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The Asbury Journal

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The Asbury Journal

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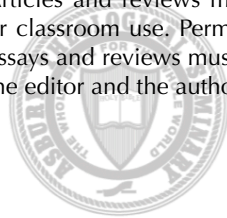
The Asbury Journal is a continuation of the Asbury Seminarian (1945-1985, vol. 1-40) and The Asbury Theological Journal (1986-2005, vol. 41-60). Articles in The Asbury Journal are indexed in The Christian Periodical Index and Religion Index One: Periodicals (RIO); book reviews are indexed in Index to 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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OF ASBURY THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

From the Editor

We finally made it! September of 2023 marked the official 100th anniversary of the founding of Asbury Theological Seminary! This issue of *The Asbury Journal* demonstrates the current nature of the Seminary, by including articles from faculty and students, and from those outside the Seminary, including one by a Jewish rabbi. Articles come from the fields of Missions, Biblical Studies, and Wesleyan Studies. Articles come from writers with backgrounds in India and Kenya as well as in the United States and Europe. From Asbury's first graduating class in 1927 of five students, the Seminary has grown to fulfill its ambitious slogan of "The Whole Bible for the Whole World." As the Seminary celebrates its foundation one hundred years ago, we also celebrate what it has become and the promising future which is in store.

We open this issue of the *Journal*, with an article by one of Asbury's newest faculty members, Stephen Bailey and some of his thoughts on contextualizing the Gospel message for the Lao people of Southeast Asia. With their strong Buddhist background, the Church has had a difficult time taking root in this culture. Bailey argues it is not just the message we deliver, but *how* we deliver that message that really matters. At Asbury the field of missions has grown and developed over the years, and this article is an excellent example of how missions has changed and worked to fit the cultural contexts of people in every corner of the globe.

The next three articles emerge from Ph.D. student presentations at the Fall 2022 Advanced Research Program Colloquium held at Asbury Theological Seminary on October 14, 2022. The Colloquium theme for this year was, "Theological Education and the Ministry of the Church," and was chosen especially for the centennial celebration of the Seminary. Eric Laudenslager challenges readers to think about ministry in the workplace, not just in helping individuals, but in forming community or team approaches to changing the workplace context. Hannah Hopkinson explores how the Bible and Bible study can be used with an emancipatory vision, helping people (in this case women) to pursue justice and change in today's context through applying scripture. Myra Watkins brings together

Bonhoeffer's views on discipleship with small Seminary-level leadership training, through a case study of Every Nation Seminary and the idea of relational discipleship.

The next three articles bring in the dimension of the Methodist influences in Asbury's history. The first two articles tackle the same type of theme, but in different ways. Both seek to explore how Wesley's view of faith changed with his mission trip to Georgia, and his subsequent Aldersgate experience. Kenny Johnston explores how John Wesley's epistemological view of faith was connected to rational understandings of his day, which influenced Wesley's understanding of faith, and how this view shifted after encountering the Moravians in Georgia and his Aldersgate experience. Roger W. Fay continues to explore the issue of how Wesley's faith developed, by taking a theological view, which examines the thought in the Church of England and how Wesley's view of "Primitive Christianity" impacted his mission to Georgia, and how experience influenced his understanding of faith in his well-known Aldersgate experience which followed. J. Russell Frazier turns his attention to the issue of accommodation and how God has revealed God's self so that human beings can understand this revelation. Frazier explores this issue in the early Church Fathers and Calvin before turning his attention to a Wesleyan approach as found in the works of Charles and John Wesley, and John Fletcher.

Finally, we turn to three articles which help us bring in outside perspectives. David J. Zucker, a rabbi who is no stranger to *The Asbury Journal*, presents an assessment of 2 Kings 5, examining it as a set of five chiasms. As usual, his insight from the Jewish perspective helps us see and understand scripture in a new light and also encourages interfaith dialog in the process. Uma John, a Ph.D. student at Asbury, explores the concept of "righteousness" as it is found in the Hebrew and Greek, as well as how it has been seen by other theologians, including John Wesley. Paul Ekal Lokol examines how transformational leadership can help mediate between a pastor's training and a congregation's spiritual health, with a focused study on the Africa Gospel Church in Kenya.

For one hundred years, Asbury Theological Seminary has worked to spread the message of Jesus Christ throughout a hurting world. While times have changed and even theological imperatives have shifted over the course of time, Asbury remains strongly rooted in its Wesleyan-Holiness history and roots. As I look at my time as editor of *The Asbury Journal*, and all of the insightful material that has been published

over the years, I think about its contribution to the next one hundred years of Seminary students, faculty, and staff. I pray along with the Psalmist, when he wrote,

“Let this be written for a future generation,
That a people not yet created may praise the LORD.”
Psalm 102:18

Robert Danielson Ph.D.



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Stephen Bailey

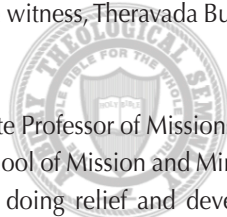
Dispositions for Christian Witness Among Theravada Buddhists

Abstract:

This article reflects on communicating the Christian gospel appropriately and effectively among Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhists (SEATB). It is concerned with contextualizing the means of communication rather than theological concepts. Contextualization is often discussed with little reference to the level of contextualization, including: the content of the gospel, liturgical forms, social rules for relating, and dispositions shaped by Buddhist virtues used in communication. Examples are given of contextualization among SEATB, and then descriptions of how communicators of the gospel can use dispositions shaped by key Buddhist virtues. An argument is made that among SEATB, the means of communicating the gospel is often far more important than the content of the gospel. This suggests that communicators of the gospel would do well to become competent in communicating in ways that reflect the local rules for relationships and by appropriating nonverbals that communicate dispositions of Buddhist virtue.

Keywords: Laos, Christian witness, Theravada Buddhism, contextualization, communication

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This article reflects on the task of communicating the Christian gospel appropriately and effectively among Southeast Asian Theravada Buddhists (SEATB). The ideas shared here are the result of many conversations with SEATB and colleagues who also struggle with this important task. Many discussions with twelve scholars and practitioners, from six different nations via Zoom during the COVID pandemic shaped the section on dispositions. More than 450 years of sincere, sacrificial, but largely ineffectual Christian witness among SEATB highlight the urgency of the task. Today, less than 1% of the Buddhist background people in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand are Christians.¹ The churches that do exist in these nations tend to be small sub-cultures made up mostly of non-Buddhist ethnic minority groups.² In spite of many efforts at different levels of contextualization of the gospel message, SEATB have not shown much receptibility. The thesis of this article proposes that Christian witness among SEATB would be more appropriate and effective if it embodied dispositions that communicate important SEATB virtues. I begin by discussing the challenges of four other levels of contextualization among SEATB to demonstrate the complexity of the challenge. This then leads to the argument that embodying virtuous dispositions will likely allow SEATB to interpret the gospel as good news for their communities.

Missionaries dating back to Paul have wrestled with the tension between the transcendent nature of the gospel that is revealed to God's servants who were shaped by ancient cultures. Christians in mission however have generally been confident in what Tennent calls the "translatability" of the gospel. Translatability, or in this article, contextualization, "refers to the ability of the gospel to be articulated, received, appropriated, and reproduced into a potentially infinite number of cultural contexts."³ The task of cross-cultural Christian witness requires contextualizing the gospel at several levels.

First, the Bible must be translated into a local language. As of the writing of this article, missionaries have translated the full Bible into 717 languages.⁴ Each of these translations required decisions about the choice of words, syntax, font style and layout of the Bible so that it communicates the gospel in ways that allow the meaning of the text to impact readers in ways "dynamically equivalent" to the way those who first heard the gospel were impacted.⁵ To read the Bible in any language requires the activation of the social experiences, history, cultural categories, and even the geographical memory of readers. Bibles translated into SEATB languages are

loaded with Buddhist terms. Yet translators are confident that the context of the biblical narrative, interpreted in the community of faith, will transform the meaning of these terms that once referenced the mental and spiritual “world” of Buddhists to point to the God of the Bible. Typically, it takes SEATB time to understand the new meanings and direction that the Biblical narrative gives formerly Buddhist terms.

An example of a contextual issue in translation is found in John 1:1. The Lao translation reads, “In the beginning was the *phatham*.”⁶ The Lao word *phatham* read by a Lao Buddhist typically means *dharma*, a reference to the sacred teaching of the Buddha.⁷ The Lao translation of the Bible requires the reader of John to transform the meaning so that *phatham* refers to Jesus, the living *dharma* of God. Charles Kraft would say that this is an “appropriate” (to the context and to the Bible)⁸ translation for “in the beginning was the *logos*.”⁹ Eugene Nida wrote that an appropriate translation of the Bible should allow people “to interpret the relevance of the message within the context of their own lives, without having to consider or be distracted by the formal structures of the original communicative setting.”¹⁰

The second level of contextualization requires that Christian theological ideas be communicated by means of “bridge” ideas from within the local culture. In the SEATB context, we must use Buddhist concepts that trigger Buddhist cosmological assumptions. But Buddhist ideas can and do bridge understanding of Christian theological concepts. All communication involves some misunderstanding that must be overcome through dialogue. Indeed, all learning builds upon what is already known, requiring adjustments and corrections to old knowledge of the world. This will be illustrated in the struggle to communicate the Biblical concept of grace among SEATB.

Terry Muck writes that Christians, “have not yet presented the gospel of grace in a way that connects with the Hindu-Buddhist understanding of gift-giving [that is free and without reciprocation] or *dana*.”¹¹ The biblical idea of free grace is understood against the backdrop of the utter holiness of God the creator (1 Sam. 2:2) and the sinful nature of humanity (Rom. 3:23). The sinful nature of humanity exists as an obstacle to human fellowship with the holy God of the Bible. This dilemma is only overcome by the death and resurrection of God’s son, Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:19). Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection to redeem humanity from the penalty of sin is the free gift of God to the world (Rom. 6:23). People must receive this gift through repentance from sin and faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior (Matt. 21:32). In

part the difference between Christian and Buddhist concepts of grace lies in the different ways they think about sin. For Buddhists the concept of sin is linked to the concept of *kamma* (*karma*).¹²

A fundamental Buddhist teaching is that to live is to suffer (*dukkha*).¹³ We suffer because of our persistent efforts to hold on to what is impermanent. Attachment to the impermanent produces *kamma*. “According to the Buddha...karma is action with intention.”¹⁴ It explains everything about a person’s station in life and everything that happens to a person is the result of their previous actions. To a certain degree, the Bible affirms this law of cause and effect by acknowledging that the result of sin is death, and the result of obeying God is blessing (Deuteronomy 28:1, 15; Proverbs 10:16). But the Bible teaches that sin is ultimately a denial of God by acting contrary to God’s will. Meanwhile Buddhist *dharma* focuses on the bad consequences resulting from doing bad deeds with no reference to God or gods. If an action does not result in bad consequences, it is not typically considered to be evil. This explains the Buddhist value of non-attachment. To be free from suffering, the consequences of our *kamma*, we must stop clinging. Clinging is the root cause of evil and suffering. Only when we completely let go of our clinging to the world can we escape the cycle of life, death, and rebirth (*samsara*) and achieve *nibbana* (*nirvana*) which is freedom from suffering or bliss. Since SEATB are pessimistic about being able to achieve *nibbana*,¹⁵ making merit (*bun*) to improve the quality of their present and future lives is the most important practice of lay Buddhist people. According to Tilakaratne:

The regular life of a Buddhist is characterized by merit making. In fact, it is correct to say that everything he does as a Buddhist has to be understood with reference to merit making. In this context there are three meritorious deeds, namely, giving (*dana*), morality (*sila*), and meditation (*bhavana*). The idea is that one must engage in these activities as much as possible, as the more one does, the more one accumulates merit; and the more one accumulates merit the better his life in the *samsara* will be.¹⁶

In the Lao context the Christian concept of grace is communicated by the phrase *bunghun*.¹⁷ But the meaning of the Lao word, *bunghun*, is set within the Buddhist narrative of *dhamma*. The Christian claim that bad *kamma* is overcome by the gift of grace in Jesus Christ, creates at least three challenges for Buddhists. First, gift giving among SEATB builds strong

relationships precisely because gifts obligate people to each other.¹⁸ A free gift that has “no strings attached” communicates that you do not want a relationship with the receiver. Second, Buddhists understand *bunkhun* as an ethical quality that indicates a person of merit (good *kamma*). But for a Buddhist no one’s *bunkhun* can liberate another person from suffering from their own *kamma*.¹⁹ Finally, God’s love in the giving of this free gift suggests attachment and thus God’s *kamma*. Theologian and missionary to Thailand, Kosuke Koyama notes the following:

The Christian message is based on the “infinite love” of God ... According to ingrained Thai emotion and psychology, the word “love” (*khwanrak*) denotes people’s attachment to things, persons, or supernatural beings. Attachment inevitably produces sorrow and trouble. Detachment inevitably creates tranquility, honesty, and genuine happiness.²⁰

There are however two ways in which *bunkhun* can serve as a theological bridge for the Biblical concept of grace. First, Christians can explain that while God’s grace is a free gift, God also wants to form a covenant relationship with us. God, like any SEATB giver of gifts wants a relationship.²¹ The relationship creating nature of a gift that forms a covenant relationship with God is likely to be experienced as *bunkhun*. Second, *bunkhun* as biblical grace can be connected to powerful local symbols of grace. Two are worth exploring. First, the well-known *bunkhun* of the village temple abbot. Monks give freely of themselves without repayment of any kind. They give the laity opportunities for making merit, they teach children to read, counsel troubled villagers, treat illness with traditional medicine and help organize village work projects. Mothers also give freely and sacrificially by serving their children without any chance of the child ever being able to repay their mother’s *bunkhun*. Of these two symbols of grace, a mother is perhaps the most potent metaphor of God’s free grace given in covenant relationship. People commonly say that no one can repay the *bunkhun* of a mother. This kind of *bunkhun* forms a powerful bond between parent and child that mirrors that between God and believer. While all analogies have weaknesses, if these symbols are used in dialogue with the biblical text, the concept of the grace of God can cross the theological bridge and transform SEATB people in dynamically appropriate ways.²²

A third level of contextualization adapts indigenous SEATB forms for use in the liturgical life of the church. Churches in SEA have not used

many indigenous forms. Church buildings reflect western architecture, and congregations mostly sing western Christian songs. While SEATB typically take their shoes off in homes and temples it is rare to find SEA Christians following this practice in their churches. Sitting on a clean floor in a Buddhist temple is a standard for worship but nearly all Christians sit in pews or chairs in their churches. However, some efforts have been made. Catholics have adopted Buddhist architecture for a few churches.²³ A few Protestant congregations sit on a wood floor after removing their shoes before entering the church. More churches encourage the use of traditional musical instruments (such as the Lao *kaen*)²⁴ and melodies for Christian worship on special occasions. Some Christians wear traditional clothing for important Christian events like Christmas and wedding ceremonies.²⁵

While these levels of contextualization have been implemented to varying degrees by missionaries among SEATB, these efforts have not resulted in significant church growth. Some may attribute this to SEATB not comprehending the gospel; but it might be because they have not yet even heard it. This lack of engagement of SEATB with the Christian message may have more to do with the means of our communication than our efforts to contextualize the message. “Mehrabian, a researcher of body language, . . . first broke down the components of a face-to-face conversation. He found that communication is 55% nonverbal, 38% vocal, and 7% words only.”²⁶ This is particularly significant in SEA, where indirect, nonverbal ways of communicating are often more important than what is communicated. Nonverbal communication plays a large role in shaping how a message is understood and accepted or rejected. This might be true everywhere but it is particularly true in SEA.

The ability of a recipient to understand the intended meaning of a message depends on more than the choice of symbols and syntax in the communicational context.²⁷ Interpreting the meaning of a message also depends on whether the message is conveyed by text message or verbally, by a friend or an enemy, or by a man or a woman. Sometimes the means of communication is so powerful that it becomes the message itself. When one person screams at another, the screaming says it all. Furthermore, how the *intention* of a communicator is understood determines how the messages will be interpreted. Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson speak to this issue:

Relevance is tied to the idea of “ostension” or, “behavior that makes manifest the intention to make something manifest.” The connection to relevance is seen in that processing information requires work and humans do not normally put forth the effort for it unless a positive return can be expected. Behavior that demonstrates an intention to communicate assumes that the speaker feels that processing the information will be relevant to the audience. (1995:49)

In other words, “an act of ostension carries a [kind of] guarantee of relevance, and . . . this fact--which we will call the principle of relevance--makes manifest the intention behind the ostension.”²⁸

There are two levels of ostensive information:

The first is the information itself, which is called the informative intention. The second is the information at which the first level of information was given intentionally. This is called the communicative intention. But there is a twist to this claim. A speaker can fulfill her communicative intention without fulfilling her informative intention. In other words, it is possible to successfully make a hearer understand that you have information you want to convey without successfully conveying the information itself.²⁹

If I am led to believe that a communicator is against me or is untrustworthy, then the way I understand the meaning of their communication is influenced in a negative way. The opposite is also true. Once I decide on a communicator’s intention it is not easy to change my understanding of what the person means to say. Furthermore, how recipients understand the intention of a communicator is largely determined by the communicator’s way of using (or not using) the social rules for relating and by the dispositions the communicator displays. Below I will address both of these means of contextualized communication.

From a biblical point of view our relationships must always be characterized by love of God and a love that makes us willing to lay down our lives for others. But cross-culturally people express and experience love in different ways guided by social structure. A community’s social structure shapes local cultural assumptions about right relationships. We can illustrate this by comparing one general rule for relationships among Americans and one for SEATB. Americans assume equality in relationships and believe

that relating to others as equals is “the right way.” Hierarchy is wrong, even if it is tolerated in some important American institutions. Even there however Americans praise leaders who put their status aside and act like they are “no better than others.” This pattern shapes the way they experience love. Not surprisingly, the key component of marriage in America is friendship described as finding one’s “soul mate.”

The most fundamental rule for relationships in SEA is to relate in terms of a hierarchy referred to as knowing who is “older and younger.” While status is commonly determined by who is older, it can also be determined by positional power, wealth, and education. So, a person can be referred to as your “older brother or sister” because their social status is higher than one’s own even if they are younger in age. SEATB often use kinship terms since doing so indicates a fictive family closeness between people that allows for a balanced exchange of favors that tie them together. The exchange of favors creates strong relational bonds. The fundamental assumption in any SEA relationship is that someone is “older” – the patron – and someone is “younger” – the client. Being a superior to someone else but acting like their equal dishonors the person and their position.

A communicator of the gospel to SEATB who wants their listeners to understand their positive intentions in communicating the gospel will need to communicate within the “older and younger” paradigm and use the appropriate rules for communicating up and down in the system. This system gives the role of teacher to older sisters and brothers who instruct younger brothers and sisters. An older sister can teach religion directly and expect the younger to take the message seriously. Most Americans would find this direct style abrasive, but it is embraced by SEATB younger-lower status people since it demonstrates the concern and care of the older-higher status person. Older brothers and sisters must care for the welfare of the younger. Obligation runs in both directions though they are different in kind.

On the other hand, “younger” people do not teach religion to those who are “older.” Younger-lower status people must communicate the religion deferentially and indirectly. Offering religious truth to someone “older” must be done in the same way that SEATB offer drinking water to a guest. When a guest comes to the home no one asks the guest if they want a drink, the guest is immediately brought water (and sometimes a snack) which is placed in front of them. It is completely up to the guest as to whether they drink it or not, although to be polite most guests at least taste

it. Nothing is said but hospitality and deferential respect is communicated from the younger to the older in this way. An example will help explain how this can happen in Christian witness.

A Lao older brother and I worked together for many years. He was not a Christian and never showed the slightest interest in the Christian faith. Feeling the constraint of the older to younger roles I left my Bible at his home. When I returned, he scolded me saying I should take better care of a sacred book. This was the appropriate rebuke and concern of an older brother. Using indirect communication, I left the Bible at his home again and several more times after that. After I returned to his home one day, he asked me to take a walk with him. While walking he explained that he had read my Bible twice and that he had some questions. As explained above, it is not in character for an older brother to ask younger brothers religious questions, but since he assumed I understood the book, he took me away from the others to ask his questions in private. After each of my replies to his questions, he “improved” on my answer and felt satisfied that he was getting somewhere. Later he went to a conference on community development and the Kingdom of God where an older man was teaching. He returned and told me he was now a Christian. The crucial point here is that had I tried to instruct him in the gospel I would have violated the social order of older-younger and this would have communicated an intention of trying to honor myself while dishonoring him. Because of this perceived intention, it would have been very unlikely that he would have interpreted the meaning of the gospel in a way that made it good news to him.

The final but related level of contextualization is dispositions. The Bible speaks to virtuous dispositions frequently. For example, 1 Peter 3:8 “Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.” 2 Timothy 2:24 “... be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed.” Philippians 4:5 “Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” And Galatians 5:22 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” As will become clear below, Christian and Buddhist virtues overlap but their meaning and application differ because of the larger religious narratives to which they a part.

By dispositions Muck refers to “the way we articulate the issue at hand...and the way we behave, the actual way we carry out our missions

(that is, volitional factors).³⁰ Here I am also referring to the way dispositions are indirectly communicated through body language, speech (i.e. tone, volume, pace of speech), emotions, attitudes, and virtues.³¹ SEATB dispositions often communicate virtues through the way bodies are positioned in relation to other bodies and in the way the quality of speech indicates deference and honor.

The dispositions of the ideal Buddhist monk are noticeably different from those of the ideal Christian leader.³² Christian leaders learn to confidently and zealously persuade others to put their faith in Christ. They preach and lead with passion. They often use loud voices, work with entrepreneurial energy, dress in western clothing that reflects the business world of SE Asia and use technology in a way that projects the power of consumerism. These dispositions appear to a SEATB to represent a person with a “hot heart” (*chairon*).³³ While these characteristics of force and materialism can also be found among some Buddhist monks, most SEATB see this as a corruption of the *sangha* (monastic community).³⁴ Christian witness done with aggressive dispositions that reflect worldly power tell Buddhists that the gospel produces people who cling and who suffer for their *kamma*. I suggest that adopting Buddhist dispositions as a non-verbal means of communicating the gospel will help SEATB to interpret the meaning of the gospel as one free of *kamma* and thus good news.

I turn now to discuss some key Buddhist virtues that shape Buddhist dispositions in communication.³⁵ The Buddha’s teaching on the “four ways of sublime living” highlights the virtues of friendliness (love), compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.³⁶ Here below is a brief introduction to how Buddhists understand these virtues.

Metta – To translate this word as love communicates too much attachment and translating it as friendliness risks sounding too distant. The meaning lies somewhere between. “Since clinging or craving is the root cause of suffering, it is important that *metta* is not confused with the emotional love that simply reflects a need for the loved object. *Metta* has to be a non-clinging form of love, in order that other Buddhist qualities may spring from it. Without this, compassion for example would not be separated from self-interest - and can descend into ‘do-gooding’.”³⁷ *Metta* is a love that does not seek to control or possess and that recognizes the freedom of the other to be what they will be.

Karuna – “Compassion is celebrated in many of the Jataka tales, which claim to be about former lives of the Buddha, in the compassion of

a hunter who spares the life of a deer, for example, or of an hare who volunteers to give his own life to feed a starving man."³⁸ Buddhist compassion is an empathetic response to the human condition of suffering resulting from our clinging to the impermanence of everything in our lives. Christians might think of John 15:13 and Matthew 5:43-48.

Mudita – Sympathetic joy is rejoicing in the goodness of others. It is understood as an antidote to competitive and jealous attitudes. It is the discipline of rejoicing in the excellent qualities of others. By rejoicing in the good deeds of others we can share in the merit (the good) that results from their deeds.³⁹

Upeka – Equanimity, is “the ability to see without being caught by what we see . . . which gives rise to a great sense of peace.” It is seeing and understanding with patience what is happening so that we do not take offense or get caught up in the emotions of the up and down of life that leads to improper and unwise responses.⁴⁰ Equanimity allows us to respond with empathetic compassion and peace to the pain we see in the anger and hate others project into the world.

All virtue must be exercised in the peaceful repose of knowing that all sentient beings suffer until they release their hold on the impermanent, allowing the beauty of each moment to come and go without clinging. Friendship, compassion, sympathetic joy must all be expressed with equanimity, peacefully and without clinging to what we cannot change or keep. The enactment of Buddhist virtues shaped as peaceful repose is on display in the bodies and voices of SEATB. Five examples of how these virtues shape dispositions communicated through bodies and voice quality follow.

The first example related to the virtue of *metta* or friendly love, presents the greatest challenge for a Christian since the passionate love of God is what Christians seek to emulate in all their interactions. While Christians will not want to abandon the character of God's love that causes God to be “jealous” (Ex. 20:5) and to “long” to be gracious to us (Is. 30:18), the Buddhist perspective on love can be instructive. Scripture itself instructs us that our love can be misplaced (the story of David in 2 Sam. 11) and even idolatrous (Hosea 3:1). Furthermore, God's love, however passionate, does not coerce or manipulate (Matt.10:8). Consider God's willingness to allow Samuel to anoint a king even though this was a rejection of God's leadership (1 Sam. 8). Consequently, in communicating the gospel to SEATB Christians should demonstrate love that does not seek to control or ma-

nipulate, but rather is characterized by a profound regard for the freedom for the other. Of course, deeper, and longer conversations with Buddhists will reveal to them new dimensions of the strength of God's love for them. The practical form this can take is by relating to Buddhists as cherished neighbors whose welfare we seek and whose faith we respect whether they come to faith in Jesus or not. Just as a host does not force a guest to eat or drink, so Christians should in body and voice gently offer the gospel with dispositions that communicate deference and hospitality.

Second, the virtue of compassion (*karuna*) can be communicated directly in word and deed in gentle and emotionally quiet ways. But it can also be communicated indirectly through the quality of one's speech. That is, speaking with a gentle tone of voice, in low volume and with a slow pace of speech. Compassion is communicated by sitting with still bodies and silent voices with those who suffer; by listening attentively without judgment while others speak. Compassion quiets our need to be right, correct others, or attempt to fix what is not ours to fix.

The third example relates to sympathetic joy (*mudita*) that celebrates the accomplishments and status of others. Perhaps the most practiced virtue among SEATB is honoring others. Honor is most often given for a person's age or position, but it is also given to recognize a person's *bunghun*. Most typical are the celebrations of parents, monks and teachers. Without demonstrating respect and giving honor to elders no one can be said to have virtue. There simply is no occasion when a virtuous person will fail to show honor, respect, and deference to those above them. In everyday interactions honor is communicated by paying attention to the position of one's body in relation to the other's body. Questions such as, "Is my head above or beneath the other's?" and "Are my feet tucked underneath me or pointing away from the person I wish to honor?" guide the position of her body. The proximity of one's body to the other's should be close, with some shoulder or hand contact if the other is of the same gender and status but politely separated with no contact if the other is of higher status or of the opposite gender. The gaze of one's eyes is deferential when it is down or away from the gaze of the other's eyes, but challenging and rude if directed into their eyes. One bows the head before passing in front of the other, and greets people of status by raising their hands, pressed together, their fingertips touching their forehead as they slightly bow their head. One sits on a chair showing respect by sitting on the front of the chair without leaning back.

Fourth, the virtue of equanimity (*upeka*) shapes the response to success, failure, difficulty, and conflict. The phrase “it is nothing” is repeated frequently.⁴¹ It is typical for SEATB confronted with a problem, conflict, or an insult to smile and repeat this phrase as a means of controlling unpleasant emotions and accepting what has occurred. An outburst of anger can end relationships forever as it dishonors both the person failing to demonstrate equanimity and the person to whom the anger is directed. Instead of showing emotion to empathize with the other, as westerners tend to do, one should be sincere but remain in peaceful repose. Even big displays of positive emotions should be avoided as expressive joy reflects ignorance of the impermanence of all things.

Finally, a practical means of communicating these virtues well is found in ritual. Ritual provides a powerful means of communicating honor, friendship, blessing, healing, and forgiveness. Ritual words of blessing are spoken over a home, a meal or to a person embarking on a new endeavor such as international travel, business, or school creating a strong emotional bond. Examples of ceremonies that communicate virtue include the Lao *baci*, and the Cambodian *pchum ben* blessing rituals, and the Thai *ahosikarma* ritual of reconciliation.⁴²

In a Buddhist society shaped by hierarchy and a collective concern for the welfare of family over a single child, the village over a single family, the nation over a single village, the means for communicating the gospel must be done with dispositions that honor a person and their kin group. Christians who embody these dispositions will not share all the assumptions they invoke that their SEATB interlocutors do. But this dissonance in the communicational exchange can be overcome when our intentions in communicating are seen as virtuous and for the welfare of SEATB. SEATB do not fear syncretism or the experience of difference in diversity. They appreciate a virtuous person who respects the sacred whatever their religious tradition. Christians who can skillfully communicate the gospel by means of honoring others through deference to the social hierarchy and virtuous dispositions will help SEATB understand the gospel and be transformed in ways dynamically equivalent to the way it transformed people in the first century; even as it continues to transform the Christians who share it.

I have argued that the importance of contextualizing the means of communication is more important than the contextualization of the content of the gospel among SEATB. If true, this thesis should prompt communica-

tors of the gospel everywhere to consider the appropriate social rules for relating and the right dispositions that should shape the communication of the gospel in their own contexts. As we consider why the church is growing and spiritually vital in the Global South, we are likely to find that social and relational factors prove far more important in this process than the contextualization of ideas and forms.

End notes

¹ The Buddhist context of Sri Lanka (the other predominately Theravada Buddhist nation in SEA) is not discussed in this paper simply because it is beyond of my knowledge and experience.

² It should be noted that there are some small movements of Buddhist background people to Christian faith today in Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand. For an overview of the history of the churches in these nations see, Kiem-Kiok Kwa and Samuel Ka-Chieng Law, *Missions in Southeast Asia* (Langham Creative Projects, 2022). For an overview on the church in Laos see, David Andrianoff, "Laos" *Christianity in East and Southeast Asia*, eds. Kenneth R. Ross, et. al., Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, UK (2020): 167 – 174.

³ Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century*, Kregel Publications: Grand Rapids, MI: (2010): 325.

⁴ "2021 Scripture Access Statistics" <https://www.wycliffe.net/resources/statistics/> Accessed September 29, 2022.

⁵ Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY (1979): 271. Kraft borrows this idea of "equivalence" from Eugene Nida. Translators should seek to the "discovery of symbols which will permit an equivalent type of response within the new cultural context" (Nida 1960: 155).

⁶ The Lao Bible reads, ເມື່ອຕົ້ນເດີມນັ້ນ ພະທໍາຊີວະເປັນຜູ້ *The Holy Bible*, Revised Lao Version, 2nd Edition. United Bible Society (2013).

⁷ Significantly, the *dharma*, and not the Buddha himself, plays the central liberating role in Buddhism. So, *dharma* in a sense plays the role in Buddhism that Jesus plays in Christian faith.

⁸ Charles Kraft, *Appropriate Christianity*, William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA (2005): 4.

⁹ For John's audience, the Greek word *logos* meant simply "word," but in this context it likely refers to the "Word of YHWH." "The widespread way of understanding 'Word' here is the Son as God's speech, address, or communication. This text should be understood in terms of the theophanic texts where God's visible image is called 'the Word,' 'the Word of YHWH,' or

‘the Word of God.’” The narrative of John’s gospel reveals to the reader that the Word previously known as Torah or by way of the prophets is ultimately Jesus. See Charles A. Gieschen, “The YHWH Christology of the Gospel of John.” *Christian Theological Quarterly*. 85 (2021): 3. Robert Peltier and Dan Lioy write, “John also adopted the Greek prologue motif as a literary device to introduce the eternal Logos of the Christian world while simultaneously redefining the commonly-known logos of the Greek world as the Christian Logos.” In other words, John was bringing the Greek Stoic meaning of Logos into conversation with the meaning of “word” as it relates to creation in the book of Genesis. See their article, “Is John’s Λόγος Christology a Polemical Response to Philo of Alexandria’s Logos Philosophy? (Part 1)” in *Conspectus: Journal of the South African Theological Seminary*. 28 (2019): 65-90.

¹⁰ Eugene Nida, *Message and Mission: The Communication of the Christian Faith*, William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA (1960): 140.

¹¹ Terry Muck, “Three Reasons Why Christian Witness to Buddhists Has Failed” *Communicating Christ Through Story and Song*, ed. Paul H. De Neui, William Carey Library: Pasadena, CA (2008): 117.

¹² In most cases this article will use the Pali form of Buddhist words used by Theravada Buddhists rather than the Sanskrit form. SEA languages have several words that roughly translate “sin.” *Kamma* can refer to action (good or bad) as in acting on the world. In this sense a person must be free of all *kamma* to achieve enlightenment and *nibbana*. But *kamma* can also refer to bad deeds probably because all *kamma* is a problem that keeps one in *samsara* and suffering.

¹³ This does not mean that SEATB do not experience joy in their lives but simply that since everything in life passes away the overall nature of existence is loss/suffering.

¹⁴ Asanga Tilakaratne, *Theravada Buddhism: The View of the Elders (Dimensions of Asian Spirituality)*, University of Hawaii Press, Kindle Edition (2012): 63. “There is, however, an equally important dimension of karma as human action that accounts for one’s identity in the absence, according to the teaching of the Buddha, of the soul held to be the essence in every human being” (61).

¹⁵ Unlike the Mahayana Buddhists in East Asia, SEATB are pessimistic about being able to stop clinging to the impermanent, ending *kamma*, escaping the cycle of *samsara*, and attaining to bliss or *nibbana*. Almost every time I have asked a SEATB if they thought that they might attain to *nibbana* the person laughed at the thought.

¹⁶ Tilakaratne op. cit., Kindle Loc 123.

¹⁷ In Lao, *bun* is a compound word with *bun* referring to “merit” and *khun* referring to “virtue.” The Lao Bible translates grace as *Phrakhun*, the Khmer word is *preahkoun*, the Thai word is *phrakhun*, and the Burmese word is *kyaayyjuutaw*. In Lao *Phra* is an honorific prefix given to things attributable to a king or divinity. *Khun* means goodness or virtue. So *phrakhun* can mean divine goodness. *Bun* according to my experience and the *Lao – Thai – English Dictionary*, means “good (done by one person to another, creating a sense of gratefulness in the receiver)”

(1999: 356) and is I believe a better translation of grace. For a discussion on grace in a Mahayana Buddhist context see Timothy Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is influencing the way we think about and discuss theology*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI (2007): 135 – 161.

¹⁸ While the Lao also understand *dana* gifts that are not repaid and that result in merit, gifts given in the context of reciprocal – interdependent relationships characterize all relationships.

¹⁹ In more than sixty interviews with SEA Christians who had converted from SEATB, I asked, “What was the most difficult aspect of Christianity to understand?” The most common reply was, “I could not understand how Jesus’ death could free me from my *kamma*.”

²⁰ *Waterbuffalo Theology*. Revised Edition, Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY (1999): 60 – 61.

²¹ Muck argues that in Asia “freedom from the obligation to give a return gift is considered one of the essential attributes of a well-given (and received) gift” (2008: 116). I do not think this is generally the case in SEATB societies. I would argue that in the vast majority of cases gift giving that binds people to one another in reciprocal favors and gifts provides the foundation for their relationships.

²² One of the weaknesses of this theological bridge is that it does not completely escape the charge of attachment that always results in *kamma* and suffering. However, SEATB desire love and relationship like all humans and this is exactly why they are pessimistic about ever being completely free of suffering (*nibanna*).

²³ A good example is the chapel at the Redemptorists’ Fr. Ray Foundation in Pattaya, Thailand (<https://www.cssr.news/2017/02/this-thai-catholic-church-is-so-beautiful-a-buddhist-style-redeemed-in-christ/>).

²⁴ See Christopher Adler. “The Lao Khaen” *Center for World Music*. <https://centerforworldmusic.org/2016/01/world-music-instrument-the-lao-khaen/> Accessed November 30, 2022.

²⁵ For an example see “Northeast Thai (Isaan) Worship – Christian Music Videos” Godtube.com Accessed November 30, 2022. https://www.godtube.com/watch/?v=7W66WNNX&fb_comment_id=10150195921915983_21395383&ts=0.

