Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy: An Introduction to Issues and Approaches*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4823-4. Price: \$24.99.
- Brand, Paul, and Philip Yancey  
2019 *Fearfully and Wonderfully: The Marvel of Bearing God's Image*. Updated and combined edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. ISBN: 978-0-8308-4570-5. Price: \$25.00.
- Bruns, Steven D.  
2019 *Introduction to Christian Worship: Practice, Theology, and Grammar*. Nashville, TN: Wesley's Foundery Books. ISBN: 978-1-9459-3540-4. Price: \$28.99.

- Castelo, Daniel and Robert W. Wall  
2019 *The Marks of Scripture: Rethinking the Nature of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4955-2. Price: \$21.99.
- Charlton, Matthew W. and Timothy S. Moore, eds.  
2018 *Displaced Persons: Theological Reflection on Immigration, Refugees, and Marginalization*. Nashville, TN: Wesley's Foundry Books. ISBN: 978-1-9381-6226-1. Price: \$39.99.
- Conner, Benjamin T.  
2018 *Disabling Mission, Enabling Witness: Exploring Missiology Through the Lens of Disability Studies*. Missiological Engagements Series. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8308-5102-7. Price: \$24.00.
- Crisp, Oliver D. and Fred Sanders, eds.  
2018 *The Christian Doctrine of Humanity: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN: 978-0-310-59547-2. Price: \$34.99.
- Cummins, S. A., and Jens Zimmermann, eds.  
2018 *Acts of Interpretation: Scripture, Theology, and Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7500-6. Price: \$35.00.
- Dew, James K., Jr. and Paul M. Gould  
2019 *Philosophy: A Christian Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-9799-7. Price: \$26.99.
- Dunlop, Jamie  
2019 *Budgeting For a Healthy Church: Aligning Finances with Biblical Priorities for Ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN: 978-0-310-09386-2. Price: \$14.99.
- Dunnam, Maxie  
2019 *Christian Leadership: Speaking to God for the People, Speaking to the People for God*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. ISBN: 978-1-5018-8311-8. Price: \$17.99.
- Edwards, James R.  
2019 *Between the Swastika and the Sickle: The Life Disappearance, and Execution of Ernst Lohmeyer*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7618-8. Price: \$30.00.

- Escobar, Samuel  
2019 *In Search of Christ in Latin America: From Colonial image to Liberating Savior.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8308-5186-7. Price: \$45.00.
- Farrow, Douglas  
2018 *Theological Negotiations: Proposals in Soteriology and Anthropology.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6039-9. Price: \$38.00.
- Gitau, Wanjiru M.  
2018 *Megachurch Christianity Rediscovered: Millennials and Social Change in African Perspective.* Missiological Engagements Series. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8308-5103-4. Price: \$30.00.
- Goldingay, John  
2019 *Old Testament Ethics: A Guided Tour.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. ISBN: 978-0-8308-5224-6. Price: \$28.00.
- González, Justo L.  
2019 *Knowing Our Faith: A Guide for Believers, Seekers, and Christian Communities.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7706-2. Price: \$16.00.
- Gould, Paul M.  
2019 *Cultural Apologetics: Renewing the Christian Voice, Conscience, and Imagination in a Disenchanted World.* Also accompanying video lectures. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN: 978-0-310-53049-7. Price: \$22.99.
- Greer, Jonathan S., John W. Hilber, and John H. Walton, eds.  
2018 *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-9775-1. Price: \$49.99.
- Gushee, David P. and Colin Holtz  
2018 *Moral Leadership for a Divided Age.* Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press. ISBN: 978-1-5874-3357-3. Price: \$24.99.
- Gustafson, David M.  
2019 *Gospel Witness: Evangelism in Word and Deed.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7680-5. Price: \$32.00.
- Hawk, L. Daniel  
2019 *The Violence of the Biblical God: Canonical Narrative and Christian Faith.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7244-9. Price: \$35.00.

- Heath, Elaine A.  
2018 *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Abuse: Reading the Bible with Survivors*. Repackaged edition with new introduction. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press. ISBN: 978-1-5874-3428-0. Price: \$17.99.
- Hexham, Irving  
2019 *Encountering World Religions: A Christian Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN: 978-0-310-58860-3. Price: \$16.99.
- Jacob, Haley Goranson  
2018 *Conformed to the Image of His Son: Reconsidering Paul's Theology of Glory in Romans*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8308-5210-9. Price: \$32.00.
- Johnson, Bradley T.  
2017 *The Form and Function of Mark 1:1-15: A Multi-Disciplinary Approach to the Markan Prologue*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications. ISBN: 978-1-5326-1721-8. Price: \$45.00.
- Keener, Craig S.  
2019 *Galatians: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6007-8. Price: \$59.99.
- Keener, Craig S.  
2019 *John: Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, Volume 2A*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN: 978-0-310-52883-8. Price: \$29.99.
- Kibbey, Sue Nilson  
2019 *Ultimate Reliance: Breakthrough Prayer Practices for Leaders*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. ISBN: 978-1-5018-7093-6. Price: \$17.99.
- Larsen, Timothy  
2018 *George MacDonald in the Age of Miracles*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8308-5373-1. Price: \$16.00.
- McConnell, Douglas  
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