²⁶ “How much of communication is non-verbal?” The University of Texas. <https://online.utpb.edu/about-us/articles/communication/how-much-of-communication-is-nonverbal/> Accessed November 15, 2022.

²⁷ For an introductory discussion on the intercultural communicational context see James W. Neuliep, *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach*, 8th Edition. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA (2021): 40 – 213. For a Christian perspective on this subject see Charles Kraft, *Communication Theory for Christian Theory*, Revised Edition. Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY (2013).

²⁸ Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. 2nd edition. Blackwell: Cambridge, NY (1995): 50.

²⁹ Stephen Bailey, "Communication Strategies for Christian Witness Among the Lowland Lao Informed by Worldview Themes in *Khwan* Rituals," Fuller Theological Seminary, Ph.D. Dissertation. 2002.

³⁰ Muck (2008: 121).

³¹ Muck (2008) refers to this level as "meekness" borrowing from Nanthachai Mejudhon (1997) and Ubolwon Mejudhon (1997). Muck prefers to call these "attitudes" by which he means emotions and predispositions (121).

³² Here I am referring to missionaries of all cultural and national backgrounds because missionaries of non-western backgrounds usually share a common idea about the kinds of dispositions that should shape their communication. I do not mean to say that the dispositions of Christian missionaries are not virtuous in some contexts, but simply that they do not communicate virtue in the SEATB context.

³³ For a discussion on the contrast between the "hot-hearted" (*chairon*) Christian God engaging the Thai Buddhist cool heart (*chaiyen*), see Kosuke Koyama, *Waterbuffalo Theology* Revised Edition. Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY (1999): 60 – 61.

³⁴ See Rachelle M. Scott, *Nirvana for Sale? Buddhism, Wealth, and the Dhammakaya Temple in Contemporary Thailand*. SUNY Press (2009).

³⁵ There are two means of religious persuasion in SEA. The first is by demonstrating that the communicator has or can manipulate *saksit* (sacred) power. *Saksit* power refers to a kind of amoral power that functions like electricity. It can help you or hurt you depending on how skilled you are at handling it. Demonstrations of *saksit* power in SEA attract significant followings and while the power of monks is primarily of a virtuous nature, *saksit* power has always been woven into the practice of SEATB. The second key means of religious persuasion comes from the communicator's virtue, which in the Buddhist cosmology is superior to *saksit* amoral power. I have chosen to discuss the persuasive power of virtue communicated indirectly through dispositions because I have found that people coming to Christian faith by this means have a more stable foundation for faith than those who come to faith because they seek *saksit* power in Christian healings and deliverance. Of course, if this *saksit* power is followed up by an encounter with virtue through discipleship, faith becomes more enduring. Preaching the gospel in SEA in a way associated with *saksit* power draw crowds and sometimes lots of temporary conversions. Chinese evangelist John Sung held very successful evangelistic meetings in Thailand between 1938 – 1939. "Sung's loud, direct style conflicted with the quiet decorum of Thai culture, but his meetings nevertheless made a great impact on many Thai and Chinese who attended. Hundreds of conversions or recommitments of nominal Christians, as well as open weeping and repentance, were reported at Sung's meetings" (Dahlfred 2022: 155). Healing services at the Hope of Bangkok Church in Bangkok have done the same: Texas Evangelist Mike Evans drew a crowd of 30,000 to Phnom Penh. Some of them had "sold cows, rice, and possessions to pay for the trip to the capital." Since he was unable to bring healing to anyone, the crowds turned violent (*The Phnom Penh Post*, December 2, 1999).

³⁶ Tilakaratne, op. cit., 120.

³⁷ Mel Thompson, *Buddhism: Key Ideas*. (Published by Mel Thompson, 2013) Kindle Edition. Loc. 1174.

³⁸ Thompson, op. cit. Loc. 453.

³⁹ Namchak, "Sympathetic Joy: A Tibetan Buddhist Formula for Multiplying Happiness" www.namchak.org Accessed November 10, 2022.

⁴⁰ Gil Fronsdal and Sayadaw U Pandita, "A Perfect Balance: Cultivating Equanimity" *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* (Winter 2005), www.tricycle.org accessed November 10, 2022.

⁴¹ The phrase in Lao is *bo pen nyung*, in Thai, *mai pen rai*, in Khmer it is *men ay tay* and in Burmese it is *kate sa ma shi par buu*.

⁴² For detailed discussion on using ritual to communicate the gospel among Buddhists see, *Sacred Moments: Reflections on Buddhist Rites and Christian Rituals*, ed. Paul H. de Neui. Christian World Imprints: New Delhi, India (2019).

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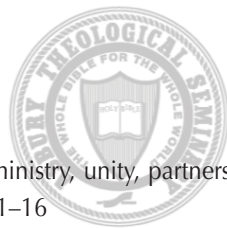
Eric Laudenslager

Equipping Marketplace Ministers for Unity: The Need for Ministry Leaders to Model Interdenominational Partnership

Abstract:

In recent decades, the marketplace ministry (MPM) movement has made significant progress. A predominant theme in the current discussion is a focus on how to support *individuals* in their place of work. While this renewed attention to supporting laity is an important change, it should be asked whether strategies that focus on the individual alone reflect the pragmatic needs of MPMs or the role models put forward in the NT. This paper will review a case study of a MPM team and how a team based approach contributed to the longevity of the ministry. It will then examine the responsibility the NT places on spiritual leaders for modeling healthy partnerships and conclude by providing a practical model for how to gain experience building interdenominational partnerships.

Keywords: marketplace ministry, unity, partnerships, interdenominational, lay ministry, Ephesians 4:1–16



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Introduction

If we were to prioritize our preaching based on the cumulative hours spent on a particular human activity, *work* would be at the top of the list. However, secular work has not always received its homiletical and theological due. In recent years, there has been a revival of interest in faith and work which has led to many discussions about *marketplace ministry* (MPM). A predominant theme in the current discussion is a focus on how to support *individuals* in their place of work. While this renewed attention to supporting laity is an important change, it should be asked whether strategies that focus on the individual alone reflect the pragmatic needs of MPMs or the role models put forward in the NT. In this paper, I will share a testimony of a team-based MPM in corporate America. This case study demonstrates that a partnership-based approach was essential to the long term success of the ministry. However, building these partnerships presents challenges. In the marketplace, MPM teams are made of coworkers, who may come from a wide denominational background. This requires marketplace ministers who are skilled in working with Christians from diverse theological perspectives. As churches are considering how to train and support their laity, this need calls upon churches and theological institutions to model biblically healthy interdenominational partnerships. The NT pattern is for spiritual leaders to be moral exemplars for the people they lead. This includes modeling the type of relationships MPM leaders will need to foster in their places of work.

This paper will review major themes in the current discussions about MPM. I will then share a team-based MPM case study and examine major principles learned from this example.¹ These principles will then be examined in light of the instructions in Ephesians 4 for spiritual leaders to train laity. The MPM movement has expanded into numerous areas. Thus, a variety of definitions and titles exist.² For the purposes of this paper, MPM will be defined as ministry activities (e.g., Bible study, prayer groups, or service projects) that are organized within a secular company by employees of the company. This type of MPM should be distinguished from Business as Mission (BAM) which seeks to use business as a direct means of Christian influence (e.g., forming a business with Christian values). My focus will be on those who are seeking to work within a secular company to mentor and encourage disciples of Christ.

A Turbulent Partnership: A Brief Survey of the Sacred-Secular Divide

A desire common to all humanity is to live an integrated life where the reality of one's faith and the labor of one's hands work side by side (Miller 2007: Introduction). However, whether one engages the marketplace as a working professional or as professional clergy, everyone finds that combining faith and work is not a simple partnership. Career growth, kingdom purposes, ethical dilemmas, and other secular pressures all compete for attention. Samuel Lee's reflections on the challenges of *entrepreneurial church planting* (ECP)—a mission strategy which seeks to reach the unchurched through Christian-managed businesses³—illustrate the all too familiar tensions and pitfalls:

Consideration of ECP also demonstrates that a combination of business and church planting has the potential for problems. A focus on multiplying profits may reduce the attention to church planting, produce a poor witness, and result in a decline in spiritual interest. In contrast, focusing primarily upon church planting results in a division whereby the business merely becomes a platform for church planting such that the business is not valued for its inherent good, thus resulting in shoddy work. (2021: 16)

No matter the intent, whether mission or career, there is a gravity that pulls the sacred and the secular apart, and the easy path is to let them go their separate ways. Eric Cooper, who has pioneered methods for integrating business and Christ's mission, similarly observes "there is an instinctive partitioning of life, a sacred-secular divide, that defines the work we do for the church as sacred, and the work we do for the marketplace as secular" (2021: 24; cf. Stevens 2006: 2–4). It is an old tension, and it is worth reflecting upon some of the forces, particularly the ecclesiastical ones, that have contributed to the divide.

It would be an error to assume that we arrived at this juncture exclusively from the modern pressures of the world. This dichotomy is neither recent nor purely secular. In various periods of history, the church has theologically ensconced the divide between the sacred and the secular.⁴ The outcomes of such a mindset are predictable. Those in positions of official spiritual leadership are highly respected, resources are invested in their development, and their contributions are valued in Christian community. We affirm people who express a calling to full-time

spiritual work, they receive dedicated training from respected specialists, and they are formally commissioned unto their task. But the converse is not true. Spiritual leaders—who are appointed to train the laity—have not historically provided the same affirmation, training, and commissioning for lay believers to serve Christ in the marketplace. Additionally, full-time spiritual leaders—who may not have extensive experience working in a secular environment—can struggle to pragmatically bring scriptural truth to bear on the realities faced in the workplace.⁵ Thus, without practical theological instruction and demonstrations of support from one's local church, it is expected that lay believers would feel unequipped for the challenges they face in the marketplace (Forster and Oostenbrink 2015: 3).

But while the sacred-secular divide and its frustrations may run deep, the situation is far from bleak. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, significant changes began to be made within the church. In fact, it would be difficult to overstate the amount of theologizing, research, conferencing, and publishing that has been devoted to the topic of MPM in recent decades. Numerous volumes with a holistic focus on theology and practice have been written.⁶ These address issues as diverse as the inherent value of work, the kingdom purposes of work, work as a means of serving God, and closing the lay-clergy gap. Focus groups have been commissioned to examine the comprehensive needs for marketplace ministry.⁷ Training programs are being developed for both church and university settings.⁸ Both churches and parachurch ministries are exploring creative and entrepreneurial methods of involvement in the marketplace beyond traditional pathways of evangelism.⁹ Theologians, academic institutions, parachurch ministries, churches, and experienced marketplace ministers have heard the needs of lay Christians and responded with admirable zeal. Their efforts have laid important theoretical, methodological, and pragmatic foundations on which the marketplace ministry movement will be able to build for many years to come.

Are Lone Trailblazers the Way Forward?: Reflecting on Our Current Vision of MPM

As this movement is rapidly developing in many directions, it is important to reflect on its trajectory and consider opportunities for refinement. The organizational character of marketplace ministry is one such area. Numerous questions arise when we begin to consider the structure and relationships of MPMs. Is the marketplace minister a lone

catalyst or do they serve with a team at their place of work? Should marketplace ministries seek collaborations, or should they aim for a degree of independence? If partnerships are ideal, then what principles should undergird those relationships to maintain common doctrine and focus? Conversely, if independence is important for agility and missional clarity, then how is the ministry sustained over the long term without the resources and synergies that come with teams and partnerships?

Presently, there are several trends in how these organizational questions are conceptualized. First, the minister is characterized as an isolated individual seeking to influence their company. For example, R. Paul Stevens envisions the marketplace as “a mission field, an arena where the *individual believer* may, in appropriate ways, share her or his faith” (2006: 88; emphasis added). While there is much to commend from this perspective, Stevens’s emphasis on the individual minister is notable and continues to be a theme in his exemplars of marketplace ministry. In one case study involving a consultant who was developing, of all things, a *community* formation program, Stevens writes “he [the consultant] developed a process of community-building that involved identifying core values both corporately and individually” (2006: 97; emphasis added). Elsewhere, Stevens encourages those who hold significant offices within their company (e.g., a business owner or VP) to use their influence to direct the overall course of the company towards kingdom values (2006: 2–4, 78–99). This conception of the marketplace minister is analogous to encouraging other types of Christian professionals to serve as chaplains, Bible study leaders, or evangelists where they are employed. In each of these examples, the minister is envisioned as someone with agency over their working environment and who independently has all the necessary resources to influence their workplace for Christ.

This strategy is understandable: most churches or organizations supporting MPM are focused on the particular marketplace minister they have contact with. It is not common for churches to consider how their members interact with other Christians outside of the scope of their ministry. But it should be questioned whether models whose predominant focus is on a single person reflect a biblical understanding of ministry and the full diversity of gifts within the body of Christ. Paul’s long partnership with Priscilla and Aquila is a ready counterexample (Acts 18:2, 18; Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19). Their bond was ethnic, financial, and spiritual.

But while exceptional, such a partnership was not unusual. It was typical for Jewish and gentile groups to form their own associations and for like trades to build *collegia* which supported their mutual success (Keener 2014: 2720). Within this complex bond, Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila found a way to balance all the competing pressures and needs of the Greco-Roman world and the Church. Indeed, Paul labored to never be alone in his pursuits. Even during team conflict and betrayal, Paul continued seeking ministry partnerships (Acts 15:36–41; 2 Tim 4:9–16). His pattern challenges us to consider whether our models should be focusing on marketplace ministry *teams* made of coworkers rather than *individuals* who are trailblazers.

When we consider the long term lifecycle of MPMs, there are additional disadvantages to placing too much emphasis on the individual minister. Building a healthy ministry within a company can be a long process—especially when we consider the secular pressures or other priorities that demand attention. If MPM is more marathon than sprint, then these ministries face an immediate challenge to maintaining consistent leadership: extended tenure is uncommon in the modern workforce. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found that children born in the early 1980s held over eight different jobs between the ages of 18 to 32.¹⁰ This implies that when young adults are entering the full-time workforce with energy and zeal to minister, many of them will only be able to influence their company for a few years. If our vision for MPM is focused on the individual, then these ministries will only be short-term mission projects at best. Ministries that require more time to develop (e.g., regular Bible studies, prayer ministries, or service groups) are out of reach. Even in unique situations where a gifted trailblazing leader has made significant gains in a short time, the MPM could suffer considerable setbacks when they leave if there is no one to fill their shoes (Preece 2005: 35). If a MPM has formed a long-term vision, there must be a plan to sustain the ministry in the context of regular employment turnover.

Collectively, these observations demonstrate that our strategy needs to move from being focused on an individual minister to considering marketplace ministry teams. As I will share in the following MPM testimony, a team-based ministry produced very different outcomes and encountered unique challenges that call us to adjust our approach.

An Unexpected Team: A MPM Case Study

Between 2008 and 2019, I oversaw a marketplace ministry team that started as a small group of dedicated Christians and which grew to a complex organization serving several divisions of a large corporation. The ministry began as a few Christian friends who met regularly for Bible study and prayer. The group represented a variety of denominational backgrounds. Over the course of ten years, the small gathering multiplied and became an informal network which eventually became an official organization with several hundred members, regular Bible studies at different sites, weekly prayer meetings, and service events. As the group began to mature, a constitution was established with defined beliefs, principles of operation, and vision for the ministry.

One of the components that developed over time was the leadership team. In the beginning, I oversaw an informal partnership of spiritually mature Christians who were highly invested in the ministry. Each one contributed their own unique abilities and passion for Christ. As the ministry began to grow, it became necessary to define roles more concretely: one leader was appointed to coordinate events and service projects, one oversaw marketing and materials, one oversaw Bible studies, and one led prayer meetings, while others provided wisdom and general oversight. It was no small wonder to us how God provided such a diverse set of gifts and talents all within our place of work. But we came to learn that we were not the only ones. In various sites across the whole company, similar groups had been developing, and after ten years we began networking and building partnerships with the other marketplace ministry teams.

Towards the end of my tenure at the company, the leadership went through a significant evolution. At the time, we did not fully grasp that these changes were a defining moment for the longevity of the ministry. In a quiet moment of prayer, the Lord impressed upon me that it was my time to decrease so God could increase. As it stood, the ministry was entirely too dependent on my oversight. I was currently overseeing all teaching and decision making. Under the compulsion of the Spirit, I was charged to reorganize the leadership team so that it could function independently of me. This compulsion came with a sense of urgency to complete this transition within the next year. At the time, none of us knew that I would be transitioning out of the company in the near future.

Over the next twelve months, I passed on as much of my pastoral, seminary, and leadership training as I could: we reorganized the authority

structure so that the leadership team was less dependent on my role, and we discussed principles and processes for strategic planning, vision casting, and organizational leadership. In one year, we were functioning well in the new structure. Responsibilities had been delegated and there were back up leaders in every position. At this time, my company made a series of strategic changes, and my position was eliminated. My twelve-year employment had come to an end and with it so had my role in leading this ministry. With the little time that we had, the leadership team and I gathered in a conference room to say goodbye. I told them I was proud of them, placed the baton in their hands, and charged them to continue using their gifts as they had this past ten years. My time was over, but the ministry was not, and the Lord would prove it the very next day. The ministry had a large activity planned, and everything operated smoothly; the leadership team was fully functional in my unexpected absence. The leaders readily accepted their responsibilities and led with courage. My departure would not be the last challenge this team would face, but the ministry kept going. In a recent reunion, the team shared that all the major components of the ministry continue to this day.

The Fruit of Teams: Principles Learned from Team-Based MPM

In each season of this MPM, different challenges presented themselves, each with the potential to bring things to an end. However, at each juncture, the ministry continued to grow. In reflecting upon this journey, six important principles arise that were foundational to our long-term success.

1. **Team-based MPM leads to more holistic ministry.** By combining different giftings together, the MPM was able to offer a greater diversity of activities than one person could facilitate. Those who excel in encouragement could catalyze, those who are competent teachers could lead Bible studies, those who are full of compassion could pray with others, those overflowing with visual creativity could get the word out, and those seasoned by experience could provide discernment.
2. **Team-based MPM increases the scope and reach of the ministry.** Working within a large company, it was possible to serve a significant number of people. But delegation was necessary to ensure that every branch received its proper due. It might be possible for a full-

time Christian worker to be a circuit rider, but a full-time electrical engineer will not be able to do the same without compromising the quality of their work. By multiplying ministers, the burden is more easily shared, and work, life, and ministry balance is more feasibly maintained.

3. **Team-based MPM safeguards the ministry's and the minister's longevity.** Turnover is inevitable in the job market, and one does not always get to choose the terms and timing of their departure. Having leadership backups is therefore necessary. But having a deep bench provides value beyond succession planning; it supports the long-term health of the ministry team. Balancing a full-time job and a highly active volunteer ministry in your workplace is physically and spiritually taxing. Distributing the workload protects against volunteer burn out.
4. **MPM teams do not choose each other.** In a full-time ministry context, organizations have a lot of control over who they hire, and thus they can be highly selective about their leadership team's theology, denominational background, and personality. In an MPM, one's potential ministry partners have been chosen by the company and the sovereignty of God.
5. **MPM teams must be highly skilled in interdenominational partnerships and conflict resolution.** This principle extends from the previous one. Depending on the diversity of the region, both the leadership team and the members of the MPM could potentially come from a wide cross-section of denominational backgrounds and with that diversity there is significant potential for unhealthy disputes. However, denominational differences are not the only source of conflict. MPMs will face numerous ethical dilemmas which will contribute their own pressure on the ministry. Infighting—for any reason—would be disastrous for the future of an MPM. Secular companies have a spectrum of tolerance for religious activities in the workplace. If significant employee conflict arises from religious activities on the job site, more sensitive employers may sanction the ministry. MPMs must excel in diplomatic and peaceful relations with themselves and their company.
6. **MPM leaders require both prior leadership experience and ongoing training from local churches, seminaries, and ministries.**

A characteristic of every member of the leadership team was that they were significantly involved in their local church and/or had church leadership experience prior to serving on the MPM team. But further investment in their growth was necessary. Several conduits supplied training for the leadership team. I received leadership training from my local church and my seminary, and I was able to pass these lessons on to the other leaders. Seminary leaders and ministries also offered leadership development opportunities.

One theme found in all of these observations is that *the MPM leader is not alone*. God had assembled a talented and diverse leadership team to serve God at that company. MPM inherently required Christians to serve with other Christians outside of their own church. But fulfilling this plan of partnering together required intentionality. When we began, there were few examples of interdenominational teams that we could look to as role models. Many of the principles we learned were developed ad hoc. Here is where seminaries and churches have the opportunity and the responsibility to aid MPMs by modeling healthy, theologically sound, interdenominational partnerships. We will turn now to a biblical precedent for spiritual leaders to set the example of biblical unity.

Function Follows Form: Called to Model Unity

Ephesians 4 is a unique text that articulates the relationship between lay ministry and the unity of the body of Christ. It is also a transitional text that sets the stage for the lengthy paraenesis that will occupy the rest of the epistle (Lincoln 1990: 221; Witherington 2007: 283; Thielman 2010: 251). Here Paul weaves together the practical and the theological: Christians are called to live in a manner consistent with their calling in Christ by eagerly pursuing unity consistent with the nature of God (4:1–6). This unity is not to be confused with homogeneity; God in his victory has generously distributed unique gifts to all individuals in the church for their mutual benefit (4:7–11; Lincoln 1990: 224–225). These gifts will strengthen the church in truth, fortify it against false doctrine, and join its members together in reciprocal blessing (4:12–16). Unity is the fruit of these diverse gifts working together. Theology and practice, body and members, leaders and saints, Father, Son, and Spirit are all to be one. A sacred-secular dichotomy is antithetical to the heart of Christianity.

The body of Christ as described by Paul inverts the adage from architecture: *form follows function*. Rather, the *form* of God, his nature, precedes and defines how the body of Christ is to *function*: we are to imitate how God relates to humanity and how God relates to himself. The opening exhortation to walk (περιπατέω)—how the body functions—is a repeated rhetorical feature that draws the hearer’s attention to the central theme: “the hallmark of the *ethic* in Ephesians is *the imitation of God* in Christ in terms of truth and love. This ethic ... is the heart of the five walking ... sections” (Long 2013: 299; cf. Lincoln 1990: 243). The Father’s love for his people through Christ defines how all Christians are to love one another (Eph 4:2, 32). God’s people are also called to imitate a heavenly relationship: the Trinity. The singular nature of the faith is founded on the singular nature of the Father, Son, and Spirit who, while being separate and each performing a unique role, are still one God. A divided body—no matter how diverse its constituents—is antithetical to the very nature of God, and therefore cannot complete its proper function. Christian ethics may thus be understood as a combination of *applied soteriology* and *applied monotheism*.

Division, immaturity, and growth can likewise be understood in the same theological categories. The distracting and disruptive influence of false doctrine divides God’s people and sends them wandering in circles (περιφέρω).¹¹ Immature Christians (νήπιος) are susceptible to such contention. Therefore, the body of Christ must grow (αυξάνω) into a mature adult. Boys and girls must shed spiritual childhood, because it is women and men who resist heresy. The Lord’s plan for developing his body is to generously provide spiritual leaders. The *descent* of Christ (Eph 4:8–10) is variously understood, but wherever or whenever it may be, the intent of the reference is to emphasize the results of the *ascent*: the Lord has triumphed over the powers of death, and on his return, he brings the spoils of his victory to generously distribute (Lincoln 1990: 244–247; Thielman 2010: 269–273). The list of gifts is similar to those in Rom 12 and 1 Cor 12, but this list is unique in its focus on gifts related to spiritual leadership and the proclamation of truth. What then is the purpose and function of these leadership gifts with respect to the other parts of the body? Paul offers here one of his most detailed expositions of the relationship between Christian leaders and laity: leaders are to *equip* the saints (πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων; Eph 4:12). The call to train the saints is thus essential to the long-term health of the body, and therefore we must think carefully about the purpose and definition of this sacred duty.

Of these two questions, the goal of *equipping* in v. 12 is the more fiercely debated: are Christian leaders equipping the saints for their own service, or is equipping, the work of ministry, and the building of the body the sole prerogatives of Christian leaders? The answer to this question rests on how one interprets the relationship of the three prepositional phrases: (1) πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων (2) εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, (3) εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ. If all three are understood to be coordinate or in apposition then these labors are the parallel purposes of the leadership gifts in v.11. In support of this view, Andrew T. Lincoln argues that the difference in prepositions (πρὸς and εἰς) is not sufficient to indicate a distinction between the first and second phrases and that the immediate context is focused on the ministry of church leaders (Lincoln 1990: 253–254). Others have argued that the structural differences in the phrases suggest they are not parallel but communicate a chain of events: leaders gifted by God train the saints who build up the body.¹²

If v. 12 only describes the works of the leaders in v. 11, then the saints are merely passive recipients of their ministries (Barth 2008: 479–480). This understanding is inconsistent with the focus of the passage: it both ends and begins with the theme of the whole body of Christ (4:1–2, 13–16). Indeed, such a reading would only fortify the sacred-secular divide: as Markus Barth writes,

This interpretation has an aristocratic, that is, a clerical and ecclesiastical flavor; it distinguishes the (mass of the) ‘saints’ from the (superior class of the) officers of the church. A clergy is now distinct from the laity, to whom the privilege and burden of carrying out the prescribed construction work are exclusively assigned. (Barth 2008: 479)

Thus, it is both syntactically and thematically consistent to treat the second phrase as the purpose of the equipping and the third phrase as the outcome of equipping the laity: the edification of the Body of Christ.

With the goal of equipping in view, we must consider the possible definitions of καταρτισμός. The frequently considered options are to restore, to complete, to prepare, and to train (Lincoln 1990: 254; Larkin 2009: 78; Barth 2008: 439). Ernest Best eliminates the last option because it would only apply to the gift of teacher and pastor, and he settles on *prepare* because the context is discussing how leaders develop laity.¹³ However, there is no reason to restrict the act of training only to teachers and pastors,

as speaking the truth (ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ) applies to the whole body of Christ (Eph 4:15).

There is yet another possibility that has not been fully explored. Καταρτισμός may have political connotations that would be salient in the Ephesian cultural context. Thirty miles to the south of Ephesus is the city of Miletus which was readily connected to it by commercial sea routes. Herodotus records that two generations before Miletus became the pride of Ionia, the city suffered from factional strife (Herodotus, *Hist.* 5.28–29). Therefore, the Milesians appointed the Parians to make peace (καταρτίζω).¹⁴ Upon arriving and surveying the situation, the Parians used the following method to bring order and productivity to the region:

Seeing the Milesian households sadly wasted, they said that they desired to go about the country. They then made their way through all the territory of Miletus, and whenever they found any well-tilled farm in the desolation of the land, they wrote down the name of the owner of that farm. After travelling over the whole country and finding only a few such men, they assembled the people immediately upon their return to the city and appointed as rulers of the state those whose lands they had found well tilled. *This they did in the belief that these men were likely to take as good care of public affairs as they had of their own*, and they ordained that the rest of the Milesians who had been at feud should obey these men. (Herodotus, *Hist.* 5.29.1–2 [Godley]; emphasis added)

Individuals who were examples of running their own affairs well were asked to bring peace and productivity to the region. The pattern outlined here is the same that Paul requires when appointing elders (1 Tim 3:5). In fact, both Paul and Herodotus use the same terminology (ἐπιμελέομαι: to care for or have oversight over). Thus, whether Paul intends καταρτισμός to communicate that leaders will teach or prepare, it is historically plausible that he is using double entendre which is immanently relevant to a discussion of maintaining unity and the healthy growth of the community: *only practitioners of peace are competent to build up a unified body.*

Some may object that the character of the leaders in Ephesians 4 is not directly in view. Three observations may be given in response. First, using a political analogy related to rulers is consistent with the themes of Ephesians and maturing body analogies in political discourse (Long 2013: 299). Second, the theme of being an exemplar is found so regularly in the

writings of Paul that it is difficult to imagine how this would not be in view at least secondarily (Ti 1:6–10; 1 Cor 11:1). Third, the whole theological-ethical logic of the passage is *function follows form*. If the unity of God is the form and the bond of peace is the functional aim, then how can the body of Christ reach that goal under the leadership of cantankerous guides? The theology of the NT is that “[the] fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by the ones producing peace” (Jas 3:18).¹⁵ Spiritual leaders must be exemplars of the unity they expect the body to grow into.

Practice, Practice, Practice: An Example to Consider

My simple proposal is that MPMs require partnerships, and it is the responsibility of spiritual leaders to model biblical partnerships. But how churches and theological institutions pursue this bond of peace across denominational lines is a challenging dilemma. The outspoken purpose of any teaching leader is to ground their students or congregations in the theology of their denomination (Tudor and Simion 2021: 128, 139). Indeed, the very ethos of Ephesians 4 is that unity is founded on theological content. A child becomes distracted because they have not developed the theological discernment to tell friend from foe. Mature spiritual leaders have the experience to know the difference (Heb 5:14). Thus, the solution cannot be found in the spirit of our modern era, which invites us to become agnostic about every biblical principle. To those weary of conflict, it is an enticing offer. But it must be recognized for what it is: another gust of wind turning the church in circles. Unity will not be found in vacating theological convictions but in having a clear view of who the Lord is and what defines our common faith.¹⁶

It would be unwise to offer a simple, tidy solution, but if discernment is the fruit of experience, then perhaps one way is for leaders, the mature, to practice biblical partnership. On this point, I commend an example from my experience at Asbury Theological Seminary. When applying to be an adjunct professor, I was asked to articulate my theological convictions on a series of issues central to Asbury’s mission. On these points, I explained where we agreed, where we differed, and why I thought this partnership was feasible. The leadership at Asbury agreed that it was viable for me to teach as long as I stayed within certain parameters. In being transparent about our theology and defining the scope of our partnership, both Asbury and I were able to proceed without violating our convictions.

This open dialogue allowed us to build trust and establish a relationship that has been fruitful. Herein lies a model that could be implemented in numerous situations by using the following steps:

1. Have each leader in the prospective partnership define their top five to ten theological convictions.
2. Trade lists with the other leaders and respond to each of their theological convictions with one of the following answers:
 - a. We are in complete agreement.
 - b. We are mostly in agreement, but I see no barrier to our partnership.
 - c. I have a different perspective, and I still see potential for us to work together. But I have questions.
 - d. We are not in agreement, and it would be difficult for us to proceed.
3. Meet to answer questions and discuss the scope of this partnership.

Often there is much anxiety about finding the wrong partners, and therefore we make no attempt. The consequence of never trying is our ability to work with others atrophies. It would be far better to give ourselves the Christian freedom to explore potential collaborations. Even if the result of the initial inquiry is that the prospective partnership is unviable, all parties involved now have a better understanding of their own limits and have grown in their ability to dialogue with others. The process outlined here does not guarantee the formation of a team. It does, however, put theological truth at the center while still fostering creative thinking about opportunities for teamwork that would have gone undiscovered by comparing denominational names alone.¹⁷ At minimum, it is a respectful way to practice the kind of dialogue that every marketplace minister will face.¹⁸

Conclusion: Go Find Your Team

The marketplace ministry movement has made incredible advances. Innovative ministries are being developed in all corners of the world. Those called to spiritual leadership must continue to reflect on its direction and how they can equip their laity for success. Consider the following hypothetical scenario of two young professionals entering the full-time workforce. Melany is a young entrepreneur who attended Asbury University. Her coworker, Amy, also studied business administration, but at

Boyce College. They both are people of studied conviction and earnestly desire to share Christ with their co-workers. Upon graduation they began working at a large firm in Lexington and by happenstance are seated next to each other. When Melany meets Amy she notices a copy of Tim Keller's *Every Good Endeavor* on her desk, and conversely Amy notices that Melany has a copy of Ben Witherington's *Work: A Perspective of Kingdom Labor*. This opens the door for some conversation, but they are uneasy because they are intimately aware of the disagreements between their denominations. Both trust in the authority of God's word, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit; but they have never worked with each other's churches and do not consider potential avenues for partnership. Over the first year, they develop professional camaraderie and occasionally pray for one another. After two years, Melany accepts a promotion and Amy takes a position at another company. On Amy's last day, they reflect on how nice it was that God provided a fellow Christian in the office and even some enjoyable theological sparring matches. But it does not occur to either of them what other possibilities could have been.

How many times has that scenario been played out? Was there no room under the banner of one faith, one Lord, and one baptism to do more? What if instead, both women were able to recall specific examples of partnerships their pastors and Bible college professors had built across denominational lines, and were able to ask those leaders for practical advice about how to proceed? In our churches, we are accustomed to associating with those that fit safely within our spiritual and traditional comfort zone. But MPM rarely provides such a luxury. If spiritual leaders can model biblically healthy partnerships, it opens a world of possibility for our places of work. The Lord of the harvest, who is always true to his word, will provide co-laborers, and it is the responsibility of his leaders to teach others how to go and find them.



End notes

¹ This article is dedicated to the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who served with me in marketplace ministry: this is your story.

² For a detailed taxonomy of the varieties of MPM, see Samuel Lee, *Faith In the Marketplace: Measuring the Impact of Church Based Entrepreneurial Approaches to Holistic Mission*, ASM 53 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2021), 23–28; for a general overview of the diversity within the MPM movement, see David W. Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), ch. 1. The diversity within the MPM movement is perhaps due to the nature of work itself. For a review of the sociological and historical complexities of defining work, see Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 7–14.

³ For an overview of the distinctives of ECP compared to other innovative ministries, see Lee, *Faith in the Marketplace*, 26.

⁴ Cf. Miroslav Volf on Aquinas (*Work*, 69–70), Ben Witherington III on Luther (*Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011], 25–27), and John Jefferson Davis on the interpretation of the Great Commission (“‘Teaching Them to Observe All that I Have Commanded You’: The History of The Interpretation of the ‘Great Commission’ and Implication for Marketplace Ministries,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 25 [2001]: 65–80).

⁵ For a simple case study of the challenges laity face in finding pragmatic counsel and equipping, see Kara Martin, *Workship: How to Use Your Work to Worship God*, (Midview City, Singapore: Graceworks, 2017), 52; For an analysis of lay perceptions of equipping, see Dion Angus Forster and Johann W. Oostenbrink, “Where is the Church on Monday?: Awakening the Church to the Theology and Practice of Ministry and Mission in the Marketplace,” *In die Skriflig* 49(3) (2015): 3.

⁶ Martin, *Workship*; Kara Martin, *Workship 2: How to Use Your Work to Worship God*, (Midview City, Singapore: Graceworks, 2018); Cooper, *Missional Marketplace*; Witherington III, *Work*; Volf, *Work*; Stevens, *God’s Business*; Gordon Preece, *Marketplace Ministry: Occasional Paper No. 40*, eds. Timothy Liu and Wong Siew Li (Lausanne Committee, 2005).

⁷ In the 2004 Lausanne Forum for World Evangelization, Issue Group 11 was dedicated to marketplace ministry (Preece, *Marketplace Ministry*, i–iv); In South Africa, the Call42 group investigated the need for marketplace ministry (Forster, and Oostenbrink, “Monday,” 1–8).

⁸ Lausanne produced a comprehensive outline of topics and resources for training programs (Preece, *Marketplace Ministry*, 69–82). Kara Martin has created a holistic equipping program for churches with goals and mentoring plans (*Workship 2*, 124–234). Colleges and universities are developing marketplace ministry curriculum for students entering the secular workforce, see Kevin Selders, “To the Ends of the Marketplace,” *CT* 64 (2020): 83–92; Amy L. Sherman, “The Cutting Edge of Marketplace

Ministries: How Businesses Are Doing More Holistic Ministry Than Ever," *CT* 56 (2012): 47.

⁹ For an example of networking and church training for MPM, see Sherman, "The Cutting Edge," 44–47. For an overview of BAM from an active practitioner, see Cooper, *Missional Marketplace*, 185–196. For a comprehensive treatment of ECP, see Lee, *Faith in the Marketplace*, ch. 2.

¹⁰ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *The Economics Daily*, "People born in early 1980s held an average of 8.2 jobs from ages 18 through 32," www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2020/people-born-in-early-1980s-held-an-average-of-8-point-2-jobs-from-ages-18-through-32.htm; cf. Selders, "Marketplace," 88.

¹¹ MGS, s.v. "περιφέρω."

¹² William J. Larkin suggests that if the phrases are parallel, τῶν ἁγίων would more appropriately be placed after the third prepositional phrase (εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ *τῶν ἁγίων; *Ephesians*, BHGNT [Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009], 78). However, "for the building up of the body of Christ of the saints" would make a redundant phrase which is rather florid compared with the rest even if v. 12 is intending to describe the ministry responsibilities of different groups (i.e., leaders and laity). Frank Thielman suggests that the addition of the definite article in the first phrase alone sets them apart (*Ephesians*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic], 278). This argument is sounder because it would be grammatically feasible and even elegant to add an article to the second and third phrase. The decision to leave the article out thus suggests a clear choice was made to distinguish between the elements.

¹³ Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 395. However, Best does not maintain this conclusion consistently: "The root [διακονία] is often used by Paul of his preaching ministry ... both within and outwith the church ... and this would correspond to the work of the evangelist (v. 11); yet there is no reason to restrict preaching to church officials" (*Ephesians*, 396).

¹⁴ MGS, s.v. "καταρτίζω." There is clear morphological and semantic overlap in the verb and noun form of the root.

¹⁵ Author's translation.

¹⁶ This contrasts with perspectives that interpret the mystery of the Trinity (i.e., one God in three persons) as a warrant for partnerships without clear theological agreement; cf. Sandra Beardsall, Mitzi Budde, and William P. McDonald, "Space for the Other: Ecumenical Shared Ministries," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 54 (2019): 155–157.

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¹⁷ Evidence suggests there is more enthusiasm for interdenominational partnerships at the grassroots level; cf. Samuel H. Reimer, "Lay Cooperation in Canada: Catholic and Mainline and Conservative Protestant Attitudes Toward Interdenominational Cooperation," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 41 (2004): 240.

¹⁸ Intentionality is often the most difficult step in developing interdenominational partnerships; cf. Tudor and Simion, "Interdenominational Networking," 134.

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Hannah L. Hopkinson

*The Bible for All: Biblical Interpretation as a Grassroots Movement*¹

Abstract:

In Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's proposed emancipatory paradigm, the biblical scholar must both analyze how the Bible is used to subjugate and imagine how those texts could form a more just world. If tenants of this emancipatory paradigm were practiced in the local church, the Bible's power could nurture a more just society. This paper explores how an emancipatory paradigm could be applied in local churches through analyzing the structure of its grassroots inspiration, Consciousness Raising Groups of the American Women's Liberation Movement, and also a similar South African method, Contextual Bible Study. In contrast to other models like the pastor theologian, the emancipatory paradigm resists hierarchical structures and instead invites all to the table of biblical interpretation.

Keywords: grassroots biblical interpretation, feminism, theological education, Church, Contextual Bible Study, emancipatory paradigm

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Introduction

Pursuing objective interpretations motivates a secularizing push in biblical studies. Scholars like Hector Avalos and Philip R. Davies have advocated that the biblical text should be treated like any other ancient text and that it should not have authority or influence in contemporary life (Avalos 2007; Davies 2004).² Despite an ideal that secularism is freedom, religious adherence continues bringing religious texts into public discourse (Volf 2013: ix–x).³ Even without the contributions of biblical scholars, the Bible has been used and will continue to be used in American public life and politics.⁴ Often, its words are wielded to legitimize oppression and violence. For example, American politicians and pastors have preached American power and war from their Bibles (Schüssler Fiorenza 2008; Kittredge 2008).⁵

While the Bible, as critics point out, has legitimized authoritarianism and oppression, it has also sparked visions of equality and freedom for the oppressed (Dayton and Strong: 2014). To use scripture publicly involves an understanding of both the contents of the text and its varied influence on society. Instead of the secularization of biblical studies and the disengaged biblical scholar, feminist biblical scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza envisions an approach to biblical scholarship, interpretation, and teaching that directly addresses its public use. In her work, *Democratizing Biblical Studies: Toward an Emancipatory Educational Space*, Schüssler Fiorenza advocates for an emancipatory paradigm to have an equal voice at the table of biblical studies (2008: 82–83). In this paradigm, the biblical scholar becomes involved in their broader community's issues by understanding their social location and analyzing how scripture is used within their context (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 82). As Schüssler Fiorenza seeks to change the academic discipline of biblical studies, the tenants of the emancipatory paradigm could be used in the context of local congregations of the church. If infused into the theological education of the local church, the Bible's power could spark Christian grassroots movements that envision and advocate for a more just world inspired by the biblical text.

The Emancipatory Paradigm and Women's Consciousness Raising Groups

There are no value free interpretations. Even interpretative methods that claim objectivity developed in particular contexts with particular goals and aims. For example, historical critical approaches to the Bible developed as an Enlightenment project over against church

dogma (Bruggemann 2011: 385–388). In light of scientific positivism, the critical methods seek to establish an objective understanding of the text or its historical circumstances by critically engaging its details rather than reading it through theology or the tenants of the church (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 68). Not only did critical methodologies have particular aims, the original practitioners, who were mostly European Protestant men, still had biases that influenced their findings and work (Davis 2012).⁶ The critical methods, which claim objective interpretation and universality, arose from a particular historical situation and cultural context and thus reflects the interest of a particular group of people rather than a universal interpretation of scripture.

While critical methods were exciting and groundbreaking at their time, scholars of the text today face different problems and issues. These differences in contexts can push potential scholars out of biblical studies as they feel a disinterest and distance from critical approaches. As long-time scholar Walter Bruggemann (2011:389) observes, “There was a time when JEDP aroused great excitement or great resistance, but no more—now only a yawn, because the enigma of a world at risk makes such a quarrel a luxury that does not deserve our energy.” Critical methodologies (perhaps precisely because of their contextual location) still speak and are important to the study of scripture, but as Schüssler Fiorenza (2009: 83) indicates, these methodologies need to be in respectful conversation with other paradigms of biblical interpretation, like the emancipatory paradigm, rather than a hegemonic power.

Schüssler Fiorenza (2009: 91) makes clear the goals of the emancipatory paradigm; the emancipatory paradigm seeks the well-being of all people and to liberate them from structures of domination. This is not a disinterested approach but rather one filled with pathos as it looks at suffering within our world, analyses how the Bible is used to justify oppression, and also imagines how those texts could form a more just world. The general disinterest of the discipline of biblical studies at best makes many bystanders to violence and at worst compliant and enablers. Centering the subjugation of women, Schüssler Fiorenza (2008: 164) calls out the disinterestedness of biblical studies to their global condition, writing, “The scriptural roots of systemic inequality, abuse, violence, discrimination, starvation, poverty, neglect, and denial of wo/men’s rights, which afflict the lives of wo/men across the globe, are still not taken seriously by biblical

scholars but seen as an unacademic special-interest issue of middle-class white wo/men.” The emancipatory paradigm corrects a disinterested biblical studies field, holding interpreters accountable and pushing the discipline into the public sphere as it “situates biblical scholarship in such a way that its public character and political responsibility become an integral part of its contemporary readings and historical reconstructions” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 91).

For Schüssler Fiorenza, the Bible is inherently rhetorical and public, meaning that even within its original context, the text was written to create, shape, and order communities (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 91). To live into this power, one must understand the social location of the interpreter and also the Bible’s use in their context, particularly who interprets scripture and who benefits from that interpretation (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 15).⁷ Since the Bible is rhetoric and its purpose is to shape community, interpretation is power.

Interpretation then, because it shapes communities of people, is not a solitary act. Truth is discovered within community as “truth and meaning are not a given fact or hidden revelation but are achieved in critical practices of deliberation” (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 152). Within an interdependent community, biblical interpretation pulls from a wide wealth of experiences and wisdom. Good interpretation shifts from being a task accomplished by intellectual giants and returns to being developed through discussion and debate within a community of equals. As Schüssler Fiorenza (2008: 168) writes, “Instead of looking to ‘great books’ and ‘great men,’ a radical-democratic model of biblical reading/learning... engages in critical questions, exploration, and debate in order to arrive at a deliberative judgment about the Bible’s contributions to the ‘good life’.” The power of interpretation does not belong to outstanding individuals but to a renewed community who regards each other as equals and who mutually engages with their experiences and scripture together. From that intersection, we can see reality in a new way and act to make that new vision a reality.

Schüssler Fiorenza’s approach is not new but is like political-historical methods used in American discourse (Cone 2018).⁸ Her emancipatory paradigm explicitly draws from the grassroots methods of the American Women’s Liberation Movement (Schüssler Fiorenza: 15). Understanding how the Women’s Liberation movement in the 1960s and 70s used consciousness raising groups (CR groups) to develop their political

theory and action will help apply the emancipatory paradigm outside of the academy to more local contexts.

The political theory of the women's movement developed within CR groups. CR groups were a form of feminist grassroots organizing in the 1960s that led to societal reformation. As Naomi Braun Rosenthal, in her history of CR groups, describes, "In the view of radical feminists, consciousness raising was an instrumental method of developing a collective understanding, and ensuring that revolutionary action would not ignore women's situation" (Rosenthal 1984: 314). The core to CR groups was women's experience and feelings. A Redstockings (a feminist activist group) manifesto declares, "Our first task is to develop our capacity to be aware of our feelings and to pinpoint the events or interactions to which they are valid responses" (*Redstockings* 1970). Feminism and CR groups held a core assumption that women were not crazy nor to blame for their oppression. Their feelings were caused by external factors of their world, namely the subjugation, belittling, and violence they had endured (Redstockings 1969: 7; O'Connor 1969, 36). Because women's feelings arose from concrete realities, they were important tools to understand reality and develop theory. In a speech, activist Carol Hansich (1978: 204–205) explains, "One of the first things we discover in these groups is that personal problems are political problems." In other words, the personal was political. For women to understand their subjugated place in 1960s and 70s America and around the world, women had to see how external realities produced their emotions and that they had those experiences in common with other women.

In order to ensure that political theory and social action did not ignore women's experiences, the general movement of a CR group flowed in this way: 1. share one's experience and the emotions associated with it, 2. evaluate the common elements of each other's experiences and develop political theory, 3. collectively act to change the community to reflect women's interests (O'Connor 1969: 35–38; Sarachild 1970: 78–80; Brown 1969).⁹ Kathie Sarachild (1970: 78), a feminist writer, summarizes this process, "Our feelings will lead us to our theory, our theory to our action, our feelings about that action to new theory and then to new action." Action would be supported by political theory, and political theory, in turn, would be based on the concrete experiences of women collectively.

The sharing of feelings and experiences in community also involved a logical process of evaluation. Lynn O'Connor (1969: 35) describes CR as

a long and logical process that synthesizes an understanding of the self with an understanding of the social class that one belongs to and their treatment. In this process, women found commonality with each other and could articulate the general treatment of women within the broader society (O'Connor 1969: 36; Sarachild 1970: 79). Having the place to articulate one's own experiences and its connection to other women led to theorizing and envisioning a world that women actually wanted (A Bread and Roses Member 1970: 10–11).¹⁰ The development of political theory then led to action that was grounded in women's experiences and not alienating to them (Sarachild 1978). Action, from theory, was meant to be collective and transformative. The solution for women was not personal change, but rather the transformation of society and social relationships (O'Connor 1969: 37).¹¹ This was an ongoing process, and this ongoing discussion empowered women to see their reality and envision a new world in which they were not subjugated. Then they could act together to build that new world.

Like CR groups, Schüssler Fiorenza's emancipatory paradigm: 1. includes and values experience, 2. is done within community, and 3. has an eye toward the effect on the broader community. This process seeks Wisdom. In the biblical wisdom tradition, Wisdom can be discovered within common life and governs our social relationships (Schüssler Fiorenza 2001: 23). Drawing from Proverbs 9, Schüssler Fiorenza sees biblical interpretation as the spiraling dance of Wisdom open to all and biblical authority as enabling justice and well-being. She writes:

This image of Wisdom/wisdom's open space seeks to replace the understanding of canonical and scholarly authority as limiting, controlling, and exclusive authority and 'power over' which demands subordination. Instead it understands the power of the Bible and biblical scholarship... as enhancing, nurturing, and enriching creativity. Biblical authority and biblical studies renewed in the paradigm of Divine Wisdom will be able to foster such creativity, strength, self-affirmation, and freedom of the sacred. (2009: 166)

As Schüssler Fiorenza seeks to sustain a diversity of voices in professional biblical interpretation, her invitation and vision of the spiraling dance of Wisdom could also reform theological education within the church. If her radical democratic ethos was applied to how congregations approached scripture, then there would be a place for people to become aware of their own power (together) and move toward a vision of human flourishing

and the good life inspired by their scriptures. This would bring biblical interpretation to the people and could inspire grassroots movements nurtured by the Bible.

Use of the Emancipatory Paradigm in the Church: Contextual Biblical Studies as a Model

As Christians influence their political and public world, they should act from this core commandment: love God and love neighbor (Volf 2013: xv, 63, 73).¹² Schüssler's Fiorenza's emancipatory model develops deep reflection of both context and text that inspires public action reflecting this emancipatory heartbeat of scripture. Though she wrote to address the academy, her insights and the methods of consciousness raising within the Women's Liberation Movement should be incorporated into the theological education of the church. Involving these methods at a grassroots level would bring critical reflection on one's experience and the Bible that would birth emancipatory change within the church and its wider public context. At a grassroots level, the emancipatory paradigm reflects the practices of South Africa's Contextual Bible Study (CBS).

Practiced at the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research, CBS is a mode of interpretation that involves socially engaged biblical scholars (or other bible teachers) reading alongside and with ordinary readers, who are often poor and marginalized. As Gerald O. West, a foundational promoter of this method, describes, "[CBS is] a form of Bible reading that begins with an emancipatory interest that is grounded in the real conditions of poor and marginalized local communities" (West 1999: 31). This method allows ordinary readers of the text, those who seek to make direct links between the text and their social location, to use the resources and skills of scholarly readers, who seek to read the texts and authors on their own terms (Anum 1996: 13). This is not an impartation of knowledge or skill from the biblical scholar to ordinary readers, but rather a collaboration with one another. The biblical scholar, rather than dominating because they see themselves as more competent than ordinary readers, facilitates, lending their technical skills to the ordinary reader to empower them to reconstruct their own ideas and views (Anum 1996: 16). West pulls from insights from feminist scholar Jill Arnot to describe this reading process; the scholar should move beyond 'speaking for' and 'listening to' and move toward 'speaking/reading with' others and the marginalized (Arnot 1996: 85; West 1999: 52). This is a collaborative effort between

scholars and ordinary readers to interpret the Bible, envisioning how to bring its vision of wellness, flourishing, and freedom to their communities.

In order to bring about social change, CBS follows a loose structure that is similar to the movement in feminist CR groups. CBS is based on a See-Judge-Act method (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 25).¹³ This method begins with understanding and analyzing the local context of the participants, informed by their own understanding (See). Then it leads to re-reading the Bible and allowing the biblical text to speak to that context (Judge). Lastly, this process then spurs the group into action, responding to what God is saying and the way that the world should be (Act). This is an ongoing process as action then leads to reflection on that action, starting the cycle over again (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 4). The See-Judge-Act model follows a similar movement as the general steps of CR groups in the American Women's Liberation Movement which involved: 1. knowing one's own feelings and experiences, 2. developing political theory from the commonality of women's experiences, and 3. collective action for social change. In both processes, social change starts with the context of marginalized groups: the poor, women, disabled, minority groups, etc. For the Bible to bring community transformation, people within that community must bring their whole selves to the text.

Both methods, by elevating experience, uncover hidden class consciousness of a group and help them articulate their embodied theory or theology. Embodied theology is a theology that is formed within a person based on their culture, tradition, and past experiences (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 12). This theology is often covered and hidden by hierarchical church theology and dogmas. As a CBS manual points out:

Under the dried crust of the often bereft public theology we carry resides a deeper, usually unarticulated and incipient, theology. This embodied theology has been generated by our lived faith and experiences, but is inchoate and unformed. A challenge that awaits the church is to tap into this rich residual substratum of theology and bring it into the public realm. (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 40)

CBS does not seek to grow the participants into a certain ideology in theology or church doctrine, but rather uncovers a group's embodied theology. As a group articulates their class experiences and embodied theology, they can plan informed action. This action is not just personal change, but collective

action that leads to change in the broader community (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 13).

A theological education within the church that is informed by the CR groups in the American Women Liberation's Movement, Schüssler Fiorenza's emancipatory paradigm, and the CBS method of interpretation calls for participation within and mutual respect among the people of God. Biblical interpretation then is a democratic process that inspires transformation of the community into a place of well-being for all. Theory, theology, and informed action rises from a dialogue between experience and scripture. Below are some suggestions on how scripture can interact with experience:

1. Critical Engagement with Both Scripture and Cultural Context: This engagement with Scripture is based upon Schüssler Fiorenza's approach. In her approach, the Bible is a tool for rhetoric. Both in the text's original contexts and our current one, its words formed communities and supported worldviews and systems. Thus, the Bible's rhetoric has been used both to justify oppression by the powerful or to envision freedom by marginalized people (Schüssler Fiorenza 2009: 17). By reflecting on how the language of scripture has been historically and currently used, the community critically engages with domination justified by scriptural language and also advocates for a more just society supported by the text (Schüssler Fiorenza 2008: 158).¹⁴ This process of critically examining how the language of scripture forms communities will empower congregation members to use biblical rhetoric to transform their communities into a reflection of the emancipatory aspects of the text.

2. Finding Lines of Connection between the Biblical Text and the Contemporary Community: In this dialogue, the community finds connections between their own experiences and the ones described in the text or of the community behind-the-text (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 9). The community discovers these connections themselves by processing a variety of questions: 1.

questions about how scripture is used within a particular context, 2. questions that draw people into reflecting on the biblical text, and 3. space for the community to ask about the circumstances that gave rise to the text (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015: 11). Discovering the lines of connection between us, the text, and the historical community, empowers the contemporary faith community, including women, the poor, and any other marginalized people, to interpret scripture and articulate their embodied theology (*Doing Contextual Bible* 2015: 37).¹⁵ Making space for congregations to articulate their embodied theology challenges the hegemony of church theology and inspires action that stops the perpetuation of domination, violence, and sin.

3. *The Forming of Imagination*: When we interpret scripture together, its democratic language shapes our lives and imaginations. The Bible becomes a collective memory that helps us imagine an involved God and form social relationships that reflect his involvement (Aitken 2011: 576–578). Ellen Bradshaw Aitken (2011: 576), an Anglican biblical scholar, describes this as a social imaginary from the world of the Bible. In this view, the Bible does not take an instrumental role, but rather “those texts become environments, territories, in which we grow familiar with other ways of looking at the world, other ways of moving toward God’s desire” (Aitken 2011: 577). This approach involves a gradual growing together and toward God’s vision for the world. It involves sitting within the text, its diversity, reenacting it in liturgy, and involving many voices in its interpretation. From imagining with scripture, congregations can articulate a new and creative theology that brings God’s world of goodness, freedom, and well-being into our contexts.

There are many ways to engage with scripture in grassroots interpretation. The list above is a sample from my own reflections and reading. However, I hope that it shows the multi-varied approach that readers of scripture, both “ordinary” and “scholarly,” could take while reading together. And as we interpret scripture together, we invite the Spirit, as Schüssler Fiorenza (2008: 171) describes, to move and blow where she wills to foster “such creativity, strength, self-affirmation and freedom of the sacred in the public sphere.” When seeking to love God by studying scripture and loving our neighbor by interpreting with them, local church communities will be empowered to use the rhetoric of the biblical text to transform their communities into a place of well-being for all.

Congregation Led Theology vs. Clergy Led Theology

Modeling theological education within the church on the emancipatory paradigm moves the power of interpretation from exclusively belonging to the academy and invites discussion within the whole people of God. This proposal is not just about the method of teaching or interpretation, but also about *who* should have the power to interpret. Other theologians and interpreters have also felt the shortcomings of biblical interpretation and theology developed within the academy. Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson (2015: 59–60), founders of the Center for Pastor Theologians, argue that since theology is typically done from an academic place, it usually does not reflect the concerns of pastor or congregations. They propose a pastor theologian model that elevates the credibility, quality, and quantity of theological research from the contextual location of the pastorate. The pastor theologian is a clergy member who works within a local church and also produces theological scholarship for the broader church (Hiestand and Wilson: 15–16). For Hiestand’s and Wilson’s pastor theologian model, the *who* of interpretation are clergy and other church workers. In an applied emancipatory model, the *who* of interpretation is the whole people of God. While the voices from the pastorate should be respected in theological discourse, moving the locus of power away from the professor to the pastor does not dispel the risk of domination and subordination. Despite Hiestand’s and Wilson’s (2015: 12) idealization of the pastorate as a place for intellectual men, clergy centered theology often was oppressive and reinforced human subjugation. This subjugation arises partly because clergy positions have historically been accessible to a limited group of people. If the pastorate is the main contextual location of theology, then

large demographics of the people of God would be excluded from creating theology.

These issues are demonstrated by Hiestand's and Wilson's implicit exclusion of women in their primary text on the model. When describing a pastor theologian, Hiestand and Wilson (2015: 11–12) consistently use male only language.¹⁶ In order to justify their model, they appeal to historical examples of men who did theology from an ecclesial location (Hiestand and Wilson 2015: 21–41, 133–172). They never mention a female pastor theologian within their main text and in the 500+ theologians they list in the appendix, only five of them are women: Hildegard of Bingen, Teresa of Avila, Anna Comnena, Hrotsvitha Gandersheim, and Jean Marie Bouvier (Hiestand and Wilson 2015: 141, 147, 150, 168, 172). None of these women fit Hiestand's and Wilson's "clerical" designation. As Hiestand and Wilson relied on outside collections for their list of theologians, this shows a broader issue (Migne 1844–1864; 1857–1886). This exclusion of women highlights two elements that Christians must contend with: 1. the patriarchal past of Christianity, namely the barring of women from roles of pastoral leadership, and 2. the continued bias of theological collections to see the contributions of men as more substantial than those of women. The former poses an issue for the pastor theologian model. If women have been historically and currently barred from clergy, then how could they trust a clergy led theology to reflect their interests and God's vision for their lives?¹⁷ The latter is still a persisting issue, but Hiestand and Wilson could have circumvented it by also analyzing collections that focus on the contributions of women within the church.¹⁸ Feminist scholars have done this work for them, but they did not consult it. Failure to do so keeps them and their readers in an echo chamber that reinforces their own biases.

The reason for erasing women is made explicit in Hiestand's work outside of this book, as he argues against women in ministry (Hiestand 2021).¹⁹ As Hiestand and Wilson advocate for shifting theological authority from the academy to the church, the locus of power would rest on a specific elite class of male interpreters. This has historically limited the voices of women from participating in interpretation and theology. As women are a principal and large demographic within the church, as Philip Jenkins (2011: 1–2) describes, "If we want to visualize a 'typical' contemporary Christian, we should think of a woman living in a village in Nigeria, or in a Brazilian *favela*," the pastor theologian model gives a minority of people theological power over others. Theology done at the pastorate level does not inherently

benefit the whole people of God. This work of meaning-making, describing reality, and discerning appropriate action is done instead by an elite class determined by traditional qualifications.

Witnesses like Hiestand and Wilson help broaden out the social location of theological reflection and biblical interpretation. Pastors, female and male, should also be welcome to the table of biblical interpretation. However, due to Hiestand's and Wilson's biases, the pastor theologian model does not address all the issues of academic biblical interpretation and theology. This model has a high potential to reinforce structures of domination and subordination by giving the power of interpretation to those who have access to the pastorate. To bring true transformation to our communities, there should be space for the voices of scholars, pastors, and congregation members to express their theology and biblical interpretation. The emancipatory paradigm of biblical teaching and interpretation is a democratic vision. As the pastor theologian model defines the *who* of interpretation as (implied male) pastors, an emancipatory model sees *all* as interpreters within a community of equals. Womanist biblical scholar Wilda Gafney reflects this vision with a metaphor of a dinner table. At the supper of biblical interpretation, all are welcome to the family table where we discuss both the contents of the meal (the Bible) and our lives (Gafney 2017: 1–2). Schüssler Fiorenza (2009: 27) echoes this inclusive sentiment in her description of Wisdom, “She transgresses boundaries, celebrates life, and nourishes those who will become her friends. Her cosmic house is without walls and her table is set for all.” The Bible belongs to all, and thus the theology of the church should be a grassroots project rather than a dominating authority from one group of people over another.

Conclusion

Schüssler Fiorenza's democratic vision for biblical studies should be applied in the theological education of the church. Based upon the CR groups in the Women's Liberation Movement, and similar to the CBS method from South Africa, the emancipatory approach to theological education would empower marginalized members of the people of God to critically examine their lives and the Bible and contribute their own theology to public discourse. Different from authoritative models, like theology coming from the academy or from clergy, this approach is a democratic process that invites all voices to the table or peoples to the dance of biblical interpretation. As a grassroots method, the emancipatory

approach to theological education in the church will bring out the authentic and embodied theology of local communities. The theology of the church will spring forth from the ground-up and will inspire action toward communal transformation that reflects God's heart for the well-being and peace of all people.

End notes

¹ In honor of my mother, Deborah Hopkinson (1956–2022). I hope that my work reflects your determination and tenaciousness in life, and opens doors for other powerful women in the Church that had been closed to you.

² Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza uses their work as examples of secularizing Biblical Studies (2009: 38–44).

³ Theologian Miroslav Volf advocates that people of faith have the right, in a democratic society, to bring their visions of the good life into public life and politics, and that it would be oppressive to bar them from doing so.

⁴ For examples of how the Bible has been used in the United States see Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (1982).

⁵ Such as the work of the “Moral Majority” in the 1970s and the rise of the Religious Right in the 1980s and 1990s (Schüssler Fiorenza 2008: 157). As another recent example, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge (2008: 55–66) draws out the parallels between Paul's liberation speech about human salvation and George W. Bush's speeches that justified the United States' war in Iraq.

⁶ Stacy Davis points out the anti-Jewish environment of Julius Wellhausen, a founding voice of source criticism, and how this influences his documentary hypothesis.

⁷ The emancipatory paradigm has dual sides to its hermeneutics: the hermeneutics of suspicion and reconstruction. The hermeneutics of suspicion is a critical approach to the texts and interpretations. The hermeneutics of reconstruction is centering scriptural stories, characters, and ideas that are on the margins of the text and interpretation, and creatively imagining a new world that is centered on justice and well-being for all.

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⁸ James H. Cone's work is a good example of American political-historical methods. He interpreted black liberation and power as part of the Gospel message (Cone 2018).

⁹ This loose structure of 1. share experiences, 2. evaluate and develop political theory, and 3. collective action comes from an analysis of women's literature from the late 1960s and early 1970s.

¹⁰ A woman expresses her CR group's reflections on the relationship they have with their male partners through a comic strip. Those women wanted to have a relationship that was equal (no one was lesser) and autonomous (having space to pursue their own interests and relationships) while still being interconnected.

¹¹ O'Connor stresses that change for women could not be just personal change. As woman's consciousness is awakened, and they begin to live in a way they truly want, they face backlash from those around them. Through that backlash, they realize that only collective action, not personal change, will win them liberation.

¹² Jesus summarizes the law in this way in Matt 22:37–40, Mark 12:30–31, and Luke 10:25–28. Jesus' parting in commandment in John 15:12 is that the community should love one another. Lastly, Paul tells the Galatians in Gal 5:14 that the entire law is fulfilled through love of neighbor.

¹³ See-Judge-Act method is first associated with a Catholic chaplain, Joseph Cardign who used it with factory workers in 1930s Belgium.

¹⁴ Schüssler Fiorenza refers to this community and process as developing the *ekklesia* of wo/men.

¹⁵ As the manual describes the impact of this process on women who have been abused or sexually assaulted, "Because the Bible is a sacred text and because Christians located themselves in relation to it, establishing lines of connection can be enormously empowering," and through their discussion of the text in the context of people with similar experiences their "embodied theologies are given and become owned (*Doing Contextual Bible Study* 2015)."

¹⁶ This male centered language is apparent at the beginning but builds throughout Hiestand's and Wilson's work. In their first descriptions of a pastor theologian, they use male-only language.

¹⁷ Laure L. Norris (2016: 163–171) sees this issue and tries to address it, in practical ways, to include women in the pastor theologian model.

¹⁸ Some examples of work that highlight the work of women include Marion Ann Taylor's and Agnes Choi's *Handbook of Women Biblical Interpreters: A Historical and Biographical Guide* (2012), Amy Oden's *In Her Words: Women's Writings in the History of Christian Thought* (1994), and Ruth A. Tucker's and Walter Liefeld's *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (1987).

¹⁹ Hiestand's argument rests on the idea that women have been subjugated to violence, violated, and oppressed and the call into ministry is to embrace that type of suffering for the freedom of others. Women were barred from ministry in the early church because to embrace ministry was to give up privilege and power. However, this explanation does not take in account women's experiences and the reality of the pastorate. The pastorate is currently and has been historically a place of power and authority.

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Myra L. Watkins

Training Faithful Disciples to Meet the Challenges of the Church in the World: Applying Bonhoeffer's Seminary Vision to Hybrid Education

Abstract:

This article will first examine Dietrich Bonhoeffer's philosophy and practice of theological education to train faithful ministers of the gospel for the service of the Church. Particular attention will be given to Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together* which he wrote while directing one of the underground seminaries for the Confessing Church in Nazi Germany. Second, this article will explore Paul House's argument for a personal, incarnational, rather than a distance learning, approach. Using a small seminary for a global family of churches, Every Nation, as a case study, this article will present relational discipleship as a central, integrated course to train leaders for the church. It will conclude by suggesting why and how principles of relational discipleship can be integral to a hybrid seminary approach for training leaders who can meet the challenges of the Church in the world.

Keywords: relational discipleship, cost of discipleship, hybrid seminary education, Bonhoeffer, Every Nation

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Introduction

In his keynote address at the 2012 Lausanne Consultation on Global Theological Education held at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Timothy Tennent introduced several areas theological institutions need to address in relation to the realities of an emerging global Church since theological educators form, shape, and direct the Church's theological education (Tennent 2012). Among other concerns, Tennent insisted theological institutions must become more missionally driven. Similarly, Amos Yong points out that the work of theological education must be understood in light of its audience, the Church, and its purpose, the *missio Dei* (Yong 2020: 22).

In addition to training pastors and teachers, Tennent said “we must train culturally savvy, theologically nuanced evangelists and church planters. We must release new kinds of apostolic leadership” that oversees lay-empowered movements globally. To carry out this mandate and to face new challenges that call for adaptive change, he proposed adopting new degree goals and delivery systems. More recently, the Covid pandemic rocked our world making new delivery systems necessary and global needs more acute.

Furthermore, Tennent stated that more missional churches have been opting not to send their young leaders to seminary. Every Nation, a young global family of churches that formed in 1994, is one such church planting movement that has only recently started sending its leaders to seminaries such as Asbury. In 2020, Every Nation founded its own seminary with a hybrid delivery Master's in Theology and Mission to catalyze leadership development for pastors and missionaries, helping emerging leaders become the apostolic leaders of the future.

Every course in Every Nation Seminary which includes four in theology, seven in biblical studies, and four in missions integrates the values of relational discipleship, biblical preaching, apostolic leadership, and global mission (“Mission | Every Nation Seminary” n.d.). With relational discipleship in the contexts of relationship with God, the people of God, and the world as the core integrated three-year course, church planters, pastors, and missionaries may be prepared to meet the challenges of the Church in the world.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's seminary vision to train faithful ministers of the gospel in service of the Church, the visible Body of Christ, was unique to his context under the Third Reich during the Second World War. Still, I

argue that his insights in *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together*, which he wrote while directing and teaching a seminary for the Confessing Church, can inform theological education for the Church on mission in our world today.

While Paul House uses Bonhoeffer's seminary vision to argue for in-person, incarnational learning rather than distance learning, I propose that principles of costly discipleship and life together can be integrated into a hybrid learning approach that enables church planters and church leaders to remain on mission in their contexts. In the process of unsettling adaptive challenges, theological institutions that value costly discipleship and life in community need not fear the loss of these essential aspects of the vibrant, visible Church. In order to release new kinds of apostolic leadership and mutually beneficial partnerships globally, new delivery systems that do not compromise on relational discipleship are needed.

Bonhoeffer's Context and Vision for Theological Education

In 1935, Bonhoeffer became the pastor in charge of the Confessing Church's new seminary to prepare clergy that would serve churches and resist the claims of Hitler. Bonhoeffer believed this required the revitalization of discipleship lived in community since church renewal depended on a brotherhood of pastors reforming the church as a visible body in a hostile environment. In his seminary, students were initiated into a new way of life that was structured around the sacraments, scripture, and communal discipleship to prepare them for service in the world.

A deep crisis in the German church brought Bonhoeffer together with the Confessing Church. The Confessing Church issued the Barmen Declaration in 1934 declaring the church's sole allegiance to Jesus Christ and a biblical view of the relationship between the church and state because they believed that German Christians, in their eagerness to follow Hitler, had compromised the gospel and the church. The Confessing Church viewed church administration through a "council of brethren" because brotherhood is the essential beginning of church (House 2015: 58).

Before the Nazis came to power in 1933, Bonhoeffer was concerned that seminaries and theological departments in universities were not forming disciples or followers of Jesus Christ. Therefore, he deemed it necessary to train pastors as Jesus trained the apostles. In a letter to Erwin Sutz on Sept. 11, 1934, he stated why he believed a new type of theological training was needed for pastors:

The next generation of pastors, these days, ought to be trained entirely in church-monastic schools, where the pure doctrine, the Sermon on the Mount, and worship are taken seriously – which for all three of these things is simply not the case at the university and under the present circumstances is impossible. (House 2015: 41)

Bonhoeffer's students were unmarried young men who chose to align with the new, relatively undefined protest church, so they were bold enough to challenge the status quo in German church life. The Confessing Church included Lutheran and Reformed congregations, so students came from more than one theological tradition. They had studied theology at a university and had spent time as ministry apprentices. Between 1935 and 1940, Bonhoeffer directed the training of ten groups of students in various locations as deteriorating restrictions necessitated new venues for the work. His inaugural group numbered twenty-three, and the total number was one hundred eighty-one (House 2015: 45).

Bonhoeffer envisioned seminaries that form shepherds for the church as special visible ministries of the body of Christ. Jesus dwells in, replenishes, and sanctifies the church as “the living temple of God and of the new humanity” as it walks the earth (Bonhoeffer 1995: 247). Bonhoeffer claimed that, as a consequence of the Incarnation, the Body of Christ “takes up space on the earth” (Bonhoeffer 1995: 247). Hence, the Body of Christ can only be a visible body. Therefore, Christ's works will be visible.

In order to form shepherds for the church, Bonhoeffer proposed that seminaries should reach at least three interconnected goals. First, to form a community on proper grounds. House points out that daily worship, prayer, and meditation were means of sanctification to smooth the rough edges of selfishness, ambition, individualism, and theological arrogance (House 2015: 137). Second, to send out pastors who were formed by the Bible so they would obey God. Third, to provide a visible example of the body of Christ. According to Bonhoeffer, the body of Christ takes up positive space in the world through worship, listening to God's Word, prayer, caring for others, using its gifts wisely, offering hospitality, going about its daily work and returning to meet again, and spreading the gospel of redemption in Jesus Christ (House 2015: 141). He focused on life together in regular, simple, Word-centered, prayerful, formational worship.

Bonhoeffer thought that German Lutherans had reduced grace to a principle only requiring mental assent and blurred the lines between the

lordship of Jesus Christ and Hitler's leadership. Therefore, he considered it essential for the Confessing Church, his students, and Christians in general to "recover a true understanding of the mutual relationship between grace and discipleship" since discipleship springs from grace. House asserts that Bonhoeffer's most important writings, *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937) and *Life Together* (1939), should be considered in light of the fact that he wrote them while directing the Confessing Church's seminaries or "church-monastic" schools (House 2015: 41).

Costly Discipleship

The Cost of Discipleship or *Following After* in German originated as a series of Bonhoeffer's lectures at Finkenwalde, one of the Confessing Church's seminaries where he served as the spiritual director and professor from 1935 until 1937 when the Gestapo shut it down (Ford and Muers 2005: 45). Karl Barth remarked that "on the matter of a theology of discipleship, he was tempted to simply reproduce long passages from Bonhoeffer's book and let the matter stand there" (Ford and Muers 2005: 45). In contrast to cheap grace, Bonhoeffer lays out a costly grace under the cross that is not primarily governed by religious ritual, ethics, or doctrine, but by the call of Jesus Christ to follow him.

The promise held out to followers of Christ is that they will be members of the community of the cross through the Mediator, the "people under the cross" (Bonhoeffer 1995: 114). Bonhoeffer taught that Christ the Mediator separates the disciple from the world of men and things, so we should not be concerned with ideals, values, or duties, but with recognizing and accepting Jesus Christ's *fait accompli* (Bonhoeffer 1995: 107). Through following Jesus, we establish direct contact in our kinship relationships and our duty to the community. The same Mediator who makes us individuals in relation to God founds a new fellowship. "He (Jesus) stands in the centre between my neighbour and myself" (Bonhoeffer 1995: 112). He divides, but also unites (Mark 10:28-31). We have everything through the Mediator, including the visible fellowship of the Church, yet with the proviso of persecutions.

Bonhoeffer lays the foundations of costly grace, calling, and commitment through the Sermon on the Mount following the flow of Matthew's gospel before he equips students in costly ministry (House 2015: 74). In Matthew 7, Bonhoeffer analyses how Jesus addresses the relationship between the disciples and unbelievers and infers that the disciples and the

people or the crowd belong together, the little flock and the great flock that Jesus is seeking (Bonhoeffer 1995: 183).

After examining the Sermon on the Mount, he moves on to Matthew 9:35-10:42. Matt. 9:35-38 highlights Jesus' motive and method for calling coworkers into God's harvest. Jesus had compassion for the people he taught in the cities and towns of Galilee for "they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (v. 36). Bonhoeffer taught his students to not only learn new techniques of preaching and instruction, "they were to be initiated into something that would radically change the prerequisites for those activities" (House 2015: 75).

Bonhoeffer's students wrote their impressions of his discipleship in the New Testament course, noting the call stories, Jesus' statements concerning discipleship, and the Sermon on the Mount. A letter from the Finkenwalde students to their supporters states:

Discipleship is the unconditional, sole commitment to Jesus Christ and thus to the cross, a commitment whose content cannot wholly be articulated. The place to which the church is called is the cross, and the only form in which the church can exist is discipleship. (Bonhoeffer et al. 1996b: 14:89)

Considering the context of Nazi Germany, the words of Bonhoeffer's students echo his aim to prepare students who would lead the church without compromise. Next, it is important to understand how the seminaries of the Confessing Church employed practices that Bonhoeffer laid out in *Life Together* to attain the biblical goals for ministers set forth in *The Cost of Discipleship*.

Community as Gift and Challenge

Bonhoeffer considered seminaries as precious communities of the visible body of Christ that showed students the way community life in churches can be shaped. The Confessing Church sought to establish pastoral ministry on the basis of brotherhood rather than privilege and prominence (House 2015: 129). Bonhoeffer recognized that his suggested practices could be adapted, so there is inherent flexibility in his approach.

Bonhoeffer's vision for community is grounded in Christology: "Christian community means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ" (Bonhoeffer

et al. 1996a: 5:31). Since Jesus is our Mediator, Bonhoeffer taught that Christians can live at peace with one another; love and serve one another; and become one (Bonhoeffer et al. 1996a: 5:33).

His insistence on the Christian community's identity in Christ led him to two convictions. First, Christian community is a divine reality, not an ideal. He warned that idealistic Christians can have a distinct conception of community life that can lead to disillusionment. Bonhoeffer asserts,

God hates this wishful dreaming because it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. Those who dream of this idealized community demand that it be fulfilled by God, by others, and by themselves. They enter the community of Christians with their demands, set up their own law, and judge one another and God accordingly. (Bonhoeffer et al. 1996a: 5:36)

Second, Christian communities are built on the manifest Word of God rather than the power of charismatic leaders. Christian community is a spiritual and not a psychic reality (Bonhoeffer et al. 1996a: 5:35). The desire for powerful, charismatic leaders in churches runs counter to Paul's standards for bishops (1Tim. 3) and to Jesus' statement in Matthew 23:8 that the disciples have one teacher, and they are all brothers (Bonhoeffer et al. 1996a: 5:106–7). In Mark 10:43, we learn that "Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant." He says that the community of faith does not need brilliant personalities, but faithful servants of Jesus and of one another, yet it often lacks the latter (Bonhoeffer et al. 1996a: 5:107). Apart from Jesus Christ, Christians would not recognize one another, and their egos would interfere with loving one another (Bonhoeffer et al. 1996a: 5:33). Bonhoeffer was emphatic about this principle with his young students who would lead the church:

Every personality cult that bears the mark of the distinguished qualities, outstanding abilities, powers, and talents of another, even if these are of a thoroughly spiritual nature, is worldly and has no place in the Christian community of faith; indeed, it poisons the community. (Bonhoeffer et al. 1996a: 5:133)

God calls us to a better way through thankfully receiving community life as linked with our salvation and incorporation into the body of Christ (House 2015: 111). Bonhoeffer stressed that shepherds of

the church must take the path of service and faithfulness that Paul and Jesus required. He emphasized four areas of service that took practical shape in seminary life: listening to others, active helpfulness, bearing with one another, and speaking God's Word to others.

At the seminary, students participated in a rule of life that included daily chapel, silent prayer and meditation, voluntary confession of sins to one another, and life together in community that included meals together and recreation. For Bonhoeffer, Christian worship never really stops with continuous scripture readings, singing hymns, prayer, communion, fellowship, and godly work. Bonhoeffer did not exclude himself from community life, but modeled participation including confession of sins.

He stressed that community life and meditation should make the individual strong for the times of testing and lead them to be ready for the daily reality of the world, not provide an escape from reality (Bonhoeffer et al. 1996a: 5:92). In conclusion, Bonhoeffer pointed out that almost everyone who has participated in true Christian community has been granted an uplifting experience by God (House 2015: 113).

Argument for In-Person Seminary Education

House uses Bonhoeffer's theology and practice of theological education to argue for what he calls the biblical necessity of personal, incarnational, face-to-face education for the health of pastors and churches (House 2015: 29). House says it's likely that seminary education has entered a new phase in the United States and elsewhere: "the biblically based, centuries-old belief that theological education should occur in person through mentors with peers in communities in communal places" is no longer deemed necessary (House 2015: 28).

According to House, seminaries have departed from two critical elements in theological education. First, they have departed from proving that theological traditions can produce a viable academic setting through faculty credentials and an enduring physical location. Second, they no longer prove they can govern themselves and teach reasonable, assessable goals. He says that many educators think impersonal education through credit or degree-granting online or hybrid means is inevitable even if they do not desire such a delivery system or think it is theologically viable.

House considers a commitment to incarnational pastoral formation as the irreplaceable key to recovering Bonhoeffer's seminary vision because God has placed the incarnational principle at the heart of

the Gospel. By any standard of measure, he says, this incarnational method remains successful. Shaping or forming people for service is God's means of developing believers in friendships, marriages, churches, and communities. However, this method can seem slow and requires patience.

Since some argue that face-to-face seminary education may inhibit world missions, House says in-person seminaries can begin with the mission's mandate and provide students with extensive access to teachers and colleagues that can catalyze missions. A practical concern is that people in some nations or locations without access to seminary education may also lack reliable internet and funds for computers. Also, oppressive governments could block and monitor online classes. House argues that even if emergency cases exist, missions should not be used as a reason for impersonal education when the real goal, or at least the result, is to enroll more students to increase tuition revenues.

Theologically, House points out that Jesus spent much of his ministry training a small number of disciples face-to-face. Then, he sent them out to make disciples. In this personal, organic way, the gospel expanded to the ends of the earth in a few decades (House 2015: 188). In the New Testament, Jesus is God speaking to people face-to-face and he has passed that direct speaking on to his church. (House 2015: 194–95).

However, I propose that perhaps enduring physical locations are less necessary, theological institutions can learn to equip a broader array of traditions, and reasonable, assessable goals can effectively be met through hybrid delivery systems that meet the challenges of the Church in the world. Both theological institutions and the Church must correctly assess the world we're in, and it is a connected, flattened, networked world. In Bonhoeffer's day, drastic circumstances made theological training entirely in church-monastic schools the best and possibly only option for the Confessing Church.

Theological education for the Church in today's realities cannot effectively train culturally savvy, theologically nuanced evangelists and church planters and release new kinds of apostolic leadership without significant contributions from contexts where such leaders can potentially oversee lay-empowered movements. These contexts are often simultaneously local and global. How might theological institutions do this well in a hybrid program without losing an emphasis on costly discipleship formed through life together? A case study looking at relational discipleship and mentoring in a small hybrid seminary program for Every Nation, a global family of

churches, may shed some light on this concern for theological education and the Church.

Relational Discipleship as an Integrated Hybrid Course in Every Nation Seminary

Every Nation is a global family of churches dedicated to establishing church-planting churches, reaching the next generation on the university campuses, and making disciples in every nation. Every Nation currently has five hundred churches in around eighty nations. Every Nation Seminary (ENS) is a global seminary headquartered in Manila, Philippines. The faculty and students are diverse, and the students enter the seminary program with at least several years of ministry experience as pastors, regional leaders, or campus missionaries. Except for an annual two-week intensive in Manila or Dubai, the students remain in their ministry contexts as they take classes and interact with faculty and other students.

The M.A. in Theology and Mission that ENS offers has four integrated courses over three years that are primarily taught at the intensives: Relational Discipleship, Biblical Preaching, Apostolic Leadership, and Global Mission. The curriculum includes four courses in theology, seven courses in biblical studies, and four courses in mission: Pneumatology, History of Missional Movements, Evangelism and Apologetics, and Pastoral Theology.

Not only are the courses integrated in the curriculum, they also directly relate to Every Nation's church-based discipleship and apostolic, global mission. Relational Discipleship is central among the four integrative courses. The ENS statement on relational discipleship follows:

We believe that every student is first and foremost a disciple of Jesus whose discipleship and leadership journey happens in the context of relationship—with God, the people of God, and the world. Therefore, at ENS, we desire to form deeply committed disciples of Jesus whose lives are marked by the lordship of Jesus (Christ-centered), the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Spirit-empowered), and the compassion of the Father for the lost and the oppressed (socially responsible). (“Mission | Every Nation Seminary” n.d.)

The core integrative outcome for Relational Discipleship is that graduates “will embody and grow in the practices of being and making

biblically-formed disciples who love the Triune God, one another, and the Word." This is linked to the outcome for global mission which is for graduates to exemplify "a biblical theology of mission, cultural humility, and a sacrificial lifestyle by praying for nations, financing missions, and mobilizing disciples who go to every nation and every campus."

Greg Mitchell, the professor of the Relational Discipleship course, says, "who we determine Christ to be determines how we follow him."² Discipleship is about grace and transformation, not adopting new behaviors. He weaves together a very practical, behavioral discipleship with theology. Trinitarian theology shapes his view of discipleship which he sees as relational development wherein the self is brought into the context of relationships, so the focus is not on personal, individual growth.

Mitchell says that Every Nation has done a great job unpacking discipleship as a reproducible program, so he focuses on how change occurs, viewing it as a process of death and resurrection built on Philippians 2:5-11. His emphasis is like Bonhoeffer's who linked following Christ with becoming members of the community of the cross through the Mediator or "people under the cross." Mitchell requires students to read sections of Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*. He says real discipleship is very vulnerable, it explores the heart, while making it too efficient runs contrary to biblical discipleship.

The ENS annual intensives are relational with four intentional commitments. First, everyone stays at the same hotel. Second, they cater lunch daily, so everyone, both faculty and students, dine together. Third, in class, they change the seating arrangement every two days. Fourth, in a similar way to Bonhoeffer's seminaries, ENS residential focus on life together in regular, simple, Word-centered, prayerful, formational worship through chapel services twice a day. Students overwhelmingly mentioned chapel and the relationships they built as their favorite and most formative experiences during the residential weeks.

At the beginning of the first intensive, William Murrell, the academic dean, orients the students into the academic culture and talks about the tensions between missional unity and theological diversity, action and reflection, and indoctrination and critical thinking. Looking back at Bonhoeffer's four areas of service in *Life Together*, the students have opportunities to listen to others, actively help, bear with one another, and speak God's Word to others during the intensives, but also through the multi-faceted mentoring program.

The Importance of Multi-Faceted Mentored Ministry

In ENS, mentored ministry is not a culmination of learning from the program nor a short-term mentored ministry experience. Rather, the mentoring program with three aspects is part of the seminary program from beginning to end. In seminaries, students are traditionally responsible for finding their own placements, which can be challenging for residential students who have relocated from distant locations, but the students in ENS are already involved in ministry and can remain in their contexts.

At the beginning, the ENS launch team asked, “How do we make ENS both global and relational in a correspondence program?” Murrell who led the launch team was greatly influenced by Bonhoeffer’s theology and seminary model.³ The team believed the best way to develop students as disciples, preachers, leaders, and missionaries is to provide a team of three mentors to each student, with each mentor having a different role and function. They mentor students to lean into existing discipleship relationships and into their contexts.

The Faculty Advisor is an ENS faculty member who offers academic guidance and facilitates a “micro-cohort” leadership group that offers opportunities for peer mentoring, prayer, critical reflection, and spiritual formation. Barry Lee, the director of the Mentored Ministry program said, “the intention is that people will be formed relationally as if they were in a Bonhoeffer seminary, but on a global scale.”⁴ Murrell describes the groups as similar to Wesleyan bands, so they are oriented around discipleship with time to reflect, share life, and pray. The groups are intentionally multi-generational, ethnically diverse, and diverse in ministry experience. For example, one leadership group has people from six nations in five regions, so cross-cultural learning takes place.

The Preaching Coach is a skilled preacher and experienced coach who facilitates individual and group coaching sessions focused on discovery and development. Each student is assigned a Preaching Coach for the duration of the program who offers timely feedback on individual sermons as well as sermon preparation. Preaching is also viewed as a fruit of the minister’s life.

The Ministry Mentor is a ministry leader from the same local church or regional context as the student who provides pastoral care and helps the student integrate what they are learning at ENS into their local ministry context. For example, a student from Myanmar is mentored by his pastor who is also Burmese, but he benefits from learning in a global

seminary. The network of relationships equips them to serve the church in both global and local contexts. Students typically can get visas to the Philippines where the intensives take place. Students from Namibia, Uganda, and South Africa have all been able to make it to the intensives.

Lee said students have given positive feedback regarding the global cohort because one culture does not tend to dominate among the plurality of cultures. On the other hand, ENS can only point in the direction of contextual issues as they tend to deal with the mission of the church within a plurality of global concerns. Lee said that a hybrid global seminary is working, but it is hard to do it well. It requires a lot of work.

The Visible Body of Christ: Towards Meeting the Challenges of the Church in the World

I will now look at how Bonhoeffer's perspective of the Church in the world broadened after the Gestapo shut down the seminaries he led. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer defines the church as existing "where the Word is preached, the sacraments are duly administered, and the ministry gifts of the people operate in daily life" (Bonhoeffer 1995: 187). He compared the Church to "a sealed train travelling through foreign territory" on its way through the world (Bonhoeffer 1995: 313). God sanctifies and seals the Church as his own possession, his habitation, the place from which the Word of God goes forth in judgement and reconciliation into all the world.

Bonhoeffer emphasized Christ's claims to exclusiveness in *The Cost of Discipleship*, but he came to understand Christ's claims to totality in the face of the Nazi's totalizing claims during his involvement in the resistance to the Nazi regime, which he wrote about in *Ethics* and *Letters and Papers from Prison* while imprisoned in Tegel. Drawing on Colossians 1:15 and other passages, Bonhoeffer developed a "Christocentric understanding of all reality" and revised some of his earlier views on sharp distinctions between the church and the world (Fowl and Jones 1998: 153). In *Ethics*, his view of Christ's claim to totality expands to reflect the world as the sphere where Christ is found (Bonhoeffer and Bethge 1995: 206). The reality of God revealed in Jesus Christ belongs to the world. Bonhoeffer did not think in terms of two spheres, church and world, but wrote that "the church is the church only when it exists for others" (Bonhoeffer 2015: 503, 282).

Viewing the church in this way has at least six implications. First, the church must be there for others simply because others exist who

Bonhoeffer understood to be both those who are without religion and those who are mature. Second, the church can be the church for others because Jesus is “the man for others.” Third, the church is for others if it keeps its doors open to the world, which can be a dangerous journey. Yet, it’s the nature of the church to do so. Fourth, the church is for others if it allows them to remain others and without trying to make them its own. Fifth, the church can be radically for others because Jesus Christ is at work in the world. Finally, the church for others is not merely a reinterpretation of ecclesiology, but inspires a change in financial commitments, building programs, liturgies, and theological education (Flett 2020: 122).

Martin Luther left monastic life and concluded that the otherworldliness of the Christian life should manifest in the midst of the world in the visible Christian community, the church, and in its daily life. Using Luther’s example, Bonhoeffer states that, “the Christian’s task is to live out that life in terms of his secular calling” (Bonhoeffer 1995: 298). Like the apostle Paul, Luther’s call to men to return to the world was a call to “enter the visible Church of the incarnate Lord” (Bonhoeffer 1995: 298).

However, Bonhoeffer emphasizes that the claims and limits of secular callings are fixed by our membership in the visible Body of Christ. Followers of Jesus reach a limit and enter into Christ’s suffering when “the space which the body of Christ claims and occupies in the world for its worship, its offices and the civic life of its members clashes with the world’s claim for space for its own activities” (Bonhoeffer 1995: 298). Such was the case during the Third Reich when church leaders and members were required to give an oath to Hitler’s leadership.

Bonhoeffer argues that whether in or out of the world, the Church’s task is to increasingly realize the form of Christ himself who came into the world, but was not of this world. Out of his infinite mercy, Christ bore mankind and took their sin upon himself, was rejected, and suffered. As the Body of Christ deeply invades the sphere of secular life with a great gulf existing at some points, Bonhoeffer insists that the Christian is to obey the following: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2, ESV).

Emphasis on visibility of witness recurs in Bonhoeffer’s writings and is crucial for grasping the personal and community aspects of Church and seminary. As Bonhoeffer taught, disciples and the people (or the crowd) belong together, the little flock and the great flock that Jesus is seeking.

Costly commitment to following Christ, the narrow way of the Sermon on the Mount, is best lived out in society. Therefore, a hybrid approach to seminary that involves a rhythm of life together during intensives with multifaceted mentoring and local contextual ministry is worthy of consideration, not just as a reluctant concession to trends.

Conclusion

For Bonhoeffer, Christian community forms us not only to read scripture wisely but also to live as Christians in the world. Stephen Fowl and Gregory Jones point out that Bonhoeffer emphasized reading scripture in community as this practice raises questions not only about biblical interpretation, but also about politics and ethics (Fowl and Jones 1998: 144). Reading scripture in community is a vital part of seminary education, which involves biblical interpretation and application to the manifold issues in our world today.

Bonhoeffer and the leaders of the Confessing Church's seminaries were acutely aware that they and the German Christians reached very different conclusions about how to live as faithful followers of Christ. What are the critical issues we face today that tend to divide the church? In contexts that are both local and global, how can theological institutions facilitate not only reading scripture together, but also following Jesus Christ in community as his visible body no matter the cost?

Looking at the crisis in theological education today, Yong asks a similar question: "How might theological education reconstruct itself in a postmodern, post-Western, post-Enlightenment, and even post-Christendom age?" (Yong 2020: 18). Part of his argument is that theological education needs to engage the rapidly de-institutionalizing forms of the twenty-first-century church (Yong 2020: 21).

The answers to these questions may be diverse, but I propose that the vision must be missional. Theological institutions must get out of the seemingly safe boat of preserving their own viability and walk with Jesus who calms the storm and leads us on his mission. Through a missional lens, new structures and delivery systems of theological education can form students to serve the Church on mission in today's world.

Throughout this paper, I have argued that institutions entrusted with the theological education of the current and future leaders of the Church can learn from Bonhoeffer's seminary vision. Principles of relational discipleship in the contexts of relationship with God, the people of God,

and the world can be integral to hybrid seminary approaches for training pastors and apostolic leaders who can meet the challenges of the Church in the world. Many leaders in Every Nation, including myself, have benefitted from the theological training in Asbury's Wesleyan tradition that corresponds with its commitment to global missions and relational discipleship.

End notes

¹ ENS 2021 cohort student profile: 32 students from 17 nations: 10 from North America, 9 from Asia, 5 from Africa, 3 from Latin America, 2 from Europe, 2 from Middle East, and one from Oceania. Four students are women. ENS 2022 cohort: 32 students from 16 nations: 18 from Asia, 6 from North America, 3 from Africa, 3 from Oceania, 1 from Europe, 1 from Latin America. Five students are women.

² Zoom interview with Dr. Greg Mitchell on August 25, 2022.

³ Zoom interview with Dr. William Murrell on August 24, 2022.

⁴ Zoom interview with Barry Lee on August 25, 2022.

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Kenny Johnston

Faith, Knowledge, and Virtue: John Wesley's Concept of Faith as a Conscious State

Abstract:

It is well established that John Wesley's understanding of faith shifted radically between 1735 and 1740. The nature of that shift is variously understood, but most agree that Wesley shifted from defining faith as assent only to faith as a heartfelt trust; from faith as a bottom-up effort to faith as a top-down gift. What is often overlooked is that Wesley's new version of faith was influenced by his previous epistemological commitments. Faith, accordingly, is defined in terms of a *conscious state*, something not deducible by inference but directly available to its subject, and located epistemologically at the forefront of the mind's tripartite operations.

Keywords: John Wesley, theology, faith, Aldersgate, conscious state

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Introduction

In *Aldersgate Reconsidered* (Maddox 1990), Wesleyan scholars attempted to better understand the nature and importance of John Wesley's 1738 Aldersgate experience.¹ In *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Collins and Tyson 2001), Wesleyan scholars addressed the broader theme of conversion itself, but in doing so, Aldersgate was never too far out of view.² One issue surrounding the debate about Aldersgate is whether or not it represents Wesley's conversion experience or even if such a thing exists. If it does, what is the extent and significance of that conversion? If it doesn't, then what does Aldersgate represent exactly?³ One thing that is inarguable, however, is that Wesley *did* undoubtedly have a conversion of how he defined faith in and around this period. If nothing else can be established for certain, it is nevertheless true that Wesley's notion of faith from his early years underwent a radical change. From approximately 1735 to 1740, Wesley's understanding of faith as a bottom-up assent was converted to a top-down, supernatural gift, understood epistemically as a conscious state. As a conscious state, faith is a non-inferential and incorrigible.

I will begin first by summarizing Wesley's understanding of faith between 1725 and 1730 as an assent to the objects of faith, grounded upon the authority of divine testimony, the virtue of which is located in an allegiance to divine authority. Second, I will then develop what I take to be the salient features of his motivation for rethinking his understanding of faith. I will demonstrate that his notion of faith was not first found to be deficient definitionally or even theologically, but *experimentally*. Third, I will argue that because being a rational Christian was important to him, he therefore needed a framework upon which to build his new understanding of faith, which he found in his commitment to Aristotelian empiricism. The result is that faith was moved from the second operation of the mind (judgment) into the first (simple apprehension).

Wesley's Concept of Faith from 1725–1730⁴

Wesley's earliest attempt at defining faith took place during the latter half of 1725 in correspondence with Susanna, his mother, while reading Richard Fiddes' account of faith and Jeremy Taylor's account of holy living.⁵ At that time, Wesley attempted to define faith as "an assent to a proposition upon rational grounds," his understanding being almost completely dependent on Fiddes.⁶ Objects of faith were understood to be

proportioned to the evidence or reasonableness of the object. His argument can be summarized by the following passage from his July 29th letter.

I call faith an assent upon rational grounds, because I hold divine testimony to be the most reasonable of all evidence whatever. Faith must necessarily at length be resolved into reason. *God* is true; therefore what *He* says is true. He hath said this; therefore this is true. When anyone can bring me more reasonable propositions than these, I am ready to assent to them; till then, it will be highly unreasonable to change my mind.⁷

Wesley was not simply arguing that trust in the divine testimony is rational, but that the divine testimony testifies to nothing that is *not* rational, and therefore that our epistemic duty is to put faith in no object that is not *supported* rationally. The distinction is subtle. If every object of faith is resolvable into reason, then, he argued, the virtuous act of faith is to establish a rational account of every object of faith, proportioning faith to the evidence of reason. The virtue of faith is directly related to the fulfillment of one's epistemic duty.⁸

Susanna, however, suggested to Wesley that his definition of faith was definitionally flawed and that there is a better account for faith than that found in his study of Fiddes.⁹ Her argument was that "an assent to a proposition upon rational grounds" describes not faith but science.¹⁰ Instead, argued Susanna, faith is a species of assent defined as an assent grounded upon the authority of divine testimony. Although all objects of assent are "at length resolved into reason," yet faith need not wait on that resolution, nor should it.¹¹ She wrote, "For though the same thing may be an object of faith as revealed, and an object of reason as deducible from rational principles, yet I insist upon it that the virtue of faith, by which through the merits of our Redeemer we must be saved, is an assent to the truth of whatever God hath been pleased to reveal, *because* he hath revealed it, and not because we understand it."¹² The virtue of faith in *this* case, is found in an allegiance to the divine authority as a grounds as opposed to the evidences of reason.¹³

Not only did Wesley come over to the opinion of Susanna, but he went even farther in 1730 than she did in 1725. In 1730 he held that faith is an assent to the objects of faith upon the grounds of God's authority. Moreover, all objects of faith can ultimately be resolved into reason. New, however, was that God sets "proper bounds" to what can be rationally accessed this side of human malfunction so as to encourage faith. "And

this intention of our Creator [to limit the bounds of attainable knowledge] is excellently served by the measure of understanding we now enjoy. *It suffices for faith, but not for knowledge.* We can believe in God—we cannot see him.”¹⁴ In 1730, not only is it more virtuous to ground one’s faith in divine testimony as opposed to the evidence of reason, but also God has deliberately limited the boundaries of reason so as to encourage faith as a choice, rather than as a dictate of knowledge.

Epistemological Framework

Two things are important to know at this point. First, Wesley was working within an epistemological framework in which the mind has a tripartite division of operations: simple apprehension, judgment, and discourse.¹⁵ Second, within this framework, faith was understood to function under the second operation, judgment. This combination produces a bottom-up faith, where faith is both a choice and a responsibility of the subject.

Evidence of the Early Influence of the Tripartite Division

As far as I can tell, Wesley did not make any direct references to the tripartite division before the 1740s, after which it became more numerous throughout the remainder of his life.¹⁶ However, there are two reasons besides his later use of the tripartite division for thinking that they shaped his thinking in the early stages.¹⁷

First, Wesley was educated at Christ Church, Oxford where he would have been directly exposed to this unique epistemological framework prior to 1725. Henry Rack writes that the “latest study of Oxford logic shows that much of the instruction depended on compendia of Aristotelian and later scholastic logic: Wesley studied Aldrich’s version [the tripartite division version].”¹⁸ Furthermore, Rex Matthews writes, “This tripartite division of the operations of the human mind and of the corresponding functions of logic is unique to the Aristotelian tradition in eighteenth-century England.”¹⁹ By education alone, the framework would have been familiar to him.

The second reason for thinking that Wesley used this tripartite framework is because two of the most influential authors that informed his early years on faith also used it for framing *their* arguments. Wesley only discussed faith in 1725 and 1730. In 1725 he was reading Richard Fiddes’ *Theologica Speculativa*, specifically parroting Fiddes’ argument on faith. In

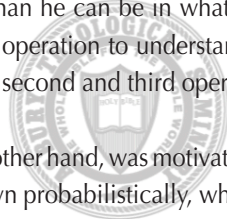
1730 Wesley was reading and abridging Peter Browne's *The Procedure*, at which time he used certain elements of Browne's book to inform his sermon "The Promise of Understanding," which elucidates Wesley's developing understanding of faith. Both Fiddes and Browne explicitly used the tripartite division to build their arguments.

Faith in the Tripartite Division

As noted above, the tripartite division of the operations of the mind consists of simple apprehension, judgment, and discourse. Wesley defined simple apprehension as "the bare conceiving a thing in the mind," which occurs when something is either self-evident or evident to the senses or incorrigible.²⁰ These first conceptions were known as "ideas." He defined judgment as "the mind's determining in itself, that the things it conceives agree or disagree," which is when the mind first exercises its will on the ideas of apprehension or perception, accepting them, rejecting them, and attending to them. Finally, he defined discourse as "the progress of the mind from one judgment to another" using inference. The first operation, simple apprehension, is non-inferential, direct, and immediate; it commands assent. The second two operations, judgment and inference, are inferential, indirect, and mediate. The second and third can only admit of probabilistic assent and can only work upon the ideas provided by the first operation.²¹

For both Fiddes and Browne, faith was a species of judgment, meaning that faith is indirect and mediate. Fiddes was motivated by a desire to establish human liberty in faith. If faith is located within simple apprehension, then, according to Fiddes' epistemology, the liberty of faith is impossible. He wrote, "Perception is always true, and necessarily what it is; and consequently infallible. For a man cannot be deceiv'd in what he perceives; any more than he can be in what he sees, hears, or feels."²² Fiddes attributed the first operation to understanding, since understanding is purely passive, and the second and third operations to the will, since the will must act.

Browne, on the other hand, was motivated to establish that revealed religion can only be known probabilistically, which meant that faith *cannot* be located within the first operation. Browne explored three possible ways that direct religious knowledge might be possible, all of which he rejected. The first option is the immediate presence of the objects of faith presented to a "faculty in the mind which is disposed to receive that impression, and



retain it."²³ But, according to Browne, no such faculty is known. Secondly, it could simply be by the power of God who might "impregnate the mind with true and *direct* ideas of spiritual things, which were never present to any of our faculties..."²⁴ The final option was that a person might have some internal ability to "intuit" such things (like heavenly beings), circumventing the faculties of material sensation.²⁵ Browne appears to have thought that the second and third options would be extraneous since the rational faculties God has provided are adequate to the task.

Although Wesley was not as explicit as Fiddes and Browne, he appears to have accepted their application of the tripartite operations in relation to faith. For instance, in "The Promise of Understanding," he stated that faith can be chosen because God deliberately places some aspects of knowledge beyond the proper bounds of human capacity. "It suffices for faith, but not for knowledge. We can believe in God—we cannot see him."²⁶ The implication is that if we could see God, then faith would be overwhelmed by knowledge. Seeing God would fit into the category of simple apprehension, where objects are directly perceived (evident to the senses). "Another reason why he now hides himself from us is to fulfill his eternal purpose, that man, as long as he continued upon earth, should walk by faith, *not by sight*."²⁷ Direct contact and perception are by definition out of view in Wesley's 1730 understanding of faith.

Wesley's Experimental Discontent

Exercising faith was not, for Wesley, a one-time decision such that if exercised, one *will* be saved. Rather, faith was a chosen assent to the propositions and attitudes suggested by divine revelation. It was necessary, therefore, to continuously exercise faith under the hope of salvation. He had established in 1730 that hope, as a species of assent like faith, occurs when a person takes a proposition of faith (grounded in divine testimony) and infers from that proposition to the conclusion that "I am to hope for salvation."²⁸ He writes, "Everyone therefore who inquires into the grounds of his own hope reasons in this manner:

If God be true, and I am sincere, then I am to hope;
But God is true, and I am sincere, (There is the pinch);
Therefore, I am to hope."²⁹

The variable in the syllogism is the sincerity of the subject (the "pinch"). By faith a person affirms the hypothetical, but by inference he or she arrives at

hope. Key to that hope is being able to *perceive* one's own sincerity: "Am I really doing all I can with the best I have?"³⁰

What would be the case if a person could not *presently* hope? Wesley had written in 1725 the following to answer this question in one of his objections to Jeremy Taylor:

...I imagined [in opposition to Taylor] that when I communicated worthily, i.e. with faith, humility, and thankfulness, my preceding sins were *ipso facto* forgiven me—I mean, so forgiven that unless I fell into them again I might be secure of their ever rising in judgment against me, at least in the other world. But if we can never have any certainty of our being in a state of salvation, good reason it is that every moment should be spent, not in joy, but fear and trembling, and then undoubtedly in this life WE ARE of all men most miserable!³¹

If one cannot have certainty in their present state of salvation, no wonder but that they should be in a state of constant fear and misery.

It was not until 1730 that Wesley developed his understanding of the relationship of hope to faith, which by that time came to mean a certainty arrived at through faith in the proposition, "If God be true, and I am sincere, then I am to hope" conjoined with an inference to the conclusion of hope grounded in the perception of one's sincerity.³² The difficulty for Wesley, then, was the constant maintenance of his faith in order to maintain a continuous hope of salvation. And this leads us to Wesley's trip to America in 1735.

*Wesley Goes to America to Save his Soul in 1735*³³

Because Wesley must always be working to exercise faith, since this is the only means towards hope, he set out in 1735 to go to Georgia as a missionary. He explained to Dr. John Burton, a scholar of Corpus Christi College, "My chief motive, to which all the rest are subordinate, is the hope of saving my own soul."³⁴ Further on in the letter, he anticipated Burton's response. "But you will perhaps ask, Can't you save your own soul in England as well as in Georgia?"³⁵ Wesley responded:

I answer, No, neither can I hope to attain the same degree of holiness here which I may there; neither, if I stay here knowing this, can I reasonably hope to attain any degree of holiness at all. For whoever, when two ways of life are proposed, prefers that which he is convinced in his own

mind is less pleasing to God, and less conducive to the perfection of his soul, *has no reason from the Gospel of Christ to hope that he shall ever please God at all, or receive from him that grace whereby alone he can attain any degree of Christian perfection.*³⁶

It must be kept in mind that for Wesley, where there is not hope, which can easily be shattered by self-doubt in one's own sincerity, there is only the expectation of a state of fear and misery.

Wesley then boarded a ship and began to learn German in order to converse with the Moravians. On January 17th, he experienced his first storm on the ship, and it did not go well. He expressed shame at his "unwillingness to die."³⁷ On January 23rd, just a few days later, a second storm came, and Wesley was perplexed by his response. He recorded, "I could not but say to myself, 'How is it that thou hast no faith?' being still unwilling to die."³⁸ The problem that was occurring in Wesley's mind was that his system was failing in some way. According to his notion of faith and hope, he should be at peace and at ease. What makes it worse, he recognized a different response from the Moravians. According to his system, it followed that he did not have faith, he thought.³⁹

On January 25, 1736, Wesley journaled that he had noticed the character of the Moravians, and with another coming storm, he put them to the test. "There was now an *opportunity of trying* whether they were delivered from the spirit of fear, as well as from that pride, anger, and revenge."⁴⁰ Wesley observed them, using the coming storm as an opportunity for a live experiment.⁴¹ The result, as is well known, was that the English began to scream while the Moravians "calmly sung on."⁴² On February 24th, once in Georgia, Wesley wrote in his diary that he had once again "opportunity, day by day, of *observing their whole behavior.*"⁴³ Thus the experiment continued. What was the variable that differentiated Wesley and the Germans?

Upon reaching Georgia, Wesley sought the audience of August Spangenberg, a Moravian pastor, and asked him for advice. Wesley had not yet entertained the idea that his model of faith was wrong, only that he must not have it, or at least have it fully, and that the Moravians *did* have it. The conversation between Wesley and Spangenberg, though well known, is worth noting at length because it reveals some important epistemological distinctions. The interchange got awkward because Spangenberg used the language of *knowing* Jesus as opposed to *believing* a proposition about

Jesus. Though Spangenberg was no philosopher, his terminology implied that faith can exist in the first operation of the mind, simple apprehension. Meanwhile Wesley uncomfortably shifted the terminology back to the propositional language of the second operation of the mind.

[Spangenberg] said, "My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God?" I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" I paused, and said, "I know he is the Saviour of the world." "True," replied he; "but do you know he has saved you?" I answered, "I hope he has died to save me." He only added, "Do you know yourself?" I said, "I do." But I fear they were vain words.⁴⁴

Wesley was "surprised." He had only understood the witness of the Spirit according to his understanding of hope, based upon inference from the promises of scripture.⁴⁵ This is why he answered, "I *hope* he has died to save me." Wesley wasn't being trite; he was being precise. Additionally, for Spangenberg to ask, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" was to move an object of faith, Jesus Christ and his salvation, from the second operation of the mind (judgment) to the first (simple apprehension). It is not clear that Wesley deliberately analyzed it this way at the time, but it certainly seems clear that this is why it caught him off guard and why he answered the way he did. Wesley's response removed the language that indicated a direct, experiential relation, something that only occurs with material objects of sensation or incorrigible states, and replaced it with indirect, propositional language.

On December 22nd, 1737, almost two years later, Wesley began his journey back to England, and made a journal entry on December 28th that is important. While at sea, he experienced what Ken Collins has identified as possibly a panic attack though "the wind being small, and the sea smooth...."⁴⁶ Wesley cried out for help from God, and God granted momentary relief. Out of that relief came a reinforcement of his former understanding about faith and the facing of death at sea as an experimental test.

Let me observe hereon, (1) that not one of these hours ought to pass out of my remembrance, till I attain another manner of spirit, a spirit equally willing to glorify God by life or by death; (2) that whoever is uneasy on any account (bodily pain alone excepted) carries in himself

his own conviction that he is so far an unbeliever. Is he uneasy at the apprehension of death? Then he believeth not that 'to die is gain.' At any of the events of life? Then he hath not a firm belief that 'all things work together for his good.' And if he bring the matter more close, he will always find, beside the general want of faith, every particular uneasiness is evidently owing to the want of some particular Christian temper.⁴⁷

Faith, here, is about "attaining" a spirit that is "willing." If a person experiences uneasiness, it is because he or she does not assent to the proposition, "to die is gain." His working principle about faith was that "every particular uneasiness" is proportioned to "want of some particular Christian temper," the temper itself understood as an object of faith.

On that day, December 28th, 1737, Wesley thought that he had finally attained the faith he had witnessed among the Moravians. Nevertheless, by January 8th, he reached the very opposite of that conclusion

By the most infallible of proofs, inward feeling, I am convinced: 1. Of unbelief, having no such faith in Christ as will prevent my heart from being troubled; which it could not be if I believed in God, and rightly believed also in him [i.e., Christ].⁴⁸

Finally, Wesley had failed the test, and how is it that he knows? By the most "infallible of proofs, inward feeling." By now we can recognize the following formula of faith and hope:

If God be true, and I am sincere, then I am to hope;
But God is true, and I am sincere, (There is the pinch);
Therefore, I am to hope.⁴⁹

But Wesley does *not* perceive his own sincerity, and this is what he means by "inward feelings."

Inward Feelings and Incurable Conscious States

Key to Wesley's formula, but as of yet not discussed, is that in Wesley's empiricism, inward feelings are the sorts of things that have evidential value.⁵⁰ In fact, they are among the most important for evidential value. Earlier I mentioned that the first operation of the mind, simple apprehension, is an operation that is direct, immediate, and non-inferential. Simple apprehension was understood to occur in one of several

ways: through what is self-evident, evident to the senses, or incorrigible. Something is self-evident if the truth of it is relatively perceivable and necessary such as “all unmarried men are bachelors.” The smell of a rose is something evident to the senses, as is anything presented to the faculties of material sensation. Something is incorrigible when its existence implies and entails that it is perceived. The most notable use of incorrigibility is when applied to one’s own *conscious states*. Scott Crothers and Joseph Cunningham give the example that “the belief that I am tired now is an incorrigible belief.”⁵¹ An example of the incorrigibility of conscious states is found in John Locke’s famous *Essay*: “For to be happy or miserable without being conscious of it, seems to me utterly inconsistent and impossible.”⁵²

Later in Wesley’s life, he uses the perception of conscious states regularly to establish his arguments.⁵³ It is visible, however, from the beginning, being the key to peace in 1725, the “pinch” of any inference of hope, and the most significant variable in his experiment of fear in 1737 and 1738. It is an epistemic principle that he *never* gave up. One’s conscious states are immediately accessible and incorrigible.

Wesley Develops His Concept of Faith

On January 24th, two weeks following the conclusion of his failed experiment, he famously wrote, “I went to America to convert the Indians; but Oh! Who shall convert me? ... I have a fair summer religion.”⁵⁴ On January 28th, he wrote, “I have no hope, but that if I seek I shall find....”⁵⁵ It is at this time that he made the following statement about faith.

If it be said that I have faith (for many such things have I heard, from many miserable comforters), I answer, So have the devils—a *sort* of faith.... The faith I want is, ‘a sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God’. ... *I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it.*⁵⁶

Wesley wanted a faith *which none can have without knowing that he has it*. This was the first explicit step away from his prior understanding. It was a step toward faith as an inward *conscious state* that is incorrigible.

Wesley and Peter Böhler 1738

On February 7th, Wesley met Peter Böhler, following which, it became clear that Wesley engaged in many conversations with him on the nature of faith. On February 18th, Wesley mentioned that Böhler had

confronted him. "*Mi frater, mi frater, excoquenda est ista tua philosophia—* My brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away."⁵⁷ It is not clear what Wesley's takeaway was from this, especially since he expressed his ignorance of Böhler's comments in his journal that night. Presumably, though, Wesley shared his understanding of faith with Böhler, which likely included a portrayal of faith that was objectified rather than experiential. On March 4th, in company with Böhler and his brother Charles, Wesley wrote that being "clearly convinced of unbelief," he began in spite of his lack of faith to preach "this new doctrine" of "*salvation by faith alone*."⁵⁸

What did Wesley mean by a "new doctrine"? He recorded a shift in his thinking and doctrine, but he also recorded much confusion. I suggest that Wesley's confusion is found in his unconscious inability to reconcile the language of faith as an incorrigible conscious state with his broader epistemological commitment that faith and hope belong in the second and third operations of the mind. Böhler and Spangenberg discussed faith in a manner of "knowing Jesus" and having a "confidence" that, if one has it, cannot escape perception, placing faith in the first operation of the mind. Of course, Böhler and Spangenberg did not have an epistemological framework, only crude and experiential descriptions. They were not philosophers but pastors. We can surmise, though, that this new doctrine was theologically associated with Luther's *sola fide*.

On April 22nd, with Böhler, Wesley emphasized that he was confused as to "how a man could *at once* be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost."⁵⁹ After a careful study of scripture and an interview of testimonies on the following day, Wesley declared: "Here ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, 'Lord, help thou my unbelief.'"⁶⁰ The initial confusion regarded the possibility of an *instantaneous* faith. This highlights my suggestion that Wesley wanted to define faith in a way that positions it within the first operation of the mind, but which he could not epistemologically justify or comprehend.

By April 23rd, Wesley confessed that instantaneous faith is presently possible and being experienced by some, but he did not work out the epistemological implications of how it works. He did, however, understand its theological implications, that faith was no longer to be understood as a *bottom-up* but as a *top-down* relation to God. Faith is *God's* working. On May 14th, Wesley wrote to his brother that this new doctrine

of faith is “intolerable to *religious men*” because it “makes Christ a Saviour to the utmost....”⁶¹ He explained that “this is not to be wondered at. For all *religious* people have such a quantity of righteousness, acquired by much painful exercise....”⁶² The obvious implication was that religious people will be offended that their virtuous efforts account for nothing before God.

Wesley and Aldersgate 1738

At five in the morning on May 24th, Wesley read the Greek text of 2 Peter 1:4, “Τὰ μέγιστα ἡμῖν καὶ τίμια ἐπαγγέλματα δεδότηται, ἥνα γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως—‘There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature.’”⁶³ This passage is choice because it communicates something of a spiritual ontology, a contact between subject and subject, elucidating the shift that was taking place in Wesley and highlighting his earliest conversation with Spangenberg. By that evening, Wesley related,

I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther’s Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.⁶⁴

Wesley’s language here has important epistemological qualities. Whether or not we can call this Wesley’s conversion, is, for my purposes, irrelevant. What is relevant is that Wesley’s perceived *confidence* in Jesus is such that he not only understands himself to have it, but it is incorrigible for him. This represents his *conscious state*, which, be reminded, cannot err.

It is no argument against Wesley’s conscious state on the evening of May 24th that his perceived state is different on following dates noted by scholars.⁶⁵ I am not arguing that a certain theological and philosophical finesse is unnecessary, but, rather, that following the month of May, 1738, Wesley forever shifted his concept of faith. It remains true that certain issues need to be sorted. For instance, this new definition, which was not worked out by Wesley yet and what, for the moment I will call the faith-as-a-conscious-state principle (CSP_f), has problems.

(CSP_F) For any person p , and for some conscious state x , if p has faith, then p has x where x is incorrigible for p and the instantiation of x in p is veridical.

Now suppose we define a conscious state where $\sim x$ is instantiated in p and define it as (CSP _{$\sim F$}).

(CSP _{$\sim F$}) For any person p , and for some conscious state $\sim x$, if p does not have faith, then p has $\sim x$ where $\sim x$ is incorrigible for p and the instantiation of $\sim x$ in p is veridical.

In this case we might say that a person has and does not have faith upon the evidence or instantiation of their conscious states. So, we can add a time quantifier t and imagine both instantiations for a person at different times, at one time genuinely having faith but at another time afterwards genuinely not having faith.

(CSP_{F \times $\sim F$}) For any person p , and for some conscious state x , and for some conscious state $\sim x$, and for some time t^1 , and for some time t^2 , possibly, p has x at t^1 and $\sim x$ at t^2 where x at t^1 and $\sim x$ at t^2 is incorrigible and veridical for p .

The problem is that if conscious states have the properties of incorrigibility as well as veridicality then at any time Wesley perceives his conscious state of unbelief, he at that time genuinely escapes salvation. These are the sorts of problems that need to be discussed, and they *are* resolvable. Nevertheless, my point is simply to demonstrate that this is the sort of shift that Wesley was making and the problems it involves.

Developments Following Aldersgate 1739

On January 4th, 1739, Wesley, it appears, makes a fuller connection to his implicit epistemology. In his journal, he writes the following:

My friends affirm I am mad, because I said I was not a Christian a year ago [at the Hutton's]. I affirm I am not a Christian now. Indeed, what I might have been I know not, had I been faithful to the grace then given, when, expecting nothing less, I received such a sense of the forgiveness of my sins as till then I never knew. But that I am not a Christian at this day I as assuredly know as that Jesus is the Christ.

For a Christian is one who has the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, which (to mention no more) are love, peace, joy. But these I have not. I have not any love of God. I do not love either the Father or the Son. Do you ask how do I know whether I love God? I answer by another question, 'How do you know whether you love me?' Why, as you know whether you are hot or cold. You *feel* this moment that you do or do not love me. And I *feel* this moment I do not love God; which therefore I *know* because I *feel* it. There is no word more proper, more clear, or more strong.⁶⁶

We can see the problem, discussed above, of viewing faith as an incorrigible conscious state that reflects ultimate relations. Regardless, consider how Wesley thereafter discussed his understanding of that experience and his new concept of faith. The epistemological language is throughout. "Do you ask how do I know...?" Wesley's appeal as to the knowledge of his own inward, conscious states was based on examples of other incorrigible conscious states. His example, "Why, as you know whether you are hot or cold." He knows it in the same way that one "cannot be happy and miserable without be conscious of it," (Locke 1690);⁶⁷ in the same way that one "who perceives not *joy* has not *joy*," ('John Smith' 1746);⁶⁸ and in the same way that "you cannot but perceive if you love, rejoice, and delight in God," (Wesley 1738);⁶⁹ in the same way a person may inwardly and directly perceive "a sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God," (Wesley 1738).⁷⁰

If I am correct that Wesley was working from Aldrich's tripartite division of the operations of the mind, then it is unlikely that Wesley was still, in 1739, thinking of faith as something that is a species of judgment, or even of assent at all.⁷¹ This is evidenced by the fact that faith was defined primarily in terms of conscious states that are incorrigible and veridical, which means that the act of the will is uninvolved and the subject passive. And because incorrigible conscious states were not understood as associated with the second and third operations of the mind, Wesley likely began to understand them at that time according to the first operation, simple apprehension. (Of course, we know that in the 1740s, he did, in fact, develop his concept of faith along these lines, as a faculty of perception, and he specifically used the tripartite division to present his argument.)⁷²

Conclusion

I have argued that Wesley's development of faith in and surrounding Aldersgate might better be understood against his Oxford, Aristotelian education and early readings where the operations of the mind are divided by simple apprehension, judgment, and discourse. I have also argued that in Wesley's earliest musings on faith, he located faith in the second and third operations of the mind, associating it with a bottom-up tendency in which a person would virtuously assent to objects of faith on the grounds of divine authority. Finally, I have argued that in the time surrounding Aldersgate, Wesley shifted his understanding of faith in a way that relocated faith in the first operation of the mind (simple apprehension) where it became associated with incorrigible, conscious states.

Rex Matthews most helpfully suggested in 1986 that we understand Wesley's 1738 transition according to the notion of "convictional knowing," a theory of knowledge articulated in 1981 by James Loder.⁷³ The value of my interpretation of that time period is that it utilizes a context closer to home for Wesley for understanding how Wesley himself might have been processing it, as opposed to how we might make sense of it.

My broader purpose for this study is to better understand Wesley so that we can more properly situate him within current discussions about faith. For instance, how does faith fit within the certainty of faith tradition argued for by Brandon Dahm?⁷⁴ Or how does it square with faith as a mechanism of cognitive input, like that formulated by Alvin Plantinga?⁷⁵ Or what about John Piper's life-long development of faith as an affection?⁷⁶ What about Matthew W. Bates' argument that faith is defined as an allegiance?⁷⁷ Furthermore, where do we locate the virtue of faith now that it is not located in the liberty of faith? If Wesleyan scholars are to join the discussions looming large today, then having a proper understanding of Wesley's epistemological outlook regarding faith is necessary. My hope is to have pushed our understanding of Wesley one step further, and to some degree, I *hope* the reader *perceives* that I have accomplished it.

End notes

¹ *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, edited by Randy L. Maddox (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990).

² *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*, edited by Kenneth J. Collins and John H. Tyson (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001).

³ See the compelling argument of Mark K. Olson in *Wesley and Aldersgate: Interpreting Conversion Narratives*, Routledge Methodist Studies Series (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2019). Olson argues that Wesley understood his own narrative about Aldersgate specifically as a *conversion narrative*.

⁴ For a detailed analysis see my “Analytical Theology Applied: John Wesley’s Early Logic of Faith (1725 and 1730),” forthcoming in *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, vol. 16 (2024).

⁵ Wesley was incredibly disciplined in his width and breadth of reading. In 1726, Wesley’s reading plan was revised as follows: “Mondays and Tuesdays were to be given to classics, Wednesdays to logic and ethics, Thursdays to Hebrew and Arabic, Fridays to metaphysics and natural philosophy, Saturdays to oratory and poetry, and Sundays to divinity.” Onva K. Boshears, “John Wesley, the Bookman” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1972), 101–2.

⁶ John Wesley, Letter to Susanna Wesley (July 29, 1725), *Letters I*, ed. Frank Baker and Ted A. Campbell, 7 vols., vols. 25–31 in *The Works of John Wesley* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1980–82; and Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015–), 25:174–5. Hereafter *Letters*. Richard Fiddes, *Theologica Speculativa: or The First Part of a Body of Divinity, Under That Title Wherein are Explained the Principles of Natural and Reveal’d Religion* (London, UK: Printed by W. Bowyer for Bernard Lintot, 1718), 330–56.

⁷ Wesley, *Letters I*, 25:175.

⁸ I tease out the details of this more fully in “Analytic Theology Applied,” (forthcoming). For a discussion of noetic and epistemic duty see Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁹ Wesley, *Letters I*, 25:179, 183 respectively.

¹⁰ Susanna lists three species of assent: what is self-evident, what is deduced from what is self-evident (science), and what is believed by testimony (faith). Wesley, *Letters I*, 25:179.

¹¹ Wesley, *Letters I*, 25:179, 183.

¹² Wesley, *Letters I*, 25:183 (italics added).

¹³ I use the term allegiance because I think it represents what was being argued for, but the term is inspired in part by its recent use in Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).

¹⁴ Wesley, “The Promise of Understanding,” in *Sermons IV*, vols. 1–4 of *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, edited by Albert C. Outler (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984–1987), 4:288 [italics added]. Hereafter *Sermons*.

¹⁵ This tripartite division is attributed to Henry Aldrich, *Artis Logicae Compendium* (Oxford, UK: At the Sheldonian Theater, 1691).

¹⁶ Rex D. Matthews covers Wesley's use and understanding of these operations in Matthews, "Religion and Reason Joined: A Study in the Theology of John Wesley" (Th.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1986), 78–119.

¹⁷ In 1734 Wesley read Isaac Watts' *Logic*, where a fourth operation is added to Aldrich's tripartite division. Apparently, Wesley did not like it (Matthews, "Religion and Reason," 101). Isaac Watts, *Logic: Or, the Right Use of Reason in the Enquiry After Truth* (1724), in *The Works of Isaac Watts, D.D.*, 9 vols. (London, UK: Printed for Longman, et al., by Edward Baines, 1813).

¹⁸ Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1989), 65."

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

²⁰ These definitions are from Wesley's translation of Henry Aldrich's Latin version in 1756. John Wesley, *A Compendium of Logic*, in *The Works of John Wesley, A.M.*, edited by Thomas Jackson, 3rd ed., 14 vol. ([1872] Reprint. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 14:161. Quoted in Matthews, "Religion and Reason Joined," 98. The use of the term incorrigible is more modern, but the idea of it was used in Wesley's day to describe inward states that one could not experience without knowing that they are experiencing them. I will discuss this more below.

²¹ This is commonly understood as classical foundationalism. Alvin Plantinga defines classical foundationalism as "believing one proposition on the evidential basis of others," *Warranted Christian Belief*, 82 (italics in the original). Scott Crothers and Joseph Cunningham define classical foundationalism as "the foundationalist epistemology which permits only two types of beliefs to be believed without the rational support of other beliefs as evidence. These two sorts of beliefs are those that are either self-evident (the belief that 1+1=2 for example) or incorrigible, that is beliefs about one's own states of consciousness that cannot be believed mistakenly (for example, the belief that I am tired now is an incorrigible belief)." "Wesley's Epistemology in Contemporary Perspective," in *Via Media Philosophy: Holiness Unto Truth; Intersections between Wesleyan and Roman Catholic Voices*, ed. Bryan Williams (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), 171 n1.

²² Fiddes, *Theologica Speculativa*, 332.

²³ Browne, *The Procedure*, 92.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 93 (italics in the original).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁶ Wesley, *Sermons IV*, 4:288.

²⁷ Ibid. (italics added).

²⁸ Wesley, *Letters I*, 25:245. See my explication of this in “Analytical Theology Applied,” forthcoming in *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, vol. 16 (2024).

²⁹ Ibid. This deductive account of hope becomes the foundation of Wesley’s more developed doctrine of the witness of the Spirit.

³⁰ I address Wesley’s understanding of perception as an epistemological issue in “Perceiving Wesley: An Analytical Study of Epistemological Uses of Perception in John Wesley’s Theology,” *The Methodist Review: A Journal of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies* 14 (2022): 78–117.

³¹ Wesley, *Letters I*, 25:170.

³² The correspondence between Wesley and Susanna demonstrate that attitudes were as much an object of faith as propositions.

³³ The following section contains passages that have been all but worn out in discussion, but they contain important hints regarding Wesley precise epistemological understanding that have not been explored.

³⁴ Wesley, *Letters I*, 25:439. His journal entry from October 14th, 1735 relates the same sentiment (*Journals and Diaries I*, vols. 18–24, in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, edited by W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater [Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988], 18:136–7). Hereafter, *Journals*.

³⁵ Wesley, *Letters I*, 25:441.

³⁶ Ibid. (italics added).

³⁷ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:141.

³⁸ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:142.

³⁹ Kenneth Collins has drawn attention to the fact that the fear of death was a “standard of conversion” throughout Wesley’s life, being used for his societies as a point of accountability. Kenneth J. Collins, “John Wesley and the Fear of Death as a Standard of Conversion,” in *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*, edited by Kenneth J. Collins and John H. Tyson (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 56–68.

⁴⁰ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:143.

⁴¹ For the impact of Wesley’s empiricist epistemology on his understanding of these experiences, see the interesting essay by Theodore H. Runyon, “The Important of Experience for Faith,” in *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, edited by Randy L. Maddox (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 93–107. It is not clear to me that Runyon is correct on his assessment

of Locke, whom he attributes with having shifted the perceived value of experiences. However, he draws attention to the fact that experience is an epistemological concept, not an emotional one.

⁴² Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:143.

⁴³ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:151.

⁴⁴ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:146.

⁴⁵ The same inferential, deductive formula that Wesley used for arriving at hope in 1730, is used for his understanding of the *indirect* witness, which in 1733 he relates to hope in his sermon "The Circumcision of the Heart," (Wesley, "The Circumcision of the Heart," in *Sermons I*, 398–414).

⁴⁶ Collins, "John Wesley and the Fear of Death," 60. Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:207.

⁴⁷ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:207.

⁴⁸ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:208.

⁴⁹ Wesley, *Letters I*, 25:245. This deductive account of hope becomes the foundation of Wesley's more developed doctrine of the witness of the Spirit later.

⁵⁰Noted by Runyon, but somewhat misunderstood it seems. "Although the subjective element was by no means absent for Wesley, it is important to realize that for the 18th century 'experience' was first and foremost 'evidence,' i.e., impressions made on the physical senses by the external world, giving the mind which receives those sense impressions access to reality and knowledge of the way things 'really are,'" (Runyon, "Importance of Experience," 95). Runyon is not wrong, but his analysis is certainly incomplete as far as it appears to only address material sensation with regard to "feelings."

⁵¹Cunningham and Crothers, "Wesley's Epistemology," 171n.

⁵² John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch [Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1975] II.1.11, 110.

⁵³ I discuss this in more detail in "Knowing God: The Non-Inferential Foundation of Spiritual Knowledge in John Wesley's Theology," *The Methodist Review: A Journal of Wesleyan and Methodist Studies* 13 (2021): 1–29 and "For the Love of God: Knowing, Certainty, and John Wesley's Vision for Holy Love," in *WTJ*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (2022):108–31.

⁵⁴ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:211. COPYRIGHT PERMISSION

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⁵⁵ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:215.

⁵⁶ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:215–16 (italics added).

⁵⁷ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:226.

⁵⁸ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:228 (italics in the original).

⁵⁹ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:234 (italics in the original).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:240 (italics in the original).

⁶² Ibid. (italics in the original).

⁶³ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:248.

⁶⁴ Wesley, *Journals I*, 18:249–50 (italics in the original).

⁶⁵ See for instance the summary of scholars who challenge the significance of Aldersgate for this reason in Randy Maddox's "Introduction," in *Aldersgate Reconsidered*, 13–14.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Matthews, "Religion and Reason Joined," 140.

⁶⁷ Locke, *An Essay*, II.1.11, 110.

⁶⁸ Letter from 'John Smith' (Feb. 26, 1746), *Letters*, 2:188 (italics in the original).

⁶⁹ Wesley, *Sermons I*, 1:273.

⁷⁰ "January 24, 1738," *Journals*, 1:75.

⁷¹ Possibly the conscious state is a fruit of something preceding faith or a result from it rather than faith itself. Wesley isn't clear.

⁷² I discuss this in my "The Witness of the Spirit," in *Reclaiming the Order of Salvation: Evangelical Wesleyan Perspectives*, ed. Jerome VanKuiken (Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury Press, forthcoming).

⁷³ James E. Loder, *The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1981), 29–34, 92–124. Quoted in Matthews, "Religion and Reason Joined," 149. See also the summary in Natalya Cherry, "Wesley's Doctrinal Distinctions in Developing the Faith that Marks the New Birth," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Vol. 52, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 100–12.

⁷⁴ Brandon Dahm's "The Certainty of Faith: A Problem for Christian Fallibilists?" in *Journal of Analytic Theology*, Vol. 3 (May 2015): 130–46. Dahm argues for a certainty of faith that is probabilistic. For my analysis of probabilistic knowledge in relation to Wesley, see my "For the Love of God," *WTJ*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (2022):108–31.

⁷⁵ Alvin Plantinga, 'Is Belief in God Properly Basic,' *Nous* XV (1981); 'Reason and Belief in God,' in *Faith and Rationality*, Alvin Plantinga

and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds. (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame 1983), 16-93; *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York NY: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁷⁶ John Piper, *What is Saving Faith? Reflections on Receiving Christ as a Treasure* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022).

⁷⁷ Matthew W. Bates, *Salvation by Allegiance Alone: Rethinking Faith, Works, and the Gospel of Jesus the King* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017).



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Roger W. Fay
John Wesley's Motivation for His Mission to Georgia

Abstract:

The importance of justification by faith in the thinking of John Wesley (1703-1791) after his Aldersgate Street experience in May 1738 has long been doubted by some Wesley scholars. This article argues, however, that Wesley was motivated only by works-righteousness while he was a missionary to Georgia, and that salvation by faith did not characterise his thinking until he finished his mission there.

Keywords: Aldersgate, mission, Georgia, John Wesley, primitive church, salvation by faith, works-righteousness

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Introduction

Wesley was a pioneer leader of the eighteenth-century Evangelical Awakening in Britain. His influence, perpetuated by the vigorous impact of Wesleyan Methodism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has been stamped on both Established and Nonconformist churches for well over two centuries. His influence as a ministerial role model during an evangelical awakening is still commended among Protestant churches. If wrong perceptions concerning his precise relationship to faith before and after Aldersgate have gained scholarly traction, they need correction, both for historical accuracy's sake and because Wesley stood for religious centralities that matter as much in the present as in the past.

Scholarly interest in John Wesley flagged under the influence of nineteenth century Higher Criticism.¹ But various developments during the mid- to late-twentieth century renewed interest in him. For example, Wesley has re-emerged in the context of Enlightenment studies, since he was a well-documented religious leader who interacted with Enlightenment thinking although in a selective and nuanced way. In the last 40 years, renewed attention has also been given to him from a variety of other perspectives, including ecclesiological, psychological, philosophical, sociological and medical. Because of this increasing diversity of “takes” on Wesley, John W. Wright maintains we are now faced with “too many Wesleys” and, more pointedly, that:

During John Wesley's life and within the early nineteenth century and onward, polemic has accompanied the question of how to situate the texts and practices of John Wesley as interpreted by friend and foe alike. His heirs have proven a most fractious group. They have abandoned Wesley's seemingly fundamental commitments, consequently taking the movement in radically different directions. (2014: 4-8)

One litmus test available for assessing different scholarly perspectives for their adherence, theologically speaking, to Wesley's “fundamental commitments” is their evaluation of Wesley's account of receiving “salvation by faith” at Aldersgate Street, as recorded in his famous journal entry for 24 May 1738:

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter

before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death. (*Journal*, 475-476)

That evening at Aldersgate Street marked the occasion when Wesley first recognised that he had saving faith, “I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation.” The nature of this faith he later described, with reference to Church of England doctrine, in his 1741 sermon “The Altogether Christian”:

The right and true Christian faith is (to go on in the words of our own Church),² “not only to believe that Holy Scripture and the Articles of our Faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ. It is a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that, by the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God; whereof doth follow a loving heart, to obey his commandments.”

Wesley’s description of faith unites assent to the truth — as taught by Holy Scripture and, secondarily, as defined in the Articles of the Church of England — with personal appropriation of the One whom that truth reveals, that is, Jesus Christ in his redemptive merits. This saving faith brings in its wake inward and outward holiness, and (sooner or later)³ a reliable personal assurance that the goal of faith — reconciliation with God — has been attained. All these elements together, according to Wesley’s sermon, constitute real faith. This definition of faith by Wesley, albeit in an Anglican context, is difficult to improve on.

On 24 May 1738 Wesley was sure he had received that “right and true faith.” Nevertheless, some modern scholars are hesitant to accept his explanation of Aldersgate’s significance to him or to give it the same prominence as he did.⁴ This hesitation is, no doubt, partly due to their own theological presuppositions,⁵ but also partly due to several enigmatic factors emanating from Wesley himself. These factors include, first and foremost, Wesley’s surprising footnotes to the “pessimistic” January 1738 entries concerning his spiritual state, as found in the later 1774 edition of his *Journal* (1909: 421-424, with Wesley’s 1774 glosses shown in a footnote on page 423); second, his modified, post-Aldersgate doctrinal emphases;

and third, his occasional, post-Aldersgate expressions of self-doubt. But the enigmas do not give adequate grounds for radical scepticism concerning Wesley's own assessment of Aldersgate's evangelical significance.

The two twentieth century anniversaries commemorating what happened at Aldersgate — in 1938 and 1988 — elicited scholarly attempts to re-instate the traditional Methodist understanding of that occasion. They included, for example, *The Conversion of the Wesleys* by J. Ernest Rattenbury (1870-1963) in 1938 and "Twentieth-Century Interpretations of John Wesley's Aldersgate Experience" by Kenneth J. Collins in 1989. But scholarly unease with traditional interpretations of justification by faith at Aldersgate remains. Such interpretative differences are exemplified by Albert C. Outler (1908-1989), who articulated in 1964 (at the height of the twentieth century ecumenical movement) that, "'The Aldersgate Experience' has come to be the most familiar event in Wesley's life. It often goes unnoticed, however, that it actually stands within a series of significant spiritual experiences, and is neither first nor last nor most climactic" (Outler 1964: 14, cf. 51-52).

However, the available historical evidence still firmly supports John Wesley's own account of what 24 May 1738 meant to him. Certainly, after Aldersgate, his convictions concerning the exact relationship between faith, assurance and sanctification began to change, as he critiqued the Moravian understanding of these subjects — for example, by summer 1740 he realised that there are degrees of faith and degrees of assurance and that a child of God may exercise a justifying faith which is mixed with both doubt and fear. But he never changed his mind about the centrality and importance of justification by faith for salvation. He still firmly identified with Church of England formularies that defined saving faith, in a homily attributed to Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), as "a sure trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven and he reconciled to the favour of God."

Georgia

What then was motivating the 32-year-old John Wesley to undertake his Georgia mission? Was it the same conviction of salvation by faith — albeit at that time immaturely articulated — that he would express more coherently at Aldersgate in three years' time? Or was it something very different, that is, works-righteousness?

On 14 October 1735 three “Holy Club”, Oxford Methodists — John, his brother Charles (1707-1788), and Benjamin Ingham (1712-1772) — boarded the *Simmonds* at Gravesend, England. The three were now ordained clergymen of the Church of England, supported by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and designated “Volunteer Missionaries” to Georgia. John was also approved by The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), although, at this stage, regarded himself as an independent missionary to the indigenous Americans. The ship was bound for Savannah, Georgia’s chief city and port. The voyage, carrying 121 passengers, would last four-and-a-half months, including a three-week wait for favourable winds off the Isle of Wight.

It had been Dr John Burton, Tutor at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and a Georgia Trustee, who had written to John Wesley during 1735 about him going to the colony as a missionary (*Letters*, 8, 18 and 28 September 1735). There was the need for someone at Savannah to replace Samuel Quincy, an SPG missionary suffering from indifferent health.⁶ The Trustees licensed John Wesley as the next minister of Savannah.⁷

As Geordan Hammond (2014) has cogently argued in, for example, *John Wesley in America Restoring Primitive Christianity*, Georgia was ideal virgin territory for John Wesley to ground its young Church in “Primitive Christianity.” Wesley determined that it should recover the nuances of the 1549 edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* with its more Catholic rubrics and usages, rather than use the 1662 edition commonly accepted by the Church of England (Hammond 2014: 108-112).

Wesley had been brought up “from a child ... to esteem the primitive Fathers, the writers of the first three centuries” (John Wesley, “Farther Thoughts on Separation from the Church”, 209). When preparing for ordination during winter 1724/5, his father had sent him a recommended reading list that included the Church Fathers Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus and Athanasius, and various Anglican divines who promoted Patristic study within the Church of England. He had read some of the Church Fathers and most of the Anglican divines.

Wesley had been strongly influenced while at Oxford by John Clayton (1709-1773), who associated with the Oxford Methodists for some months before departing to Manchester. Clayton, an ardent High Churchman, stimulated Wesley’s religious zeal in the direction of work-righteousness by intensifying his commitment to the practices of the “Primitive Church” of the first three centuries after Christ. Wesley recalled

in May 1738 that, from spring 1731, he “began observing the Wednesday and Friday Fasts, commonly observed in the ancient Church; tasting no food till three in the afternoon” (*Journal*, 468). Hammond records that his thirst to recover Primitive Christianity “was so well-known that in 1730 his friend Mary Pendarves nicknamed him ‘Primitive Christianity’” (Hammond 2009: 192).

Perhaps Burton was aware of the danger of Wesley pushing his “Primitive” agenda too far, since in his correspondence he advised Wesley that in Georgia:

Accordingly in every case you would distinguish between what is essential and what is merely circumstantial to Christianity, between what is indispensable and what is variable, between what is of divine and what is of human authority. I mention this because men are apt to deceive themselves in such cases, and we see the traditions and ordinances of men frequently insisted on with more rigour than the commandments of God, to which they are subordinate; singularities of less importance are often espoused with more zeal than the weighty matters of God's law.

But by the end of his mission, despite Burton's sound advice, Wesley's “Primitive” application of canon law would prove deeply unpopular with some colonists. Alexander Gordon has described their reaction:

Wesley's preaching was regarded as too personal, and his pastoral visitation as censorious. His punctilious insistence on points of primitive usage (e.g., immersion of infants at baptism and use of the mixed chalice), his taking the “morning service” at five, and “the communion office (with the sermon) at eleven”, his introduction of unauthorised hymns, his strictness in the matter of communicants, excluding dissenters as unbaptised, his holding a private religious “society”, provoked the retort, “We are Protestants.” (*Dictionary of National Biography*)

Robert Southey, more caustically, wrote that Wesley “drenched his parishioners with the physic of an intolerant discipline” (Southey 1820: 55).

Several mothers in Georgia demurred from Wesley's insistence on baptism of their infants by trine immersion. Thomas Causton (1692-1746), later an enemy of Wesley, called him “a murderer of poor infants by plunging them into cold water.” William Stephens (1671-1753), who arrived

in Savannah in November 1737 and was later president of the colony, wrote that, “Some parents ... have suffered their children to go a long while without the benefit of that sacrament, till a convenient opportunity could be found of another minister to do that office” (2014: 112-114). Such negative reactions were just one part of the complex of circumstances contributing to Wesley’s later realisation that, “all the time I was at Savannah I was thus beating the air” (*Journal*, 470).

Works-righteousness

That “works-righteousness” best describes Wesley’s spiritual state when he departed for Georgia is evidenced by what he wrote to John Burton on 10 October 1735, a few days before boarding the *Simmonds*. In his letter he disclosed his fundamental motive for going to Georgia:

My chief motive, to which all the rest are subordinate, is the hope of saving my own soul. I hope to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen ... I am assured, if I be once fully converted myself, [God] will then employ me both to strengthen my brethren and to preach His name to the Gentiles, that the very ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God. But you will perhaps ask, “Cannot you save your own soul in England as well as in Georgia?” I answer, “No; neither can I hope to attain the same degree of holiness here which I may there.”

Hammond argues that, in using the words “saving my own soul,” Wesley was not subscribing to “works-righteousness” but using an expression synonymous for “work out your own salvation” in Philippians 2:12-13 (“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure,” KJV).

According to Hammond (“John Wesley’s Mindset,” 18-20), “saving my own soul” was “language central to the holy living school exemplified by Wesley’s mentor William Law, who interpreted [Philippians 2:12] as referring to: ‘The salvation of our souls’ — a ‘salvation [that] depends upon the *sincerity* and *perfection* of our endeavours to obtain it.’” Such a text, says Hammond, would have been on Wesley’s mind because, only ten days before writing to Burton, Wesley had written to someone at Oxford⁸ that

"Dr Tilly's sermons on Free Will are the best I ever saw. His text is, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling'" (cf. 1712: 258-270).

Hammond argues, as did Charles A. Rogers before him (1966: 137-141), that William Tilly's (1675-1740) two sermons on Philippians 2:12-13 taught that "'baptismal and preventing⁹ grace' restores enough free will to allow a person to cooperate with 'the grace of God [which] works with us and enables us to will and to do of his good pleasure.'" Wesley therefore accepted the corollary of Philippians 2:13, that God's activity in the soul is needed to work out one's own salvation — that is, to this extent salvation depends on the Spirit.

Moreover, Hammond points out, Wesley's sermon of 1 January 1733, "The Circumcision of the Heart" (Sermon 17), had declared that nothing good can be thought or done "without the supernatural assistance of his [God's] Spirit." Wesley's "hope of saving my own soul" was thus, for Hammond, a shorthand for striving after Christian perfection as enabled by God's grace, rather than a bare statement of works-righteousness.

But Hammond's circumstantial argument does not disprove that Wesley was, in fact, pursuing works-righteousness in his mission to Georgia, since, despite Tilly's statements, there is little in Tilly's sermon to wean readers from a works-based approach to salvation. Tilly acknowledges that "liberty" is given to a person who is under "the covenant of grace" to fulfil the Christian duties implied by Philippians 2:12-13, but he does not enlighten his readers as to how, by faith, that covenant secures their obedience to the law of God. Nor does Tilly point his hearers to Christ's incarnate life and propitiatory death as vicariously fulfilling "the rigour of the moral law" and securing a perfect righteousness that can be imputed to them by faith.

Tilly's approach is, in fact, markedly synergistic: "Both the grace of God and our own endeavours must strike in together, and are inforc'd and made effectual by each other"; and "the continued supplies of, and necessary improvements in the divine grace are suspended upon our own care and diligence, and are liable to be withdrawn wholly from us, upon our fault and misbehaviour."

While Wesley would have accepted that any doctrine latent in Philippians 2:12-13 was creedally true, it cannot be concluded that he yet appreciated the evangelical implications of Philippians 2:12-13 and that he understood good works to be the product and not the meritorious cause of a salvation which is by faith alone (see Ephesians 2:8-10).

Wesley's words to Burton (above) explained that he anticipated his endeavours in Georgia would hopefully lead to him being "fully converted" and help him achieve a higher degree of holiness in Georgia than could be achieved in Oxford. This outcome would occur, as Wesley wrote, by "[learning] the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen." All these are the sentiments of a seeker of righteousness through good works rather than of a finder of righteousness by faith.

In fact, there was during this period another influence at work in Wesley's psyche. This was the memory of his father's death nearly seven months earlier, on 25 April 1735. That event was clearly still on his mind when he preached his first sermon in Savannah on 7 March 1736 (Sermon 139, "On Love"), since he used his father's death as the climax of his sermon, illustrating how love makes death "comfortable." In rehearsing this, John would have recalled his father's words uttered "more than once" in his "last illness": "The inward witness, son, the inward witness. That is the proof, the strongest proof, of Christianity" (*Journal*, 179, 222 fn). Wesley had not yet shown evidence of experiencing this "inner witness."

Based on his own words, John Wesley's mission to Georgia was intended to obtain from God something he did not yet have, "the hope of saving my own soul." Works-righteousness was his motivation, even if unrecognised. The Georgia mission was not an outworking of faith, but a search for faith.

Success or failure?

John Wesley's mission in Georgia (excluding the voyages to and from Georgia) lasted from 6 February 1736 to 2 December 1737. Hammond gives a detailed historiographic taxonomy of evaluations of the success or otherwise of Wesley's Georgia mission. His categories include a failure; a "preface to victory"; and neither calling the mission a success or failure ("Success or Failure," 297-298). Hammond then argues the mission should be viewed as a success and not the failure Wesley implied it was when he wrote, "All the time I was at Savannah I was thus beating the air ... In this vile, abject state of bondage to sin, I was indeed fighting continually, but not conquering" (*Journal*, 470).

Hammond justifies his thesis by reference to Wesley's steady and sincere commitment as an SPG missionary to parishioners of all nationalities; Wesley's steady praise of the pastoral progress of some of his parishioners; his pioneering translation of German hymns and his *Collection* of hymns for

the colonists' use; the increased attendances at his communion services; and his innovative use of men and women as lay workers. Hammond sees Wesley's Primitivism as extending in a modified form into his ministry beyond Georgia (Hammond 2014: vii, viii, 2-3, 76, 190-194). Also, Wesley developed in Georgia the system of small group ministry that he began in Oxford and would later employ in Methodism to good effect (*Journal*, 198-205, 426).

Hammond is not alone in his positive evaluation. George Whitefield arrived in Georgia on 7 May 1738 after receiving correspondence from John Wesley and Benjamin Ingham. A few weeks later Whitefield wrote: "The good, Mr John Wesley has done in America, under God, is inexpressible. His name is very precious among the people; and he has laid such a foundation that I hope neither men nor devils will ever be able to shake. Oh, that I may follow him, as he has Christ!" (1738: 77, 79, 157). Whitefield's generous words about his former mentor were unrepresentative of all the colonists, and perhaps reflected the views of Wesley's inner circle. They were no doubt written in ignorance of Wesley's own negative evaluation of his time in Georgia.

While Hammond's analysis highlights helpfully what Wesley's ministry did achieve, it fails to interact convincingly with Wesley's relentlessly self-critical entry at the close of his final Savannah *Journal*. Hammond accepts that Wesley was "in a state of spiritual anxiety during his voyage to England" but qualifies this admission with the statement that "during the whole of the Georgia mission there were few signs of the spiritual doubts that plagued him" on his journey home ("Success or Failure," 300, 304).

However, a lack of direct data in Wesley's *Diary* and *Journal* concerning any spiritual doubts in Georgia does not rule out their existence. Although the traumatic experiences in Georgia arising from his friendship with Sophia Hopkey and Mrs Hawkins' behaviour quite frequently spilled into these two documents, the *Journal* and *Diary* are mainly objective in focus and were clearly not intended as continuous commentaries on Wesley's state of mind, neither in Georgia nor at other times.

Wesley's self-analysis

It is therefore reasonable, in the absence of directly contrary evidence, to give due weight to what Wesley chose to disclose in detail about his inward state in Georgia. These "pessimistic" thoughts concerning

his mission were written on 24 January 1738, on the home-bound *Samuel*, while over 400 miles from England:

I went to America, to convert the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of mischief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near. But let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, "To die is gain!"... (*Journal*, 418)

A few days later he continued:

This, then, have I learned in the ends of the earth — that I "am fallen short of the glory of God"; that my whole heart is "altogether corrupt and abominable"; and, consequently, my whole life (seeing it cannot be, that an "evil tree" should "bring forth good fruit"): that, "alienated" as I am from the life of God, I am "a child of wrath," an heir of hell: that my own works, my own sufferings, my own righteousness, are so far from reconciling me to an offended God, so far from making any atonement for the least of those sins, which "are more in number than the hairs of my head," that the most specious of them need an atonement themselves ... I have no hope, but that of being justified freely, "through the redemption that is in Jesus"; I have no hope, but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and "be found in him not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (*Journal*, 423-424)

These emphatic statements were not the product of transient depression, but the result of a revolution taking place in Wesley's understanding of what faith is and does. He had attained a new appreciation of the importance of justification by faith for salvation, even though he was not yet saying that he had personally received it.

The footnotes in his 1774 *Journal* edition apparently contradicting these "pessimistic" statements cannot mean Wesley fundamentally resiled from this self-analysis, since he never erased the original journal entries from the later journal editions. While the footnotes invite caution and further analysis in interpreting Wesley's autobiographical account, they do not justify scholarly scepticism.

Nor did Wesley's self-critical evaluation signal that he had collapsed under the weight of adversities in a pioneer colony. Wesley did not shirk

hardship in doing God's will, but embraced that will, as he saw it. His willingness to suffer is exemplified by uncomplaining *Journal* entries relating to his rugged pioneer lifestyle (for example, *Journal*, 191-192, 267-268, 308-309). Wesley welcomed suffering. He had written, shortly before embarking for Georgia, probably to John Robson (b.1714, graduated BA in 1735) at Lincoln College, Oxford (see footnote 8, which refers to the same letter), explaining his unyielding commitment to Holy Club principles at Oxford: "Till a man gives offence he will do no good; and the more offence he gives by adhering to the gospel of Christ the more good he will do, and the more good he does the more offence he will give" (Letter, 30 September 1735). But, even with a willingness to suffer, Wesley's experiences in Georgia had so changed his thinking as to lead to his "pessimistic" self-evaluations of January and May 1738 (*Journal*, 418-424, 465-472).

Wesley's message in Georgia

Necessary for evaluating Wesley's Georgia mission is not only his effectiveness in gathering and retaining congregations of regular communicants and adherents, but, fundamentally, the validity of the message that he proclaimed in the colony. Theologically and pastorally speaking, a ministry with a radically wrong message must be considered a failure, objectively speaking,¹⁰ even if accompanied by an increase in congregational numbers.

Hammond calculates an increase of ten worshippers at Wesley's daily morning and evening prayer, and an increase of seventeen parishioners attending his three Sunday services at Savannah's parish church between 1736 and 1737 (Hammond 2014: 191). But, even if an increase in congregational numbers is the criterion of ministerial success, then his mission rates only as slightly successful.

There is little extant data to be unequivocal about what Wesley preached and taught in Georgia, but that which is available points to a works-righteousness message. For example, Wesley records his conversation with "a young negro," 14 months into his mission, on 23 April 1737:

Finding a young negro who seemed more sensible than the rest, I asked her how long she had been in Carolina. She said two or three years; but that she was born in Barbados and had lived there in a minister's family from a child. I asked whether she went to church there. She said, "Yes, every Sunday, to carry my mistress's

children." I asked what she had learned at church. She said, "Nothing; I heard a deal, but did not understand it."

While the ensuing conversation demonstrates Wesley's skill as a catechist, it also reveals his profound conviction that "being good" is a necessary precursor for receiving God's blessing:

I asked, "But don't you know, that your hands and feet, and this you call your body, will turn to dust in a little time?" She answered, "Yes." "But there is something in you that will not turn to dust, and this is what they call your soul. Indeed; you cannot see your soul, though it is within you; as you cannot see the wind, though it is all about you ... Do you know who God is?" "No" ... "He made you to live with himself above the sky. And so you will, in a little time — if you are good. If you are good, when your body dies, your soul will go up, and want nothing, and have whatever you can desire. No one will beat or hurt you there. You will never be sick. You will never be sorry any more, nor afraid of anything ... for you will be with God."

Wesley continued: "The attention with which this poor creature listened to instruction is inexpressible. The next day she remembered all, readily answered every question; and said she would ask Him that made her to show her how to be good" (*Journal*, 350-351).

Wesley's only extant Georgia sermon is on love. He preached it in Savannah a few weeks after arriving from England. It did include this brief call to faith: "Thus saith the Lord God, 'Whosoever thou art who wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.' (In order to this, 'believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved')." But from there on the sermon was marked by a sustained emphasis on the necessity of good works, with spiritual power to perform these works arising from eating the bread and drinking the cup of Communion:

"Forsake not the assembling together, as the manner of some is." In secret, likewise, "pray to thy Father who seeth in secret" and "pour out thy heart before him." Make my word "a lantern to thy feet, and a light unto thy paths." Keep it "in thy heart, and in thy mouth, when thou sittest in thy house, when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." "Turn unto me with fasting," as well as prayer; and, in obedience to thy dying Redeemer, by eating that bread and drinking that cup, "show ye forth the Lord's death till he comes." By

the power thou shalt through these means receive from on high, do all the things which are enjoined in the Law, and avoid all those things which are forbidden therein, knowing that "if ye offend in one point, ye are guilty of all." (Sermon 139, "On Love")

If this was representative of Wesley's teaching in Georgia, then the doctrine of faith he preached in the colony was almost drowned out by his emphasis on good works.

It is, therefore, no surprise that, when back in England on 6 March 1738, at the urging of Moravian missionary Peter Bohler, Wesley began preaching "salvation by faith," he thought it a "new doctrine," from which his "soul started back" (*Journal*, 442). But, impelled by his experiences in Georgia, his conversations with Moravians and German pietists there,¹² and with Moravians in England, Wesley's ministry was radically transformed from early 1738. His spiritual motivation had ceased to be one of works-righteousness; it had become one springing from faith in the merits of Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

End notes

¹ "Higher Criticism" often means "biblical criticism" from the same philosophical viewpoint as Baruch Spinoza (1632-77), who urged that the Bible should be treated like any other book and that its truth (or untruth) recognized by the light of natural reason (without need of tradition or ecclesiastical interference), and its miracles interpreted in terms of the physical laws of nature.

² Thomas Cranmer, attrib. "A Sermon of the Salvation of Mankind, by only Christ our Saviour from Sin and Death Everlasting." *Homily*.

³ Wesley later modified his views concerning Christian assurance.

⁴ Kenneth J. Collins lists American Methodist scholars whose work "suggests that later Wesley significantly modified or even repudiated his basic understanding of what constitutes 'real Christianity'" (1996: 15).

⁵ This point is acknowledged by Henry D. Rack in *Reasonable Enthusiast John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*. London: Epworth Press (1989), 153.

⁶ Samuel Quincy resigned from his ministry at Savannah in October 1735.

⁷ Although Wesley acquiesced to the Trustees, he recorded that this appointment was “without either my desire or knowledge,” since his preference was to minister to the indigenous Americans (*Journal*, 298).

⁸ Geordan Hammond says this letter was written to Richard Morgan Jr. (“John Wesley’s Mindset,” 19). John Telford’s edition of Wesley’s letters says it was written probably to John Robson (b. 1714, graduated BA in 1735) of Lincoln College, Oxford.

⁹ “Preventing” is more or less synonymous with “prevenient.”

¹⁰ Objectivity was a marked element of Wesley’s personality. As a boy, his father had noted in him an unusual rationality, remarking that “Our Jack’ would do nothing (*non etiam crepitare*) unless he could give a reason for it” (A. Gordon).

¹¹ Hammond calculates that Wesley was present at Moravian worship about eighty percent of the days he spent in Savannah (2014: 82, 85).

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J. Russell Frazier

Calvin's Doctrine of Divine Accommodation and Its Correspondence with the Methodist Triumvirate¹

Abstract:

The doctrine of accommodation is the idea that God has, out of love, accommodated divine revelation to human frailty and sinfulness. This article summarizes the contributions of secondary resources on the doctrine of divine accommodation in John Calvin's thought. These sources provide a paradigm for examining the doctrine of accommodation in the thought of the Methodist triumvirate, i.e., John and Charles Wesley and John William Fletcher. The author emphasizes that the Methodist triumvirate adopted and adapted the doctrine of accommodation and suggests that it provided a theological underpinning for the early Methodists' accommodative practice of ministry.

Keywords: revelation, accommodation, John Calvin, John Wesley, John Fletcher

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Introduction

The doctrine of accommodation is the idea that God, given the present condition of humanity,² has adapted the form and content of divine revelation in order to communicate effectively with human beings.³ From a human standpoint, the doctrine of accommodation implies that human beings are incapable of receiving the full revelation of the divine nature due to human finitude and sin, particularly the noetic effects of sin. From the divine standpoint, God, out of love, desires to reveal to created human beings the divine nature, but the nature of humanity dictates a less than a full revelation lest the object of revelation should be overwhelmed by the glory of the divine and fail to comprehend the content of the disclosure.

The Old and New Testaments are replete with accounts and descriptions of divine accommodation to humanity. While the purpose of the current work is not to launch into an analysis of the biblical data on the doctrine of accommodation, a few examples from scripture may serve to enlighten the reader. In Exodus 33, God promises both to reveal and to conceal himself at the same time, saying, “Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen” (Ex. 33:23, NIV).⁴ In the NT, the Incarnation is the supreme accommodation of God’s revelation to humanity; the Johannine community can testify to this divine revelation: “We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only...” (Jn. 1:14, NIV). While only two examples have been given, they point to a broader theme within scripture that underscores the limitations of divine revelation and the human comprehension of it; Paul wrote accordingly, “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12, NIV).

Given the widespread theme of accommodation within scripture, it is only natural to find the idea of accommodation in the history of Christian thought. This paper will trace the idea in the Early Church Fathers. Then, the article will review the doctrine of accommodation in the theology of John Calvin (1509-1564) based upon the current discussion among historical theologians on the subject. These discussions will provide a framework for an exploration of the doctrine among the Methodist triumvirate, i.e. John (1703-1791) and Charles Wesley (1707-1788) and John Fletcher (1729-1785).

The goals of this paper are several. First, while it will not attempt to establish a direct appropriation of Calvin’s theology by the Methodist triumvirate, it will examine the theologies of the three early Methodist

theologians to determine any correspondence between them and Calvin. Second, while the differences between Calvin and the Methodist triumvirate have frequently been emphasized, this essay will endeavour to establish the deeper theological accord between the founders of these two theological traditions of Protestantism. Third, the paper will investigate not only the theology of the Methodist triumvirate on this particular doctrine, but will also suggest some practical implications of the doctrine.

The Early Church Fathers on Accommodation

As stated previously, the theme of accommodation is found within scripture, and it is only natural to find the idea of accommodation given treatment in the Early Church Fathers. In his book, *Divine Accommodation in John Calvin's Theology: Analysis and Assessment*, Arnold Huijgen reviews the doctrine of accommodation in the early history of Christianity (Huijgen 2011: 57-93). This section of the current paper will summarize his work.⁵

Huijgen concludes that the doctrine of accommodation "is a patristic commonplace; it is used in the East and the West, in the Antiochene and Alexandrian traditions, from the second century to the fifth century" (Huijgen 2011: 89). The theologian of the period that gives the most comprehensive treatment is John Chrysostom (347-407). He has been styled "le docteur de la condescendance."⁶ Chrysostom is representative in the field and provides the most comprehensive treatment of the doctrine among the Early Church Fathers. For this reason, his thought will be summarized here.

Huijgen summarized Chrysostom's thought with five different aspects: "transcendence, hermeneutics, pedagogy, Christology and Paulinism."⁷ Each of these aspects will be given a brief treatment to summarize the doctrine of accommodation.

First, divine transcendence emphasizes the distinction in nature between the infinite God and finite human beings. Chrysostom uses a term to describe the activity of God to bridge the gap between God and humanity; it is *συγκατάβασις* or condescension. He defines the term: "It means that God appears not as He is, but that he shows Himself in a way that the one who beholds Him can bear, because he proportions what He reveals to the weakness (*ἀσθενεία*) of the beholder."⁸ The term condescension was employed by the Early Church Fathers to indicate the divine adaptation to the human condition and is nearly synonymous with the term accommodation.

The second aspect of Chrysostom's doctrine of accommodation deals with hermeneutical issues. Chrysostom employs accommodation as a key to understanding certain biblical passages, particularly anthropomorphic passages of scripture. The passages that attribute some human emotion or characteristic to God are understood not to be an accurate reflection of the divine nature but an accommodated account which must not be interpreted literally.⁹

Huijgen identifies the third aspect of Chrysostom's doctrine of accommodation as the pedagogical aspect. God's dealings with the Jews in the Old Testament were the means of teaching and preparing them for more profound revelations. However, as Huijgen points out, for Chrysostom, "God's pedagogical dealings with His people are not confined to the Old Testament..." (Huijgen 2011: 80). God continues to reveal Himself progressively throughout the NT era leading humanity toward perfection.

The fourth aspect of the doctrine of divine accommodation, as evidenced in the thought of Chrysostom, has to do with Christology. At this point, Huijgen points to the emphasis of Chrysostom on the Incarnation: "...God's accommodation gradually leads humankind to the apogee, the incarnation" (Huijgen 2011: 81). The source of the Incarnation and divine accommodation is the love of God, or as Chrysostom is inclined to say, the philanthropy of God (Huijgen 2011: 81).

Paulinism is how Huijgen designates the last aspect of the doctrine of accommodation in John Chrysostom's thought.¹⁰ The idea is that the Apostle Paul exemplifies the accommodation in his ministry. The aspect that is discussed here is very different from the previous four. The previous four relate to the activity of God, whereas this fifth aspect indicates the activity of human beings; just as God accommodated divine revelation to the human condition, ministers of the Gospel must accommodate the message to their hearers if they would communicate effectively. John Chrysostom writes,

As also Paul descended indeed alone, but ascended with the whole world: not acting a part, for he would not have sought the gain of them that are saved had he been acting. Since the hypocrite seeks men's perdition, and feigns, that he may receive, not that he may give. But the apostle not so: as a physician rather, as a teacher, as a father, the one to the sick, the other to the disciple, the third to the son, condescends for his correction, not for his hurt; so likewise did he. (Chrysostom 1889: 129)

In the above, Chrysostom employs some of the metaphors frequently used in discussing the doctrine of accommodation: physician, teacher, and father. Such metaphors are commonly used in other writings to portray the condescending nature of divine love.

Chrysostom's doctrine of accommodation was much better developed than the other Early Church Fathers. It was more comprehensive and developed. Other Fathers of the Church nuanced the doctrine or applied it differently than did Chrysostom. However, the purpose of this brief overview was to introduce the reader to the language of this particular doctrine.

Calvin's Interpreters and the Doctrine of Accommodation¹¹

One of the earliest treatments of the doctrine of accommodation in Calvin's thought was Edward A. Dowey Jr.'s work in *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*. Dowey's treatment of this doctrine is only a part of a larger project, and his discussion focuses on the connection between the doctrine of accommodation and the doctrine of revelation. Specifically, he deals with two types of accommodation: "(a) the universal and necessary accommodation of the infinite mysteries of God to finite comprehension, which embraces all revelation, and (b) the special, gracious accommodation to human sinfulness, which is connected with the work of redemption" (Downey 1994: 4). The bulk of the remaining work treats the knowledge of God the Creator and the knowledge of God the Redeemer, which corresponds with the essential (creation) and accidental (sinner) descriptions of humanity.

In an article entitled "God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity," Ford Lewis Battles addresses the topic of the doctrine of accommodation in Calvin's thought. Calvin's God, according to Battles, views God as a Divine Rhetorician who bridges the gap between himself and humanity. While this seems to be the stress of this particular article, Battles does contribute to the current work in tracing briefly the use of the idea of accommodation in the Early Church Fathers and in depicting some metaphors used in scripture for divine accommodation: God as Father, God as Teacher, and God as Physician (Battles 1977: 4).

Jon Balsarak wrote the first lengthy treatment of Calvin's concept of accommodation entitled "*Deus humanitus saepe cum suis agree solet*": *An Analysis of Divine Accommodation in the Thought of John Calvin*.¹² Calvin's concept considers three components: the capacity or *captus* of

humanity, the divine response to humanity's capacity, and the implications of the divine response to Calvin's understanding of God. Calvin depicts the object of the accommodating God or the *captus* of humanity as wholly fallen (*totus homo*) (Balserak 2002: 54). However, humanity is not only fallen, but weak and intractable. God's response to the *captus* of humanity is comparable to human dealings with humans (and that of an immature person); Balserak quotes Calvin saying, God "is often accustomed to dealing with this people as a human being would" (Balserak 2002: 255). In his article entitled "The God of Love and Weakness: Calvin's Understanding of God's Accommodating Relationship with His People," Balserak asserts that Calvin's God relaxes his principles and nearly discards them "in order that he may have intimate fellowship with them" (Balserak 2000: 184) and later states that God condescends "to the weakness and even the sinfulness of his children" (Balserak 2000: 187). In his summary of Calvin's accommodating God, Balserak states:

...in accommodation God consistently struggles, experiences resistance, and accepts second best in his dealings with his people. The accommodating God pictured here is not the God of all-invincible power who effortlessly brings his perfect will to pass. This God exists in Calvin's thought too. But the accommodating God often betrays markedly different qualities. He is more like the one who looks at a situation, thinks of what he would like to have happen, and then takes into account the various limitations which hinder the realisation of that goal, and, putting his first desire behind him, does what seems most feasible given the circumstances. Often this is far from his desired outcome. Often this involves him (at least to some degree) in acquiescing with sin. Often he hates it. Often he strives against it and loses resigns himself to a situation that seems entirely unsatisfactory but lives with it and anyway. This is what this face of the accommodating God is like...¹³

This depicts, even as Balserak admits, a very different and confusing picture of God. As Balserak points out, ultimately, Calvin leaves his readers with two images of God: "a 'God within the story' (who is, at times, surprisingly human) and a 'God outside of the story' and largely outside of history (who is utterly transcendent)" (Balserak 2002: 246).

In his monograph entitled *Divine Accommodation in John Calvin's Theology*, Huijgen holds that Calvin's doctrine of accommodation was not mediated through classical rhetoric:

...Calvin's concept of accommodation has influenced his reception of classical rhetoric more than classical rhetoric has influenced Calvin's concept of accommodation. ... this idea of simplicity is closely related to the concept of accommodation: the gospel is plain and simple, because God chose to reveal Himself by way of accommodation by not speaking His own, lofty language, but employing our mean linguistic expressions. So, the simplicity of the gospel is contingent on divine accommodation. (Huijgen 2011: 110)

Having dismissed the claim of Calvin's reception of classical rhetoric, Huijgen discusses the influence of the Early Church Fathers and Erasmus. As discussed previously, in his review of the literature, he had depicted the five aspects of patristic thought, which finds its fullest expression in the thought of John Chrysostom. In chapter 3, Huijgen addresses the question of Calvin's reception of the patristic idea and Erasmus' influence and concludes that while Erasmus may have influenced Calvin's terminology, the content of Calvin's doctrine of accommodation reflected the influence of the Early Church Fathers and especially Chrysostom. As a result, the five aspects provide the foundations for the discussion in the remaining chapters of Huijgen's work.

The five aspects of the patristic concept of accommodation are "transcendence, hermeneutics, pedagogy, Christology and Paulinism."¹⁴ These five aspects will become the paradigm for interpreting the doctrine of accommodation within the thought of the Methodist triumvirate.

The Methodist Triumvirate on the Idea of Accommodation

The idea of divine accommodation is very much at home in the theological traditions that emphasise God's transcendence. As a result, the doctrine of accommodation is very much at home within the Calvinistic tradition. One might wonder why the writer proposes to search for any correspondence between Calvin's idea of accommodation and the idea of accommodation among the theologies of the Methodist triumvirate. A quick response to the question (but would perhaps need more nuancing) is to say that the Wesleyan tradition is just at home with the idea of the transcendence of God as the Calvinistic tradition. However, before launching into a survey of the doctrine of accommodation in the Methodist triumvirate, the current writer will briefly introduce the three theologians.

John and Charles Wesley were brothers and, in 1738, experienced evangelical conversions. They were intricately involved in the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century and in founding and establishing the Methodist movement. John began field preaching, under the influence of George Whitefield, to the colliers in Bristol in 1741. Charles soon joined his brother in the itinerate preaching ministry of the Methodist societies and itinerated until 1756. John was and is recognized as the principal leader of the movement due to his organizational skills; he established and supported a cadre of itinerate preachers, which expanded and supported the growth of the Methodist movement. Charles was warm and personable and was recognized as the hymn writer, writing over 5,000 hymns during his lifetime (Cross 2005: 1739). John William Fletcher, at approximately 20 years of age, migrated from Switzerland to England where he connected with the early Methodists and experienced an evangelical conversion. He was ordained in the Church of England in 1757 and became, in 1760, the vicar of Madeley, where he remained until his death in 1785. Fletcher defended John Wesley in the Calvinist controversy of the 1770s with his *Checks to Antinomianism*. These three men were particularly influential in establishing and defending the distinctive doctrines of early Methodism.

The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley

While it would be advantageous to consider each theologian of the triumvirate separately, it will be necessary to cover them together in some instances. For example, *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, as the title suggests, indicates that the work of both John and Charles appear together; George Osborne, the editor of the 13 volumes, has not attempted to separate the two writers if it is indeed possible. As a result, the paper will consider them together.

As noted above, the word *condescend* is one of the categories of the concept of accommodation. In the *Poetical Works*, the word *condescend* is often associated with other Christian graces or attributes of God. The words with which the word *condescend* is associated in the *Poetical Works* include love (or charity), grace, and mercy.¹⁵

In fact, love is most frequently associated with the idea of condescension. The writers identify the motivation for divine accommodation as the love of God. In a versification of Revelation 1:5-6, the authors write:

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Who can worthily commend
 Thy love unsearchable?
 Love which made Thee condescend
 Our curse and death to feel!
 Thou the one eternal God,
 Who didst Thyself our ransom pay,
 Hast with Thy own precious blood
 Wash'd all our sins away.
 (Wesley and Wesley 1872, 13: 220)

Closely related to the idea of the motivation of divine accommodation is the identification of God with human beings. The Wesleys stressed that God accommodated himself to humanity in identifying entirely with them. Oftentimes, this entails the Father/child metaphor and the idea of reciprocity:

Their faith the gracious Father sees,
 And kindly for His children cares;
 He condescends to call them His,
 And suffers them to call Him theirs.
 (Wesley and Wesley 1868, 1: 214)

The idea of accommodation in the Incarnation is evident.

My condescending Lord,
 How hast Thou to earth stoop'd down!
 Sinners vile and self-abhorr'd
 Thou dost for Thy brethren own;
 O the grace on man bestow'd,
 Man is call'd the friend of God!
 (Wesley and Wesley 1869, 5: 185)

In *Hymns on the Four Gospels and Acts of the Apostles*, the writers summarize Mark 10:16 when Jesus took the children into his arms. Jesus is depicted as a “condescending Friend” (Wesley and Wesley 11, 1871:32). When Jesus, in John 15:14, calls his disciples his friends, the Wesleys underscore the identification of Christ with his disciples:

Who can the grace explain?
 My God doth condescend
 To call a worm, a man,
 A sinful man His friend!
 (Wesley and Wesley 1871, 12: 26-27)

In another verse, the authors underscore Christ's willingness to condescend to call his disciples into fellowship when in a post resurrection appearance he calls to them, "Come and have breakfast" (John 21:12, NIV).

Christ to His servants condescends,
Invites and treats us as His friends,
Calls us to fellowship with Him
In grace and happiness supreme...
(Wesley and Wesley 1871, 12: 121)

The hymns of the Wesleys underscored the recipients and the goal of divine accommodation. In *Versions and Paraphrases of Select Psalms*, Psalm 68, Part I, the writers summarize Psalm 68. The condition of the recipients of the grace of God is stressed: "servants," "helpless souls," "prisoners," and "rebels." Yet, God condescends to them, "In goodness as in power supreme." The hymn above (as well as others) emphasizes the frailty and sinfulness of the recipients, but God's willingness to accommodate his dealings to compensate for the condition of human beings in order to redeem them.

He every helpless soul befriends;
To all His servants condescends,
In goodness as in power supreme.
(Wesley and Wesley 1870, 8: 149)

On this same theme, Jesus' "love condescends," and he is depicted as "The Shepherd who died His sheep to redeem" (Wesley and Wesley 1869, 5: 115). The accommodation of God descends to the point of self-abasement; the word "stoop" is employed to convey the meaning: "Condescending grace... stoops to ask my love" (Wesley and Wesley 1868, 1: 268). In the supreme paradox of the Christian faith, the Wesleys stressed the spectrum of both the *kenosis* and the *theosis*. S.T. Kimbrough, Jr. affirms the connection between the two: "[Charles] Wesley understood that, as Bishop Kallistos Ware says, 'God's Incarnation opens the way to man's deification.' Wesley emphasized this several times in his *Nativity Hymns* (1745). Stanza 2 of Hymn 14 reads:

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The Creator of all
To repair our sad fall
From his heav'n stoops down,
Lays hold of our nature, and joins to his own."¹⁶

Thus, the accommodation of Christ in the *kenosis* is chronologically prior to the deification (*theosis*) of human beings. In this same vein of thought, Charles Wesley writes of Christ, "Mild he lays his glory by..." which again points to the *kenosis* for the accomplishment of the *theosis*: "that man no more may die" (Kimbrough 2017: 131). The accommodation of Christ in the Incarnation serves the purpose of union with human beings in order to accomplish the saving purpose of God in their behalf.¹⁷

Above, it has been demonstrated that the Wesleys employed a metaphor of the accommodating God as Father. They also emphasize the analogy of a counselor or teacher. In *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, Part II, in a section entitled "Unto the Angel of the Church of Laodiceans," Christ condescends to give counsel:

O let us our own works forsake,
 Ourselves and all we have deny,
 Thy condescending counsel take,
 And come to Thee, pure gold to buy.
 (Wesley and Wesley 1869, 2: 360)

Another frequent metaphor in the Early Church Fathers was God as Physician, another accommodation. In *Hymns and Sacred Poems* in "XLIV. The Same. – Hymn 2" in the section "Jesus Christ, The Same Yesterday, Today, and For Ever [Heb. 13:8]," the two poets emphasize the metaphor of a physician which accommodates grace to the sick, needy, and hurting.

(1) Jesus, Thy far-extended fame
 My drooping soul exults to hear:
 Thy name, Thine all-restoring name
 Is music in a sinner's ear.

(2) Drawn by the evangelic sound,
 I follow with the helpless crowd:
 Mercy, they say, with Thee is found,
 And full redemption in Thy blood.

(3) Sinners of old Thou didst receive,
 With comfortable words, and kind,
 Their sorrows cheer, their wants relieve,
 Heal the diseased, and cure the blind:

(4) Whoever then Thine aid implored,
 Sick, or in want, or grief, or pain,
 Thy condescending grace adored,
 Nor ever sought Thy help in vain.

- (5) And art Thou not the Saviour still,
In every place, and age the same?
Hast Thou forgot Thy gracious skill,
Or lost the virtue of Thy name?
- (6) Faith in Thy changeless name I have;
The good, the kind Physician Thou
Art able now our souls to save,
Art willing to restore them now.
- (7) Though seventeen hundred years are past
Since Thou didst in the flesh appear,
Thy tender mercies ever last,
And still Thy healing power is here.
- (8) Wouldst Thou the body's health restore,
And not regard the sin-sick soul?
The sin-sick soul Thou lovest much more,
And surely Thou shalt make it whole.
- (9) The wondrous works in *Jewry* wrought
Thou canst, Thou wilt, on me repeat;
On me, by faith divinely brought
To fall and worship at Thy feet.
- (10) Here will I ever, ever cry,
Jesus, Thy healing power exert,
Balm to my wounded spirit apply,
And bind Thou up my broken heart.
- (11) My sore disease, my desperate sin
To Thee I mournfully confess;
In pardon, Lord, my cure begin,
And perfect it in holiness.
- (12) That token of Thine utmost good
Now, Jesu, now on me bestow,
And purge my conscience with Thy blood,
And wash my nature white as snow.
(Wesley and Wesley 1869, 4: 374-375)

It is evident that the Wesleys have reflected the theology of the Early Church Fathers and Calvin's thought in employing the three metaphors for the accommodating God: God as Father, God as Teacher, and God as Physician.

One of the unique features of the Wesleys lyrical theology is the prayers for God to condescend to indwell believers. In Hymn III of *Hymns of Petition and Thanksgiving for the Promise of the Father* in the section on *Hymns for Whit-Sunday*, the writers pray for the condescension of the Spirit:

(1) ETERNAL Spirit, come
 Into Thy meanest home,
 From Thine high and holy place
 Where Thou dost in glory reign,
 Stoop in condescending grace,
 Stoop to the poor heart of man.

(2) For Thee our hearts we lift,
 And wait the heavenly Gift:
 Giver, Lord, of life Divine,
 To our dying souls appear,
 Grant the grace for which we pine,
 Give Thyself THE COMFORTER.
 (Wesley and Wesley 1869, 4: 167-168)

The writers emphasize the gap between the “Eternal Spirit” and the recipients of the Spirit. The decent emphasized by the word “stoop” is not one of the spatial distances but on the qualitative distinction between the Spirit and the recipients of the Spirit’s indwelling. Words like “Eternal,” “high and holy,” “in glory reign,” “heavenly Gift,” “Giver, Lord, of Life Divine,” and others describe the nature of the Spirit. The nature of humans is contrasted to the nature of the Spirit. “Dying souls,” “poor heart,” and “meanest home” are words which describe the nature of humanity. The hymn emphasizes the descent of the Spirit into the “meanest” home. The term “meanest” indicates the lowest degree of any good quality, lowest in worth or power (Johnson 1822, 2: 115). Here, as in Calvin’s thought, the *corpus* of humanity is accentuated with a radical distinction between the nature of the accommodating God to whom the appeal is made to “Stoop in condescending grace/Stoop to the poor heart of man.” The Wesleys highlighted the transcendence of the God who accommodates himself to human finitude.

Consideration will now be given solely to John Wesley’s concept of accommodation. While Wesley’s God accommodates himself to the weaknesses and the frailties of humanity,¹⁸ one of the primary emphases that one finds in John’s thought is the matter of condescension or accommodation to fallen human beings in order to bring about salvation. In his notes on Exodus 6:6, Wesley holds that the condescending grace of God is demonstrated in the redemption through the Exodus event (Wesley 1765, 1: 215). In his treatise on *Predestination Calmly Considered*, Wesley discusses the many appeals that God makes to human beings to compass their salvation. In very poignant language, Wesley’s God accommodates

himself to humanity to redeem fallen human beings: “He [God] applies sometimes to their understanding, showing them the folly of their sins; sometimes to their affections, tenderly expostulating with them for their ingratitude, and even condescending to ask, “What could I have done for” you (consistent with my eternal purpose, not to force you) “which I have not done?” (Wesley 2013: 291). In his notes on Jeremiah 5:1, Wesley speaks of the idea of divine condescension in regard to the pardon of Jerusalem during the time of Jeremiah. God is willing to pardon “if there be but one righteous man found in it.” (Wesley 1765, 3: 2143). In the discussion above on Calvin’s concept of accommodation, Calvin’s God accommodates to human sinfulness whereas Wesley’s God accommodates by relenting from the punishment of sin, provided the conditions are met and doing what can be done provided that it is “consistent with my eternal purpose.”

John Wesley

For John, the concept of accommodation becomes a hermeneutical tool. At times, certain passages of scripture should not be taken literally; the dialogue between God, the angels and Satan in Job 1 is an example. According to John, the account of the dialogue is an example of God condescending “to our shallow capacities, and to express himself, as the *Jews* phrase it, *in the language of the sons of men*. And it is likewise intimated, that the affairs of earth are much the subject of the counsels of the unseen world. That world is dark to us: but we lie open to it” (Wesley 1765, 2: 1521).

Accommodation can also be used as a hermeneutical key in John Wesley’s thought. John’s comments on Malachi 4:5 reveal that while the scripture has a definite application to a given historical context, the passage through an accommodated application may also be applied to the end of the world. John states, “*The great and dreadful day of the Lord*—This literally refers to the times of vengeance upon the *Jews*, from the death of Christ to the final desolation of the city and temple, and by accommodation, to the end of the world.” (Wesley 1765, 3: 617). In his monograph, *John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture*, Scott A. Jones distinguishes between Calvin’s and Wesley’s use of the principle of accommodation. Calvin used the principle of accommodation to resolve “the contradictions and inconsistencies within the Bible,” whereas Wesley employed the principle of accommodation to resolve “discrepancies between the worldview of scripture and that of modern science” (Jones 1995: 40). Wesley would

assert that the scripture had been accommodated to the average reader with a non-scientific mind and is prepared "to yield scripture's authority to external authority" (Jones 1995: 40). Wesley made a distinction, however, between accommodating the word of God to the truth discovered in the natural world and accommodating the Word of God to the hearers. The latter is dangerous. In his *Sermon CXXXVI: On Corrupting the Word of God*, Wesley warns against accommodating the Word of God to the hearers: "Let the hearers accommodate themselves to the word; the word is not, in this sense, to be accommodated to the hearers" (Wesley 1987, 4: 250).

Another critical theme arising from this survey is the accommodation of the law. In the introduction to Exodus 21, Wesley states that the laws recorded in Exodus 21 are not accommodated to the human constitution; however, they are beneficial as an explanation of the moral law which still retained its validity for the Christian in Wesley's view (Wesley 1765, 1: 272).

John Fletcher

While the doctrine of accommodation was only nascent in the thought of John and Charles Wesley, John Fletcher, the third member of the Methodist triumvirate, developed a more thoroughgoing doctrine of accommodation. In Fletcher's thought, one finds all of the aspects which are found in the doctrine of accommodation in Chrysostom's thought.

First, Fletcher emphasized divine transcendence, a radical distinction between the Creator and fallen human nature. He affirmed the total depravity of fallen human nature.¹⁹ Sin affected every aspect of human beings, including the mind. The gap between sinful, finite humanity and a holy, infinite God were humanly insurmountable. The love of God was the impulse for intervening; God accommodated himself to the human condition to redeem humanity.

The second aspect of the doctrine of accommodation is the pedagogical aspect. Because of the noetic effects of sin and human limitations, accommodation becomes a series of divine actions which aim at the goal of "full" revelation. God desires to reveal as fully as possible, but only as fully as human beings are capable of receiving. The issue, then, is not the supremacy of divine revelation; God desires to reveal fully and supremely. However, the timing of revelation is significant; revelation is dispensed in apportioned measures and at appropriate times according to the dictates of human capacity to absorb it.

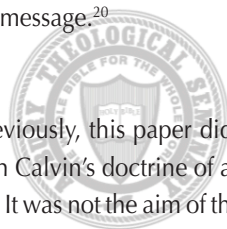
Fletcher's theology of history preserves Christology at the center. "For Fletcher, Christ is not only the apex of the *ordo temporum*, but he is also central to the *ordo salutis* even in the periods of history prior to and following the Christ event" (Frazier 2015: 162). Thus, the third aspect of the patristic doctrine of accommodation is retained.

The fourth aspect of the patristic doctrine of accommodation has to do with hermeneutical issues. Though couched in a different language, Fletcher acknowledges the importance of accommodation or history in the interpretation of some of the OT passages in particular. For him, accommodation is a hermeneutical key. He quotes Milton, "...Milton says somewhere, 'There is a certain scale of duties, a certain hierarchy of upper and lower commands, which for want of studying in right order, all the world is in confusion.'" (Fletcher 1883, 2: 342). Fletcher explained the connection between Milton's citation and the doctrine of dispensations: "What that great man said of the scale of duties and commands, may, with equal propriety, be affirmed of the scale of evangelical truths, and the hierarchy of upper and lower gospel dispensations. For want of studying them in right order, all the church is in confusion" (Frazier 2015: 162).

The doctrine of accommodation is not merely theoretical; it has, in Fletcher's thought, some significant implications for Christian ministry. As God accommodated divine revelation to the fallen human condition to communicate effectively, Christian ministers must accommodate their message (and ministry) to their hearers to communicate effectively the saving news of God in Christ. Fletcher's theology may be summarized as follows: God has, through history, accommodated divine revelation to the limitations of finite human capacity and calls Christian ministers to accommodate themselves to their hearers (congregants) for them to appropriate the Christian message.²⁰

Conclusion

As indicated previously, this paper did not attempt to establish a direct correlation between Calvin's doctrine of accommodation and that of the Methodist triumvirate. It was not the aim of this paper to do so. However, the article has reaffirmed the central role of the doctrine of accommodation in Calvin's thought and underscores how the Methodist triumvirate adopted and adapted the idea of accommodation. The correspondence of the doctrine in Calvin and the early Methodists cautions one against an



overemphasis on an antagonistic relationship between the Calvinistic and the Wesleyan-Arminian branches of Christendom.

While the doctrine was foundational for both systems, some differences should be underscored. While the Wesleys and Fletcher stressed divine transcendence as the backdrop for condescension, they also emphasized that divine condescension to human beings was motivated by the love of God. The Methodist triumvirate stressed, more than Calvin did, divine accommodation as a means of expressing God's love in condescending to human frailties and sinfulness. Love is not only the motivation for the Incarnation; it is the prominent characteristic of the incarnate Christ who befriended frail and sinful human beings. The early Methodist triumvirate stressed the backdrop of divine holiness in their discussions on human sinfulness, underscoring the stark contrast between God's holiness and humanity's sinfulness. However, the objective of divine condescension was the redemption and transformation of human beings in the image of God, accomplished in part through the divine condescension to sin-sick humanity. Thus, divine condescension, particularly in the Incarnation, is the apex of history and is the means to the end of the restoration of the image of God. The Holy Spirit condescends to indwell human beings as the agent of human transformation. Against Calvin's more pessimistic view of history, the Methodist triumvirate held optimistically to the *teleos* of history; that is, God is restoring and perfecting human beings and leading history to its destined end.

From a human standpoint, Christians are to follow the divine example in accommodating, even condescending, to others to participate with God in transforming human lives. They must accommodate the message and ministry to dictates of the limited understanding and cultural contexts for the message to be communicated effectively. At the same time, the goal remains the same: to equip "his people for the works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach the unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12, NIV).

End notes

¹ The title disregards Battles' advice. Battles counseled against using a nominal form of the word *accommodation* in relationship to Calvin's theology, insisting that Calvin always used the verb *accommodare* or *attemperare* when referring to the idea of accommodation (Ford Lewis Battles, "God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity." *Interpretation*. 31(1) (January 1977): 19.

² Battles points out that Calvin uses the term *captus* or *capacity* to speak of the human condition (Battles, 32. See also Balsarak, Jon. "'Deus Humanitus Saepe Cum Suis Agere Solet': An Analysis of Divine Accommodation in the Thought of John Calvin." Ph. D. thesis, University of Edinburgh (2007): 58ff.

³ Phillipe Theron cites Paul Helm, "God accommodates himself to us: we do not accommodate God to ourselves" (Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK [2006]: 196). Theron adds, "While the latter amounts to idolatry, the former accords with the opening words of Hebrews..." (Phillipe (Flip) Theron, "Chapter 12: Accommodation and Incarnation: A Favourite Concept of Calvin in the Theology of Oepke Noordmans," in *Restoration Through Redemption: John Calvin Revisited*. Studies in Reformed Theology Series. Brill: Leiden, Netherlands [2013]: 199).

⁴ *Holy Bible, New International Version*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2011, Exodus 33:23. Hereafter, all scripture references will employ this version of the Bible with an in-text citation, indicating this version as NIV, unless otherwise indicated.

⁵ The purpose of my work in *True Christianity* was different than that of Huijgen's. It focused principally on the economy of salvation or the doctrine of dispensations in the history of Christian thought (J. Russell Frazier, *True Christianity: The Doctrine of Dispensations in the Thought of John William Fletcher (1729-1785)*. James Clarke & Co.: Cambridge, UK (2015): 9–34.

⁶ The title was bestowed by Henry Pinard (Theron, "Chapter 12: Accommodation and Incarnation: A Favourite Concept of Calvin in the Theology of Oepke Noordmans," 201).

⁷ Huijgen, 2011:75. Battles also traces the idea of accommodation in the Early Church Fathers (Ford Lewis Battles, "God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity." *Interpretation*. 31[1] [January 1977]: 22-26).

⁸ Quoted from Chrysostom, *Sur l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu* (Homélie I-IV). Ed. Jean Daniélou and Anne-Marie Malingrey, trans. Robert Flacelière. SC 28bis. Cerf: Paris, France (2000). Huijgen 2011: 76.

⁹ Huijgen, 2011:78. Huijgen cautions against using the idea of accommodation as a lens to interpret scripture: "Obviously, there must be a criterion to judge whether a passage is accommodated to human

understanding; otherwise, the concept of accommodation entails exegetical arbitrariness" (Huijgen 2011: 90).

¹⁰ I wish that Huijgen had used a broader designation for this aspect. Paulinism, of course, limits the application of accommodation to the Apostle Paul. The current writer has not studied sufficiently the doctrine of accommodation in the thought of Chrysostom to know whether or not Chrysostom identified other biblical characters with the application of accommodation. However, a broader term would be more encompassing.

¹¹ Much has been written in recent years on the concept of accommodation in the thought of John Calvin. Some of the research has focused on the idea of accommodation as a hermeneutical key to understanding scripture which lies outside the focus of this paper. Thus, only the most important studies for the purpose of this paper have been considered here.

¹² Balserak's work has been revised and published under the following title, *Divinity Compromised: A Study of Divine Accommodation in the Thought of John Calvin* (Dordrecht, London: Springer, 2011). The thesis itself discusses Calvin's commentaries, but Balserak strangely does not develop the idea of accommodation as a hermeneutic.

¹³ Balserak, 2002: 218. "URL": "https://www.era.lib.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/18599/BalserakJ_2007redux.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y", "author": [{"family": "Balserak", "given": "John"}], "accessed": {"date-parts": [{"2017", 5, 26}]}, "issued": {"date-parts": [{"2002"}]}, "locator": "218", "schema": "https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json" In "The God of Love and Weakness," Balserak states, "The picture that Calvin paints also involves a God who seems less than omnipotent in practice. In this strand of Calvin's thought, God does not wield his absolute power to bring about the outcomes he desires, but instead labors under and allows his actions to be influenced by many of the same conditions and constraints to which his creatures are subject" (Balserak, 2000: 195).

¹⁴ Huijgen, 2000: 75. Battles also traces the idea of accommodation in the Early Church Fathers (Battles 1977: 22-26).

¹⁵ Other words include goodness, dignity, counsel, saving power, love, and grace.

¹⁶ S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., *Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley*. Cascade Books: Eugene, OR (2017): 89. The current writer is not convinced that the Wesleys posited the idea of the deification of human beings; however, he employs the quote to point to the restoration of the image of God, a theme that was consistently touted in their writings.

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¹⁷ In *Hymns on the Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles*, the Wesleys speak of the healing of the blind man in Mark 8:22. In that context, they write, "He to the conscious soul of man/Still condescends Himself to' unite." (Charles Wesley and John Wesley, *The Poetical Works of John and*

Charles Wesley, ed. G. Osborn, vol. 11 [Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office: London, 1871]: 15–16.

¹⁸ cf. 1 Cor. 17:16; Lev. 16:29; Judges 6; Gen. 23; 28:15; 1 Sam. 9:6, 30:7; John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, vols. 1-3. William Pine: Bristol, UK, (1765), en loco.

¹⁹ By total depravity, it is meant that Fletcher held that the Fall had affected every aspect of human beings.

²⁰ Fletcher's pastoral theology is reflected in his *The Portrait of Saint Paul; or, The True Model for Christians and Pastors*. It should be evident from the title that Fletcher's work reflects what Huijgen describes as "Paulinism."

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David J. Zucker
2 Kings 5: A Chiastic Quintet

Abstract:

2 Kings 5 recounts the healing of the Aramean general Naaman through his encounter with Elisha the prophet of YHWH, and what then ensues with Elisha's attendant Gehazi. As structured the chapter reflects five sets of chiasms. This article breaks down those chiasms as it seeks to examine the story's focus in scripture.

Keywords: Chiastic/chiasm/chiasmus, Elisha, Gehazi, Naaman

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Chiasm in a literary setting, broadly defined “is the use of a balance of words, phrases, or themes around a pivotal center idea, provided that the order of these words, phrases, or themes is inverted in the second half over against the ordering of the first half.” The word itself is “a symbolic representation of the flow of word or theme order in such a passage diagrammed visually by plotting the parallel sections at the extremes” of the “Greek letter ‘chi’ (X) rotating around the pivotal center crossing. Chiasm, ... [is] an expression of balanced ideas.”¹ Put slightly differently, Chiasm [or chiasmus] “is a rhetorical device that focuses the reader’s attention on the center of the unit, where the central idea or turning point is situated.”² Chiasmus is often diagrammed as A, B, C, D, E, [X] E’, D’, C’, B’, A’. Chiasms may be a mnemonic device, or simply the author’s chosen literary structure. A study of 2 Kings 5 reflects numerous chiasms in this biblical chapter.

Set in the mid-9th century BCE in the northern kingdom of Israel, 2 Kings 5 presents the narrative about the *tzaraat*-affected³ Aramean general Naaman and Elisha the prophet of YHWH, as well as details about Elisha’s attendant Gehazi. Following some general comments about chapter five, this article addresses how the structure of the received (redacted) version of this chapter reflects five sets of chiasms. There is no way to know with a certainty if these chiasms stem from the authorial intent of the writer of 2 Kings 5, from the Deuteronomic Historian, or from that of the redactor of the text of the book of Kings. Indeed, the arguments for chiasms in a narrative, by their very nature can be subjective. No doubt someone else may propose a different set of chiasms. Still, the chapter allows for this quintet of chiastic readings.

The chapter demonstrates “Elisha’s, or more properly YHWH’s, power to heal Naaman and Naaman’s recognition of that power, it also points to the prophet’s and YHWH’s capacity to punish a moral wrong.”⁴ In this chapter there are “no less than *ten* characters, or groups of characters ... Naaman, his wife, her maid, the king of Syria, the king of Israel, Elisha, Gehazi, Naaman’s servants, Elisha’s unnamed messenger, and the additional unidentified servants who carry Gehazi’s loot for him. With the marked increase in characters comes an increase in the number of subplots and ‘scene changes’ which enhance the main incident of the encounter between Naaman and Elisha.”⁵ Undoubtedly Naaman, Elisha, and Gehazi are the main characters in this chapter. Yet as Gina Hens-Piazza points

out while the young girl from Israel, and Naaman's servants are "bit-part characters ... the supporting cast ... [they] are quite significant. Despite their abbreviated appearance in the story, they often play a pivotal role ... their direct speech ... alter[s] the course of the story."⁶

In terms of an overview of this chapter, Robert L. Cohn points out that "though at first glance 2 Kings 5 appears to be a single, continuous story focusing on Naaman, closer study reveals that it is comprised of three distinct units, each centering on a different character."⁷ Cohn highlights vv. 1—14 (Elisha), 15—19 (Naaman), and 20—27 (Gehazi). Cohn correctly points out that,

Elisha is the named subject whose instruction leads to Naaman's health. Elisha, therefore, is the center of gravity in the unit. The basic story is a very simple one, which the author, conceivably, could have compressed into a few verses, like many of the other Elisha stories. It might, for instance, have run as follows:

Naaman, the commander-in-chief of the Syrian army, was valorous but leprous. When he heard of the power of Elisha, he went to Samaria to be cured. Elisha said to him, "If you would be clean, wash seven times in the Jordan." And Naaman did as the prophet said, and, behold, he was clean.

"This condensed version would seem to include the important elements, and it moves us from *problem to solution* [*my emphasis*], yet it is not equivalent to the biblical story. By weaving plot, characters, and speech around these bare bones, the biblical author has created a different story, an artful narrative. When we ask at every step *how* it is different, we begin to understand the way it functions as literature."⁸

Cohn's compressed version quoted above covers half of chapter five, vv. 1—14. Briefly stated, the second half of the narrative, vv. 15—27 looks like this:

Having been cured, Naaman goes to Elisha to thank him. He offers the prophet gifts which Elisha rebuffs. Naaman pledges loyalty to YHWH. He starts to return to Aram. Gehazi, Elisha's aide follows after Naaman and falsely suggests that Elisha actually wants a payment. Gehazi then takes the gifts and hides them.⁹ Elisha confronts Gehazi about his deceptive behavior; he then curses Gehazi with *tzaraat*.

As shall be demonstrated below, to paraphrase Cohn, in the proposed chiasmus/chiastic analysis of the whole chapter, the plot moves from problem to solution to problem: from *tzaraat* to solution to *tzaraat*.

Cohn analyzes the chapter pointing out various literary matters.¹⁰ For example, he notes that when introduced in the first verse, Naaman is praised as a commander of the army of the king of Aram. Naaman is a great man, someone held in high favor by his master; he is victorious and a “valorous hero/*gibbor hayil*.” Then, unexpectedly, “the author shocks the reader with the irony of Naaman’s predicament. [Naaman suffers from *tzaraat*.] The careful description of Naaman has a further purpose in the narrative. In it are planted a number of key words and ideas which will occur later in the narrative, like seeds which germinate and sprout. The first verse thus acts as a kind of *précis* in code, not deciphered until the story is complete.”¹¹

The first example of the chiastic quintet

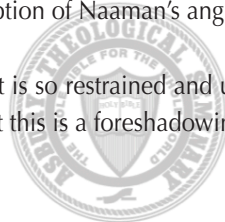
The *first* example of the chiastic quintet is quite subtle. It centers on Naaman’s actions after he has come to Elisha’s house. The prophet chooses to refrain from meeting Naaman in person. Instead, he sends a mere messenger with what appears to be a dismissive suggestion: go and immerse yourself in the Jordan River seven times. Naaman is incensed and leaves in high dudgeon. Burke O. Long characterizes the chiasm this way:

- a. A description of Naaman’s angry departure (11a)
- b. Naaman’s speech / thought (11b, 12a)
- a’. A further description of Naaman’s angry departure. (12b)¹²

This example is limited. It is so restrained and understated, that the reader might easily overlook that this is a foreshadowing of further chiasms in this chapter.

The second example of the chiastic quintet

Like a well-written mystery story, in the *second* example of the chiastic quintet a major clue hides in plain sight. Exactly two thirds of the way through the chapter, verse 18 is itself consciously written as a chiasm,



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and a much more definitive and complex one.¹³ In this case a-b-c-d is followed by d'-c'-b'-a'.

But may *YHWH pardon your servant on one count*: when my master goes into the *house of Rimmon* to worship there leaning on my arm, and I *bow down* in the *house of Rimmon*, when I do *bow down* in the *house of Rimmon*, may *YHWH pardon your servant on this one count* (NRSV slightly adapted).¹⁴

- a. On one count
 - b. may YHWH pardon your servant
 - c. Going to the House of Rimmon
 - d. Bowing there
 - d'. Bowing there
 - c'. In the House of Rimmon
 - b'. may YHWH pardon your servant
- a'. on this one count.

Appearing to give obeisance to the Aramean god is what is of greatest concern to Naaman, now a believer in the worldwide power of YHWH.¹⁵ Naaman forms his request of YHWH as a chiasm. In that chiastic sense v. 18 serves as the key to the structure of the whole chapter. *It is the most obvious theological message of this narrative.*

The third example of the chiastic quintet

In fact, the totality of chapter 5 is framed in a chiastic manner. That is the *third* example of the chiastic quintet. When read as a chiasm, where the first verse is linked to the final verse, the second verse is linked to the penultimate verse, and so on until one comes to the middle verses, the proposed chiastic structure becomes clear.

The narrative begins with a description of Naaman in Aram, heroic but plagued with *tzaraat*. This is quickly followed in verse 2 which offers a direct link to the land of Israel through the presence of an Israelite *servant girl*. In verse 3, this servant speaks to Naaman's wife, and soon Naaman is on his way to Israel. The closing verses of the chapter read in *reverse order* depict Gehazi with *tzaraat* (27), mention of female and male servants (although the text uses the descriptions of *'avadim* and *shifahot*, 26), and then Elisha and Gehazi speaking together (25).

- A. Naaman *tzaraat* (1)
 - B. Female servant/attendant to Naaman's wife (2)
 - C. Two people speak: Female servant speaks to Naaman's wife; (3)
 - D. Young girl mentioned; Request to king of Israel / Naaman takes silver, gold, clothes (4, 5)
 - E. Naaman travels to Israel (6)
 - F. Consternation of king of Israel; consternation of Elisha (7, 8)
 - G. Naaman goes to Elisha (9)
 - H. Elisha sends directions to Naaman (10)
 - I. Naaman angry, discounts power of YHWH; servants (11, 12, 13)
 - J. Naaman cured, now acknowledges power of YHWH (14, 15a)
 - K. Naaman offers gift to Elisha (15b)
 - K'. Elisha refuses gift (16)
 - J'. Naaman requests earth to take with him (17)
 - I'. Naaman seeks YHWH's absolution for his future role in Aram/worship of Rimmon; Naaman self-describes as servant (18)
 - H'. Elisha sends Naaman on his way (19a)
 - G'. Naaman leaves Elisha (19b)
 - F'. Consternation of Gehazi (20)
 - E'. Naaman travels from Israel (21)
 - D'. Gehazi requests / Gehazi takes Naaman's silver, clothes; young men mentioned (22, 23)
 - C'. Two people speak: Elisha and Gehazi (25, 26)
 - B'. Mention of male and female servants (26)
 - A'. Gehazi *tzaraat* (27)

As mentioned earlier, Chiasmus “is a rhetorical device that focuses the reader’s attention on the center of the unit, where the central idea or turning point is situated.” Near the heart of this narrative is the lesson that, as Naaman proclaims, “**Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel**” (15a). Yet there is an additional lesson. In the second part of the verse at the center-point of the narrative, Naaman offers a gift to Elisha the man of God (15b). Pointedly Elisha refuses the gift, stating that he only serves the living YHWH (16). Refusing this proffered gift is central to the wider narrative. It is the set-up for the second half of the chapter. To use Cohn’s phrase, it is “a kind of *précis* in code, not deciphered until the story is complete.” It is only towards the end of the chapter that one learns about Gehazi’s avarice in seeking a gift which leads to his being cursed, ironically with *tzaraat*, that same affliction which brought Naaman to Israel.

Additional details

The chiastic connections in this *third* example are also found in a more detailed way. In v. 1 Naaman is described as in “high favor *with* his master” (NRSV); “was important *to his* lord” (NJPS). In the more literal word-for-word translation, it reads “a man prominent *before* his lord” (*The Early Prophets*, Fox translation).¹⁶ The actual Hebrew text reads *lifney adonav*. In the corresponding chiastic verse (v. 27), Gehazi is described with a variant form of the same word, as leaving the *presence* of his master (*milifanav*). In addition, the “narrator’s final clipped remark (v. 27b) takes us back to Naaman’s early affliction and makes this tale of reversals and contrasts into a wave doubling back on itself.”¹⁷

In v. 3 the little servant girl says to her mistress, if only Naaman “were with the prophet [in Samaria] ... he would cure him” of his *tzaraat*. The Hebrew text reads, *lifney ha-navi*, standing *before the prophet*. In the corresponding chiastic verse (v. 25), Gehazi stands *before* Elisha although a different expression is used. Nonetheless, the servant girl suggests physical movement, as does Elisha; contrastingly, Gehazi denies physical movement.

In v. 4 the girl (*naarah*) from Israel is mentioned. In the corresponding chiastic verse (v. 23), “his servants” are mentioned (*naarav*).

In v. 5 Naaman takes with him gifts, ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. In the corresponding chiastic verses (vv. 22, 23) there is mention of Gehazi asking Naaman for specific gifts and then Naaman actually giving him talents of silver and sets of garments. Gehazi will then secret those items away in v. 24a.¹⁸

In v. 7 the unnamed king of Israel,¹⁹ in his consternation says, “am I God (*Elohim*) to give life or death?” In the corresponding chiastic verse (v. 20) Elisha is referred to as “the man of God” (*ish haElohim*).

In v. 8 the text speaks of “Elisha the man of God,” and one finds Elisha’s exclamation that Naaman should know that “there is a prophet in Israel.” Elisha is not drawing attention to himself by this statement, rather he is highlighting that as the prophet he represents YHWH. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 20, Gehazi is identified as the servant of “Elisha the man of God” and Gehazi refers to YHWH. There is a further, albeit more subtle connection between these verses. In v. 8 Elisha wants it understood that he is a prophet of God. Then, as shall be shown later, when offered compensation for his advice, Elisha *refuses any payment* from Naaman. By contrast, Gehazi in v. 20 runs after Naaman, specifically “to get something out of him.”

In v. 9 Naaman goes to Elisha. In the corresponding chiastic verse (19b) he takes his leave from Elisha.

In v. 11 Naaman is furious, he expected Elisha to perform some elaborate ritual. Naaman thought that the prophet would “call on the name of YHWH.” In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 18 Naaman seeks “YHWH’s pardon” when Naaman will accompany his master in future religious ceremonies when they are in the house of Rimmon (Rimmon is a play on words for the major Aramean god, Ramman).

In v. 12 Naaman makes specific reference to two rivers which are situated in *Aram*. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 18 Naaman refers to what he will need to do when he returns to *Aram*, namely accompany his master in the house of Rimmon.

Two verses, v. 13 and v. 17, are each two steps away from the center-point. In v. 13 Naaman’s servants appear to be quite grounded and practical, for they urge him to take Elisha’s suggestion at face value and that he should immerse himself in the Jordan. In v. 17 Naaman asks Elisha’s consent that the Aramean takes some earth from the Shomron back with him back to *Aram*, presumably to make an altar. Naaman’s request is both psychologically and literally grounded.

In v. 13 the servants (*avadav*) give Naaman advice; in v. 18 Naaman twice self-describes as a servant (*avadekha*). “Like his servants, who minister to him, Naaman now calls himself a servant before the prophet and before” YHWH.²⁰

In v. 14 Naaman is cured, and in v. 15a he proclaims God's power in the world. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 17, as noted he requests that he be allowed to take a quantity of earth with him back to Aram, because he will in the future only worship YHWH. This earth taken from Israel will serve as a connection for him. In v. 15a Naaman uses the phrase *ki im* (except), and the same phrase, *ki im*, appears in v. 17

In v. 15b Naaman urges Elisha to take a gift for his services *qah-na* (please *take*) and in the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 16, Elisha refuses to do so (*im-eqah* (if I will *take*)). Coincidentally Elisha echoes a trope found in Genesis 14 when Melchizedek praises Abraham (then still Abram) and wishes to reward him. Abram resolutely refuses to “take a thread or a sandal throng or anything” (Gen 14:23).

The fourth example of the chiastic quintet

The *fourth* example of the chiastic quintet addresses verses 1—14, the first half of the chapter. Before analysing those connections, one might note that Cohn draws attention to the fact that in v. 14, after having immersed himself seven times in the Jordan River, Naaman is cured of his *tzaraat*. When he is returned to health, “his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy” (*naar qaton*). This forms an *inclusio* with the parallel words in v. 2 describing the young Israelite girl (*naarah q'tanah*).²¹ This opening chiasm centers on Elisha, the man of God. Truly “there is a prophet in Israel.”

When considering just the first half of this chapter by itself (vv. 1—14) one can see that there are additional chiastic patterns.

- L. Naaman has *tzaraat* (1)
- M. (servant) gives advice (2, 3)
 - N. King of *Aram* mentioned (5)
 - O. brings letter, mentions Naaman who is on his way to Israel (6)
 - P. cure for *tzaraat* sought (7)
 - Q. Elisha mentioned (8)
 - Q'. Elisha mentioned (9)
 - P'. directions for *tzaraat* cure explained (10)
 - O'. Naaman angry and goes away in a fury (11)

N'. Rivers located near Damascus (capital of *Aram*) (12)

M'. servants give advice (13)

L'. Naaman cured of *tzaraat* (14)

Verse 1 ends with the statement that Naaman is plagued with *tzaraat*. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 14, he is totally cured, his *tzaraat* is gone.

In vv. 2, 3 the Israelite (servant) girl speaks to her mistress; offers advice. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 13, Naaman's servants give him advice

In v. 5 the king of *Aram* is mentioned. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 12 the rivers which are in *Aram*, near Damascus are mentioned.

In v. 6 Naaman physically travels to Israel; he brings the letter to the king of Israel. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 11 Naaman physically storms off, but clearly he still is in Israel.

In v. 7 the king of Israel is distraught, thinking that he is being asked to cure Naaman of *tzaraat*. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 10, Elisha tells Naaman what to do to rid himself of *tzaraat*: Go and immerse yourself seven times in the Jordan River.

In v. 8 Elisha, the man of God, is first mentioned. He tells the king of Israel, send Naaman to me so that he knows that there is a prophet in Israel. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 9, Naaman stands at the entrance of the house of Elisha.

The fifth example of the chiastic quintet

The *fifth* and final example of the chiastic quintet addresses verses 15—27, the second half of the chapter.

Here (vv. 15—27) one can see that there are additional chiastic patterns.

R. Now cured of *tzaraat*, Naaman returns to Elisha (15)

S. Elisha refuses to *take* (*eqah*) a gift (16)

T. (Naaman, standing before Elisha, *-/fanav-* v. 15) seeks gifts of earth to take with him (17)

U. Naaman: when back home his master will lean on his arm, literally my hand (*yadi* -18)

V. Elisha and Naaman, Naaman takes his leave presumably with the earth - (19)

W. Gehazi plans to go to Naaman to get some gifts (20)

X. Gehazi pursues Naaman (21a)

X'. Naaman descends from his chariot and greets Gehazi (21b)

W'. Gehazi asks for the gifts (22)

V'. Two anonymous servants/lads are mentioned, they leave (carrying the goods – 23)

U'. Gehazi returns with the “stolen” goods, he takes it from their hands (*yadam* - 24)

T'. Gehazi stands before, but literally against Elisha (*el adonav*); denies going anywhere (25)

S'. Gehazi reprimanded for *taking* (*laqahat* – twice) gifts (26)

R'. Gehazi, now cursed with *tzaraat*, leaves Elisha (27).

Verse 15, totally cured, his *tzaraat* gone, Naaman approaches Elisha. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 27, now newly afflicted with *tzaraat*, Gehazi leaves the presence of Elisha.

Verse 16, although offered gifts by a grateful Naaman, Elisha refuses to accept these presents. In the corresponding verse, v. 26 Elisha upbraids Gehazi for his theft of talents and clothes.

Verse 17, Naaman openly asks Elisha for a favor, he wishes to take certain items back with him to Aram, mounds of earth, presumably to build an altar. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 25, Gehazi dissembles, he lies about having followed after Naaman, and makes no mention of his deceitful acts, taking/bringing back certain items.

Verse 18 Naaman explains that back in Aram he will be asked to assist his master, who will literally lean on Naaman's *arm*. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 24, Gehazi takes off from the *hands/arms* of the servants, the stolen gifts.

Verse 19, Naaman is on his way back home northeastward to Aram. In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 23, the two young men carry the ill-gotten gifts southwestwardly back to Israel.

In verse 20, Gehazi thinks to himself, or probably says out loud, “I will run after him (Naaman) and get something out of him.” In the corresponding chiastic verse, v. 22, he claims that Elisha in effect had changed his mind, and that he had sent him (Gehazi) for some gifts.

Verse 21a. This is the center point of the fifth chiasm. In the first half of this verse Gehazi chases after Naaman, intending to defraud him.

In the second part, v. 21b, Naaman seeing that he is being sought not only stops but gets off from his chariot to interact with Gehazi personally.

Concluding remarks

2 Kings 5 contains its own prophetic lessons about the power of God to heal, and further that God is open to effect healing for people who live outside of the land of Israel and Judah. The chapter can be read with just that message. In addition, however, the very structure of the chapter, literally and literarily shows that there are five concurrent chiasmic parts to this narrative involving the mid 9th century BCE Aramean general Naaman and the prophet-the man-of-God Elisha, and secondarily Elisha's servant/ attendant Gehazi. These chiasms each serve somewhat different purposes. They highlight the different major personalities of this chapter, an Aramean general, a prophet in Israel, and his avaricious servant. As noted at the beginning of this article, it is impossible to know when these chiasms were set down. Further, by their very nature chiasmic structures can be subjective. Someone else may propose a different set of chiasms for this narrative. Still, the chapter allows for, at the very least, this quintet of chiasmic readings.

Verses 11—12 are the *first* chiasm. They center on Naaman's angry reaction to what he perceives to be Elisha's trivializing his *tzaraat*. He feels that the prophet is indifferent to his plight. Verse 18, the *second* chiasm discussed consists of Naaman's expression of dismay and his request to be forgiven ahead of time by YHWH when, accompanied by his master, the king of Aram, Naaman needs to be present in the house of Rimmon, the Aramean god. The whole chapter, all twenty-seven verses in themselves form the *third* chiasm, which, following Naaman's cure centers itself on Naaman's desire to present a gift to Elisha and the prophet's refusal to accept this. Verses 1—14 which form the first half of the chapter feature the *fourth* chiasmic structure which focuses on Naaman and Elisha. Verses 15—27, forming the second half of the chapter features the *fifth* and final chiasmic structure which focuses on the three main protagonists, Naaman, Elisha, and Gehazi. 2 Kings 5, a testament to the power of YHWH and of God's prophet, Elisha, is a forceful narrative in its own right. In addition, this chapter is consciously structured in such a way as to feature a quintet of chiasms, each highlighting a different viewpoint, and collectively enriching the messages of this narrative.

End notes

¹ Wayne Brouwer, "The Literary Development of John 13-17: A Chiastic Reading." Ph.D. Dissertation, McMaster University (1999): 6-7. Slightly adjusted for American spelling.

² Elie Assis, "Chiasmus in Biblical Narrative: Rhetoric of Characterization." *Prooftexts*. 22(3) (2002): 273 [273-304]. As a subset of literary criticism, "rhetorical criticism ... [is] a method which only examines the present or final form of biblical texts." T. B. Dozeman, "OT Rhetorical Criticism." In D. N. Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 5). Doubleday: New York, NY (1992): 714.

³ Tzaraat. "For centuries translated as 'leprosy,' the dreaded Hansen's disease, but modern scholars understand it as some sort of unsightly but not contagious or serious skin rash." Everett Fox, *The Early Prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings*. Schocken Bible II. Schocken: New York, NY (2014): 721. A good description of *tzaraat* is found in Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Yale University: New Haven, CT (2008 [1988]): 63.

⁴ Marvin A. Sweeny, *I and II Kings: A Commentary*. OTL. Westminster John Knox: Louisville, KY (2007): 296.

⁵ T.R. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, WBC. Word: Waco, TX (1985): 59.

⁶ Gina Hens-Piazza, *The Supporting Cast of the Bible*. Lexington/Fortress Academic: Lanham, MD (2020): 47, 48.

⁷ Robert L. Cohn, "Form and Perspective in 2 Kings V.' *Vetus Testamentum* XXXIII, 2 (1983), 171. Van Wijk-Bos also suggests three divisions, but hers are: 1—12; 13—18; and 19—27. Johanna W. H Van Wijk-Bos, *The Land and Its Kings. 1-2 Kings*. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI (2020): 193.

⁸ Cohn, "Form and Perspective," 173.

⁹ Fox suggests that Gehazi hides the stolen goods at the Ofel in Jerusalem. Fox, *Early Prophets*, 725. This locale is unlikely as Hobbs explains. "Gehazi would not hide his loot in the capital city of a foreign country, nor would he live there." Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 67 n. 24.

¹⁰ Long agrees with Cohn's tripartite division but offers "a slightly different model [of] a series of waves undulating along a line, each one containing within itself the energy that gives rise to the next ... The waves roll toward a shoreline, where originary energy subsides." Burke O. Long, *2 Kings. The Forms of the Old Testament Literature* (FOTL). Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, MI (1991): 68-69.

¹¹ Cohn, "Form and Perspective," 173, 174.

¹² Long, *2 Kings*, 71.

¹³ Robert L. Cohn, *2 Kings. Berit Olam*. Liturgical Press, Michael Glazier: Collegeville, MN (2000): 39. Cohn suggests that in a broad sense chiasmic structures are found throughout *2 Kings*. Cohn, *2 Kings*, 4 n. 4. The chiasm suggested here, however, differs somewhat from that of Cohn. For another understanding of this chiasmic verse, see Assis, 280-282. Cogan and Tadmor write that most “commentators have noted the repetition of the phrases ‘in this thing’ and ‘to bow down’; they have excised one or the other, considering them ‘a misplaced gloss’ (Stade) or ‘clumsy’ (Montgomery-Gehrman). But the wordiness of Naaman’s statement reflects his halting speech, as he apologizes for his continued worship of the god Rimmon, a custom which he perceives to be offensive to Israel’s God.” Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 65 n. 18.

¹⁴ Although the English translations in NRSV and NJPS begin with the phrase “May YHWH pardon your servant,” the Hebrew begins with “on one count” ... *ladavar hazeh*.

¹⁵ Cogan and Tadmor suggest that “Naaman’s conversion is ... an expression of ‘ancient Israelite universalism,’ an idea which surfaces frequently in the Elijah-Elisha cycles of stories,” Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 67. “Elisha seems unconcerned that Naaman is an Aramean ... he even seems unconcerned that Naaman will accompany his master to a foreign god’s temple. Rather what seems to be important to Elisha is the fact that Naaman has been converted to Israel’s God.” Alice L. Laffey, *First and Second Kings. New Collegeville Bible Commentary*. Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN (2011): 102.

¹⁶ Fox, *Early Prophets*, 721.

¹⁷ Long, *2 Kings*, 76.

¹⁸ Van Wijk-Bos draws a parallel with the items stolen by Achan at the time of Joshua (Josh 7:19—21), Van Wijk-Bos, *1-2 Kings*, 198 n. 157. Achan, however confesses his wrongdoing, Gehazi denies wrongdoing.

¹⁹ The monarchs of both Aram and Israel are unnamed. Hobbs suggests that they probably are Ben Hadad I of Aram and Jehoram of Israel. Hobbs, *2 Kings*, 63 n. 5. An alternative view for the Israelite king is Ahab. Laffey, *First and Second Kings*, 167.

²⁰ Hens-Piazza, *Supporting Cast*, 62.

²¹ Cohn, *2 Kings*, 38.

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Uma John

*Δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ: The Holistic Connotation of the term
‘Righteousness’ and its Implications for Social Service*

Abstract:

The concept “righteousness” is weighty and indispensable in the biblical tradition and understanding the concept has changed and developed through the centuries. The current article explores the topic from the ancient to modern canonical and non-canonical literature on the concept of righteousness to seek its wide range of meanings. Traditionally, the term “righteousness” has forensic, and religious connotations, but this paper argues that alongside these, the legal and social aspects of human beings i.e., the aspect of fulfilling communal obligations and the acts of philanthropy to those who are poor, oppressed, and deprived are standard expectations connoted into the term “righteousness.”



Keywords: righteousness, Hebrew, Greek, Paul, communal obligation

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Introduction

The concept of the “righteousness [Hebrew צדק and Greek δικαιοσύνη] of God” in the Bible is deep and profound. Many scholars have explored and researched this topic because it is one of the central themes of the Bible, especially in the writings of Paul. The understanding of “righteousness” has changed and developed through the biblical tradition.¹ Paul’s teachings on the concept differs from Jewish perspectives; for Paul, righteousness is through faith alone, unlike the Jewish concept. Does this exclude “works” in the lives of Christian believers? In this paper, I will explore the topic of the “righteousness of God,” focusing predominantly on the links between divine and human righteousness and the implications for ethics. I will present the way in which this concept developed through the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, the Intertestamental Literature, and the NT writings and times. I will also briefly explore the Qumran and Rabbinic teachings in order to see the progression of the concept. The topic of “righteousness” is huge, and there are various aspects involved in its meaning. As this paper deals merely with one of the aspects of righteousness, the other aspects are not detailed in the paper due to limitation of space. The aspect of fulfilling communal obligations, in other words, the act of being merciful to those who are poor, oppressed, and deprived is an essential part of “righteousness” underscored in this paper.

The Meaning of the Hebrew Root צדק

Before looking at the different aspects of “righteousness” in the OT, I will look at the lexical meanings for the Hebrew word צדק. Lexicons give these basic meanings for the root צדק: “to be just,” “right,” “innocent,” “justice,” “loyalty,” and “salvation.”² Both *HALOT* and *DCH* differentiate masculine and feminine usage of the root word: the masculine noun צדק “has a collective meaning. צדקה denotes a single proof of uprightness, an act of justice.”³ *HALOT* gives the meanings of the feminine form צדקה in some of the Semitic languages. The Jewish Aramaic form צדקהא means “justice, piety, charity, alms.” In Syriac, *zedqā* means “good deed, alms.” In Arabic, *sadaqat* means “alms; voluntary contribution of alms.”⁴ In North-West Semitic languages, the word carries a variety of meanings including “proper conduct, order, righteousness, legitimacy of succession, loyalty, favor, concession, grant.”⁵ One of the first meanings *DCH* gives for the root צדק is “righteousness, (moral) uprightness, right conduct, godliness, i.e. what is right in the Lord’s eyes; specifically, charity, act of charity, generosity,

almsgiving, kindness toward the poor."⁶ One of *HALOT*'s definitions is "just cause, God's deeds of justice, deeds of loyalty to the community, or covenant, man's deeds of loyalty to the community, honesty."⁷ Thus, the aspect of communal relationship—consisting of obligation, duties to fulfill towards the community, charity, and good deeds towards others, especially those deprived—is one of the common aspects of the meaning of "righteousness" in all the above mentioned Semitic languages and in Biblical Hebrew.

The Concept of "Righteousness" in the Hebrew Bible

The particular meaning of community obligation based in the topic "righteousness" is a common aspect in the OT/Hebrew writings. There are different opinions as to the way the term needs to be understood in the OT. For both J. A. Ziesler and Charles Lee Irons, the majority of the significance of "righteousness" resides primarily in the legal aspect and secondarily in the ethical. Irons adds a third section: "correctness." He says "legal righteousness" "[pertains] to the realm of the judicial court, whether it is a human king or judge, a messianic figure, or God himself who is depicted as judging, administering justice, executing judgement, or vindicating someone who has been falsely accused or oppressed."⁸ This reference is made frequently in the Writings and Prophets.⁹ In the OT, the obligations of doing justice and giving just judgments to the poor, needy, widow, and oppressed belonged mainly to the king who employs the judicial language (Lev 1:15; Ps 6:13; Deut 1:12-17; Ps 72:1-4, Prov 2:14; 31:4-5; Prov 31:8-9; Jere 22:3; 22:15-16 115).¹⁰ The ethical category applies mostly to humans, because it refers to righteous conduct as usually it appears with verbs of doing or applies to the status of righteousness before God; thus, right conduct is righteousness before God.¹¹ The third category "correctness" refers to the content/context of speaking the truth, doing justice, weighing and balancing justly, and doing things correctly.¹²

In the Psalms and Prophets, especially Isaiah, righteousness is God's saving act which leads to peace, well-being, and prosperity.¹³ The biblical authors do not refer to idea of righteousness abstractly; rather, they always refer to it in the context of actions of God.¹⁴ When the authors refer to the righteousness of the people, they are referring to *mispat* justice, which is to do justice, to observe fairness, and to be impartial to one another (Ps 37:6; 72:2; 106:2; Isa 1:27; 28:17; 56:1; Deut 16:18; Ps 72:1; 99:4; Isa 5:16; 33:5; 58:2; Gen 18:19; Deut 33:11; 2 Sam 8:15).¹⁵ Righteousness for

the Israelites involved proper worship and proper community leadership, including doing justice to the poor/oppressed; when these were not kept, God reacted with just judgment.¹⁶ Justice and righteousness in the prophets involves social justice. Those who oppress the widow, the oppressed, and the poor are condemned (Isa 1:17; Jer 22:3; Ezek 18; Amos 5:4–8, Is 9:7; 42:1; Jer 23:5; 33:15). Henning Graf Reventlow, quoting K. H. Fahlgren, says that, for the Israelites, religion and ethics were part of each other and went hand in hand.¹⁷ “Faithfulness to the community” was considered righteousness according to K. Koch.¹⁸

One of the important meanings that scholars attribute to the concept “righteousness” in the Old Testament is covenant relationship. The reason for such consideration is primarily because of the many appearances in the covenant passages (e.g. Gen 15; 18; Ps 15; Ezek 18).¹⁹ The Hifil form of the term connotes “restoration to relationship,” especially the covenant relationship.²⁰ Additionally, Ziesler says, “righteousness is neither a virtue nor the sum of the virtues, it is the activity which befits the covenant. Similarly, on God’s side it is not an attribute but divine covenant activity.”²¹ In covenant relationship, God’s righteousness takes different forms: he is gracious, saving, and merciful. However, when needed, his righteousness requires him to punish the people when they sin against him or break the covenant (Judg 5:11; Isa 5:16, the wrath of God against the Canaanites is considered as righteousness).²² Whatever God did towards the Israelites was in keeping with the covenant relationship that he had with them; he acts and speaks all in accordance to his own holiness (Pss 22:31; 40:10; 51:14; 71:15–24; Amos 5:21–24).²³ The covenant language becomes clear when talking about human’s righteousness--a human is considered righteous when he obeys the rules of the covenant and God’s will.²⁴ In the “covenant keeping” sections, “righteous” is synonymous to the poor and oppressed, especially in Psalms.²⁵ However, Mark A. Seifrid does not favor covenant-faithfulness as righteousness. He says, “although the Lord might be said to act out of covenant-faithfulness to his people, his action itself cannot properly be called covenantal.”²⁶ He says that in biblical settings “the administration of justice is simultaneously judicial, legislative and executive;” the writers are not merely interested in giving verdicts, but obtaining justice.²⁷ Righteousness involves “the concept of a norm, an order within the world, which God graciously acts to restore,” and so it should not be confined to the idea of “proper relation.”²⁸ For Seifrid, God’s righteousness lies between his vindication over the world and his saving

acts for the salvation of the world.²⁹ Righteousness is moral and creational. It has to do with “God’s re-establishing ‘right order’” in the sinful world. Righteousness connotes the right relationship between the creature and the world (Isa 45:8, 23; Pss 85:4–13; 98:1–9).³⁰ Thus, the ruling and justice aspects of righteousness relates to bringing “right order and re-establishing them in creation.”³¹

However, whether righteousness refers to covenant relationship or, as Seifred says, establishing right order in creation, humans are required to fulfill righteousness towards the community or creation. Peter Toon mentions that the people of the covenant are expected to receive the gift of salvation and behave as holy people; as Hosea says, righteousness is through mercy, love, justice, and kindness (2:19; 10:12).³² Thus, the people are to maintain right order in the community. God is just and righteous, and he wants his people to be just and righteous. (Isa 5:16 [cf. Isa 30:18]). Micah 6:8 states, “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”³³ Tamar is considered more righteous than Judah in Gen 38:26 because she, unlike Judah, fulfilled the requirement/obligation of the community.³⁴ Thus, fulfillment of community obligations is ethical. This aspect of righteousness and justice determines the norms of just weighing and measuring (Gen 18:23; Exod 23:7; Ezek 33:12; Ps 11:4–5).³⁵ When rulers establish justice, they are called righteous (Gen 7:1; Ezek 14:14, 20; Prov 8:15–16, 22–31).³⁶ In Wisdom Literature, (like Prov 10:2, 3, 6, 7, 11, 20, 21, 24, 25, 28, 30, 31, and 32), wisdom is considered righteousness; a human ought to manage his/her life properly, do helpful things within the community, do justice to others, and trust in God.³⁷ Ziesler calls this “practical wisdom.”³⁸ Thus, community obligations of doing justice and showing mercy is as important as personal and communal worship in the concept of righteousness in the OT.

The Meaning of δικαιοσύνη, the Greek Translation of קָדַשׁ

The above presents the concept “righteousness” used in OT Hebrew writings, now I will explore how it was used in the Greek translation of the OT. In most of the places, the OT has different forms of δικ-/δικαιοσύνη for the translation of the root קָדַשׁ. *BDAG* defines the noun δικαιοσύνη as “the quality of being upright.” Derived from the OT and Greco-Roman cultures, δικαιοσύνη could mean “a sense of equitableness combined with awareness of responsibility within a social context.”³⁹ *BDAG* defines the

adjective *δίκαιος*, according to Greco-Roman tradition, as “one who upholds the customs and norms of behavior, including esp. public service, that make for a well-ordered, civilized society.”⁴⁰ Whether it is monotheistic or polytheistic, both societies connect righteousness with a behavior towards humans and faithfulness to the duties to their families and God.⁴¹ Thus, the root *δικ-* has the basic meaning of to vindicate, upright, justice or just for. It refers to legal-judicial, social, and religious duties.⁴²

The Concept of “Righteousness” in the Septuagint

The translators of the LXX use different forms of *δικ-* for translating צדק. The various forms of *δικ-* are used 1,293 times in the LXX.⁴³ Irons compares both the OT and the LXX and provides a percentage of “legal,” “ethical” and “correctness” usage of “righteousness” in each. He finds that the reference to the legal righteousness in the OT is 44.6% and 42.4% in the LXX.⁴⁴ When it comes to ethical righteousness, 41.3% of the OT references and 46.3% of the LXX references belong to this category.⁴⁵ Reference to “correctness” appears in 9.4% of the OT cases and in 5.3% of the LXX cases.⁴⁶ *Δικ-* is also used for translation of the Hebrew words מִשְׁפָּט /שֹׁפֵט (justice), חַסֵּד (lovingkindness), אֱמֶת (truth), טוֹב (good) and so on. The LXX uses the term *δικαιοσύνη* in a positive way, to “acquit, vindicate, restore to a right relationship,” which ranges the Greek forensic significance with a personal aim, that is to “do to a person what is necessary to correct an ... injustice.”⁴⁷ In some instances, צדק is also translated as *ἐλεημοσύνη*.⁴⁸ This is the second most common translation for the word צדק in the LXX. *ἐλεημοσύνη* means mercy, compassion.⁴⁹ With the rabbinic influence, the meaning is “benevolence, charity, almsgiving.”⁵⁰ Jean Maurais states that the concepts of mercy and pity overlap in the LXX, which could denote righteousness as a intervention in favor of the poor and oppressed.⁵¹ Maurais points out a new meaning that influenced the term righteousness in late Hebrew— “mercy or deeds of mercy.”⁵² This could have combined into the meaning of the word *ἐλεημοσύνη*, which includes not only the meaning of “mercy” and “pity,” but also “charity,” or “alms.”⁵³ Maurais concludes that there is shift from focusing on Israel’s obedience (*δικαιοσύνη*) to God’s mercy (*ἐλεημοσύνη*).⁵⁴ However, here we see that the focus on mercy, pity, and charity becomes an important aspect in the LXX, along with the ethical aspect and legal features. Thus, in both the Hebrew Bible and in the LXX, the term “righteousness” refers to right standing with God by doing his will, maintaining or establishing right order with the creation, and fulfilling

the obligations to the community. There are overt implications, therefore, requiring mercy, pity, charitable giving, and doing good deeds to the people in the LXX. The Septuagint uses κρίνω (to judge) as well to translate the Hebrew word דָּן.⁵⁵

The Concept of “Righteousness” in the Apocrypha, Qumran, and Rabbinic Literature

Before I jump into the New Testament use of the term “righteousness,” I will briefly mention how the term was used in the Apocrypha books, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Rabbinic literature. In the Intertestamental Apocrypha writings, ethical righteousness is widely mentioned.⁵⁶ There are also references to forensic/judicial aspects, but mostly the authors are concerned with ethics.⁵⁷ There is a relational aspect where the righteousness is related to God.⁵⁸ God’s righteousness is connected with his mercy, truth, and his role as a judge (Tob 3:2; 2 Mac 12:6, 41; 3 Mac 2:22; 2 Esd 14:32). ἐλεημοσύνην, mercy and almsgiving, is also referenced many times in these books; Tobit and Sirach are especially well known for this.⁵⁹ The acts of charity are considered righteousness (Tob 1:3; 12:8). In 2 Esdras 10:39 sorrowing for people and mourning for Zion is called righteous conduct. There are references to the expected Righteous Messiah in the apocryphal books (1 En 38:2; Wisd 2).⁶⁰

Qumran preserved the ethical and judicial aspects of the term “righteousness” in the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁶¹ Most references are made to God’s saving act, vindication, and punishment of the people who oppress God’s people as in Isaiah.⁶² As the Qumran community was fully spiritualized and extended, the enemies they were referring to were Satan and sin. This spiritualized righteousness is prevalent in Qumran.⁶³ They prioritized doing all things correctly, with integrity, and according to God’s word, as manifested in the OT. Such was not the case with Jewish literature, including non-Pauline texts in the NT.⁶⁴ John Reumann says,

While there is considerable emphasis on righteousness as involving certain traits of pious behavior, the forensic and salvific aspects in what God does or will do continue, especially in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Qumran community’s radical, apocalyptic outlook stressed election, sin, grace, and God’s righteousness as saving activity as well as judgment. The priestly Teacher of Righteousness at Qumran taught righteousness (CD 6:10–11; 1QpHab 8:1–3) in terms of a rigorist

understanding of the Law, but was hardly a parallel to Jesus of Nazareth.⁶⁵

The Qumran community added demands to the Mosaic law.⁶⁶ The Torah was a major part of their lives. The Dead Sea Scrolls also attest to the deeds of mercy and almsgiving as righteous acts.⁶⁷

In Rabbinic literature, righteousness is obedience to God and his law/Torah which leads them to ethical and relational righteousness.⁶⁸ Rabbinic literature has a strict command around “justice, mercy, purity, equity, liberation, benevolence and especially almsgiving.”⁶⁹ They even say that God’s righteousness refers to his “true unchanging, reliable justice.”⁷⁰ Quoting from Przybylski, Reumann says that, in the Tannaitic literature, the term is the “norm of righteousness,”— which is “‘demand upon men rather than the salvific gift of God for man.’ To this extent, *šēdāqā* comes primarily to denote almsgiving, while *šedeq* more broadly refers to ‘all aspects of teaching which are normative for man’s conduct.’”⁷¹ Thus, the implications of compassion, charity, and kindness is vital in Rabbinic literature. They put forward the importance of mercy and grace.⁷²

Therefore, as in the OT, there are many references to the ethical aspect of righteousness. Both the Apocrypha and especially Rabbinic literature emphasize merciful acts, charity/almsgiving, and benevolence as one of the major aspects of the theme “righteousness.” On the other hand, Qumran describes most of it as spiritual.

The Concept of “Righteousness” in the New Testament Excluding Paul

Toon says the NT meaning of righteousness has two basic sources. First is the Hebrew understanding in the OT which includes the various meanings of צדק.⁷³ This refers particularly to God’s gracious relational acts towards his covenantal people and the apt behavior of the people who are in the covenant.⁷⁴ Second is from the perspective of the Greek world: their meaning followed the standard laws of the societies, so it was related to legalism, honesty, etc.⁷⁵ In Greek, according to the wider Graeco-Roman world, the semantic range of the term δικαιοσύνη is associated with the fulfillment of one’s duties toward the public and family (Plato, *Republic*, 433a).⁷⁶ “‘A distributive justice [gives] each their due’ (e.g., Aristotle, *Rhet.*, 1.9).”⁷⁷ For Theognis of Megara, it is about virtue; he said, “‘All virtue is summarized in justice’ (*Elegiae*, 1.147).”⁷⁸ Thus, the NT carried over the ethical, forensic, moral, and law-court aspects of righteousness (Ps. 9:4; Isa.

5:7; Judg. 5:11; 1 Sam. 12:7; Mic. 6:5; Ps. 103:6).⁷⁹ There is a view that the term “righteousness of God” (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Rom. 1:17; 3:21, 22, 25, 26; 10:3; Phil. 3:9; Matt. 6:33; Jas. 1:20; 2 Pet. 1:1) is a technical term going back to Deut 33:21; it was later developed in the apocalyptic literature as well as in Qumran.⁸⁰ The NT uses both δικ- and κρινω to talk about righteousness. Generally, δικ is used when expressing positive judgments such as legally being righteous or innocent. κρινω is used when expressing negative judgements.⁸¹

In the NT Jesus is known as the “righteous one” and as “righteous judge” (Isa 53; Wis of Sol 2:12–20) (Matt 27:19; Luke 23:47; Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14; 1 Pet 3:18; 1 John 2:1; Jn 5:30; 7:24). God is called “righteous” in John 17:25, and the Holy Spirit is the one convicting the world of righteousness (John 16:8, 10). In John 16:8, 10 “the spirit identifies the true righteousness in Jesus, not only as a standard but as a source.”⁸² When God is mentioned as righteous, it usually denotes his salvation, judgment and vindication.⁸³ In Matthew and Luke, there is a new covenant.⁸⁴ Matthew calls for two kinds of righteousness—one as a divine gift but another as a need for human response.⁸⁵ Jesus teaches his followers to exceed the righteousness of Pharisees. Jesus is set as an example in Matthew; right conduct is emphasized here.⁸⁶ Matt 5:20 is not in opposition to the law-righteousness; rather, it is the fulfillment. Righteousness in Matthew is “inward, more throughgoing, more demanding.”⁸⁷ The Mathew tradition has a particular way of righteousness— the kingdom eschatological righteousness is seen (5:6; 6:33).⁸⁸ Matthew 6:1 is especially important for this paper. To many scholars, it is moral, compassionate, and religious activity in general. Some interpreters understand it as almsgiving, but it should refer to compassion in general.⁸⁹ Ben Witherington in his commentary on Mathew points to this when commenting on the concept of righteousness in Matt 6:1-4. He says that Jesus is not banning good deeds in public, but rebukes their motivations.⁹⁰ The motivation to do good works should not be to be seen by others, rather their audience should be God alone.⁹¹ Jesus’ teachings were against self-righteousness; this is obvious with the parable of the Pharisee and Tax-collector.

Doing the will of God, fearing God, and doing good deeds is righteousness in Acts 10:35. Jesus died for our sins so that we can live for righteousness (1 Pet 2:24). God watches over the righteous. Righteous men like Lot and Noah are appreciated in Peter’s works. John wants the believers to know that God is righteous, and he says that everyone who

does right is righteous (1 John 2:2; 3:12). In the Johannine literature, Jesus is the Righteous One— his righteousness involves vindication and a forensic setting.⁹² He was sacrificed for the sins of the world, and those who follow him need to have ethical righteousness: “do righteousness” (John 16:8, 10; cf. 5:30; 7:24; 1 John 2:29; 3:7, 10).⁹³ Hebrews 5:13 and 11:7 refer to the moral/ truth righteousness.⁹⁴ Noah’s example confirms the ethical aspect of the righteousness, because Noah’s righteousness was not forensic or relational, but rather his righteousness came through faith, thus commending Christians to have righteousness through faith.⁹⁵ James stands out in his teachings because he considers faith to be dead if it comes without deeds. Abraham acted righteously by offering his son as a sacrifice; thus, his faith is reckoned as righteousness (Jas 2:23).

Accordingly, there are many references to Christian behavior as righteousness (Mat 3:15; 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1,33; Acts 13:10; 24:25; Heb 5:13; 11:7; 12:11; Jas 1:20; 3:18; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:14; 2 Pet 2:21; 3:13; 1 John 2:2; 3:7, 10; Rev 22:11).⁹⁶ All these references mean that a human should live in accordance to the will of God, according to a righteousness that fulfills God’s commandments. Hence, as Ziesler says “righteousness in its full ethical-relational sense is seen in the literature variously as a gift of God, as arising through Christ’s righteousness, and as arising from faith.”⁹⁷ He denies the mere religious and moral meaning in it, but says that “Christian righteousness is of the same order of reality as that of the Scribes, and elsewhere in Matthew there are indications that righteousness largely meant loving activity, especially Mat 25:37, 46. It is fraternal charity which characterizes the righteous.”⁹⁸ It is not mere intellectual faith, but the faith complimented with one’s life and deeds.⁹⁹ “Righteousness itself is that conduct or way of life which is the prerequisite for acceptance with God.”¹⁰⁰

The Concept of “Righteousness/Justification” in Paul

Reumann mentions how interpreters talk about “justification” and “righteousness” when using the terms *δικαιοσύνη* and *δικαιώσις*; justification declares a person righteous in court and righteousness also implies moral transformation.¹⁰¹ There is a distinction between righteousness from law and righteousness through faith in Christ which shaped Jewish-Christian reflections in Phil. 3:9; Rom. 9:30–31; 10:5–11.¹⁰² The phrase “righteousness of God” expresses both the character of God himself and also what he does.¹⁰³ Rom 3:26 expresses both of these aspects together: his character

and his act, "that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus."¹⁰⁴

Paul does not continue merely the salvation and eschatological aspects. There is a new aspect in Paul's theology— "intensification of the Torah's demands, extreme consciousness of sin, and righteousness of God as a salvation concept."¹⁰⁵ There is contention between whether it is from the Torah or Christ.¹⁰⁶ Paul denies the doctrine of ethnic election— the descendants of Abraham are no longer the elect ones of God; rather, it is now through Christ alone.¹⁰⁷ Paul denies two of the major Jewish doctrines—the election of Israel and the essentialness of faithfulness to the Mosaic Torah— and instead affirms the importance of the universal Church.¹⁰⁸ God's grace is for all, both for the Gentiles and Jews. The justice of God and the salvific righteousness are both given through the death and resurrection of Christ.¹⁰⁹ Paul teaches in Phil 3:9 that righteousness is not from the law—i.e., the achievement of humans and their own righteousness—but is from Christ.¹¹⁰ A person never possesses nor gains righteousness, but it is attained by his participation through faith in Christ.¹¹¹ His righteousness would cease if his faith in Jesus ceases because righteousness is possible only through him and having faith in him.¹¹² Thus, there is no value in self-achievements and pride for obeying the law, but all are justified in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile (Rom 3:5–26, 28–30; 4:11–12, 23–24; 9:23–26; 10:5–13; 15:8a, 9–12; 1 Cor 1:29–31).¹¹³ Paul develops the doctrine of righteousness/ justification from a missionary and apocalyptic viewpoint, so that Gentiles are included by faith in Christ, as this is God's plan.¹¹⁴ Alongside there are references to ethical and moral behaviors. First Thessalonians 2:10 talks about the behavior of the apostles— there are duties toward God and other humans.¹¹⁵ The language of righteousness in Ephesians is ethical (6:1, 14; 4:24; 5:9)— the new person is characterized by holiness and righteousness.¹¹⁶ In 1 Corinthians, the concept is also ethical, it contrasts righteous behavior and unethical character (1 Cor 4:4; 6:11).¹¹⁷ Good deeds are possible through the fruit of the Spirit, through his indwelling and not through commandments.¹¹⁸

Thus, overall, Paul's understanding of righteousness is "righteousness-in-Christ-by-faith." However, there are ethical and moral aspects involved as well. As Ziesler says, "Paul has also a doctrine of righteousness though faith, in Christ. The believer enters not just a private relationship to Jesus, but a new humanity, in which he becomes a new kind of man. Thus, there are not only social or corporate implications, but also

ethical ones.”¹¹⁹ God himself is just and righteous by acting justly towards his people. Thus, his children are expected to do the same to be just and righteous in everything they do.¹²⁰ Paul refers to righteousness in a similar way that the rabbis referred to *צדקה* in the sense of benevolence or charity (2 Cor 9:9–10).¹²¹ The righteousness of the community is part of God’s order for everyday life, wherein proper social order means justice for the poor, helpless, widow, and oppressed. The true inner circumcision is important. The body of Christ has no boundaries— no Jew or Greek, no slave or free. All are one in Christ. Michael F. Bird says, “justification is equally social and soteriological in Paul... [it] possesses obvious corporate dimensions... the vertical and horizontal aspects of justification need to be appropriately described and weighted in order to provide a thorough rendering of justification in Paul’s letters.”¹²² Paul emphasized righteousness by faith in Christ because the Jews had built their salvation based on their works and their status as heirs of Abraham. Therefore, Paul had to teach that even the Gentiles were justified through their faith in Christ.

The Concept of “Righteousness/Justification” According to the Modern Theologians

Martin Luther

Craig L. Nesson makes an important point from the works of Martin Luther. Employing the theology of Luther, he points to two of these in Luther’s “The Freedom of a Christian.” Luther was opposed to the concept of justification by merits, trades, and good works.¹²³ For him, according to Paul, the only way of justification is:

...since faith alone justifies, it is clear that the inner man cannot be justified, freed, or saved by any outer work or action at all, and that these works, whatever their character, have nothing to do with this inner man. On the other hand, only ungodliness and unbelief of heart, and no outer work, make him guilty and a damnable servant of sin. Wherefore it ought to be the first concern of every Christian to lay aside all confidence in works and increasingly to strengthen faith alone and through faith to grow in the knowledge, not of works, but of Christ Jesus... No other work makes a Christian.¹²⁴

Faith in Christ is the exclusive needed for justification. However, this does not exclude good works. Nessian rightly points to the second thesis in the same work of Luther.

Lastly, we shall also speak of the things which he does toward his neighbor. A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth; rather, he lives only for others and not for himself....Therefore he should be guided in all his works by this thought and contemplate this one thing alone, that he may serve and benefit others in all that he does, considering nothing except the need and advantage of the neighbor.¹²⁵

Thus, we see that Luther does encourage good works.

John Wesley

John Wesley, who is the founder of Methodism, says that all believers are completely forgiven and accepted, not for the sake of anything in them or anything they did, but wholly and solely for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered for them.¹²⁶ The righteousness of Christ is the only and single foundation of all our hope, but if the believers remain unrighteous and do not live a holy life then the righteousness of God will not profit anything to them.¹²⁷ Wesley argues the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believers so that they may live righteously, godly, in the current era.¹²⁸

John Wesley argues for a two-fold sermon i.e., gospel and law: "gospel" is preaching the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and preaching the "law" is applying the commands of Christ, which is summarized in the Sermon on the Mount.¹²⁹ Watson says, unlike Calvin who put good works to secondary importance "by grounding justification in an imputed status," Wesley "by restricting the doctrine of justification to pardon, and consigning the fulfilment of the law to the doctrine of sanctification, he gave faith and works equal importance—something which the Calvinist position failed to do."¹³⁰ As Timothy Tennent puts it, for Wesley "alien righteousness must become native righteousness; imputed righteousness must become actualized righteousness; declared righteousness must become embodied righteousness."¹³¹

Wesley underscores God's work to have a two-fold purpose: "to will and to do" . . . "First, 'to will' may include the whole of inward, 'to do'

the whole of outward religion.¹³² “To will” is the inward holiness which is towards God and the “to do” is the outward holiness, to do things for others.¹³³ Wesley says that Christianity is a social religion, and to make it a solitary one is to demolish it; and “to conceal this religion is impossible, as well as utterly contrary to the design of its author.”¹³⁴ He comments:

It is also true that bare, outside religion, which has no root in the heart, is nothing worth; that God delighteth not in such outward services, no more than in Jewish burnt offerings, and that a pure and holy heart is a sacrifice with which he is always well pleased. But he is also well pleased with all that outward service which arises from the heart; with the sacrifice of our prayers... of our praises and thanksgivings; with the sacrifice of our goods, humbly devoted to him, and employed wholly to his glory; and with that of our bodies.¹³⁵

Thus, as Watson puts, Wesley believed that good works were essential not only for sanctification, but to even preserve the grace of justification.¹³⁶ Levi Jones notes that Wesley’s doctrine of sanctification does not let believers be idle, rather the works of God calls for a response in one’s life.¹³⁷

Theological Implications

Having seen the Old Testament and New Testament views, especially Pauline teachings on righteousness and justification, what are the implications for a contemporary audience? One is not saved through works, but the Christian should not be exempted from good works towards one’s neighbors. One of the meanings that *BDAG* gives for the future of the verb *δικαίω* is “to cause someone to be released from personal or institutional claims that are no longer to be considered pertinent or valid, *make free/pure*.”¹³⁸ I would like to underscore two passages from both the OT and the NT: Ezek 18:5-9 and Matt 25:31-46. In Ezekiel, the writer describes a righteous person as— the one who does not worship idols, who does not favor wickedness, who executes true justice, who gives bread to the hungry, and covers the nakedness with a garment, and so on is the righteous person (צַדִּיק v.9). We see a similar kind of passage in the New Testament. The acts of the righteous person in Ezekiel are repeated in Matthew 25. Jesus gives a speech concerning the judgment of the nations in which he describes *οἱ δίκαιοι* (the righteous v. 37, 46) who will inherit eternal life. They are those

who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger, clothed a naked, and visited the sick and prisoner. These are the ones called righteous. In both of these passages, the clear acts of a righteous person are named. The communal obligations of being merciful to the needy, poor, and deprived are part of being a righteous person.

Thus, critical to the understanding of righteousness are the concepts of fulfilling community obligations and being merciful to the poor, oppressed, and deprived. As mentioned above, E. R. Hayes suggests that when God is just and righteous by acting justly towards his people, his people are expected to do the same.¹³⁹

The care towards the community should be given priority more than our individual desires and lifestyles.

Conclusion

The term "righteousness" has forensic and religious connotations. But the legal, social, and judicial aspects of one's righteousness are standard expectations built into the term "righteousness." One strand of meaning of the concept "righteousness" includes the fulfillment of communal obligation, being merciful, and doing benevolent acts for others, especially the poor, oppressed, and deprived.

End notes

¹ Henning Graf Reventlow, "Righteousness as Order of the World: Some Remarks Towards a Programme." In *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and Their Influence*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman, JSOTSup 137, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, UK (1992): 163–172: 166.

² The meanings are taken from three different lexicons having similar word categories: *HALOT*, *DCH*, *BDB*.

³ *HALOT* צִדֵּק and *DCH* צִדֵּק. [Also "צִדֵּק" refers to the correct order, צִדְקָה refers to proper behavior which aims at order]."

⁴ HALOT צדקה

⁵ J. J. Scullion, "Righteousness: Old Testament," *AYBD* 5 (1992), 725–736: 725.

⁶ DCH צדק

⁷ HALOT צדקה. The biblical references provided by HALOT with the definition are: Jer 51:10 ; Ju 5:11 1 Sam 12:7 Isa 45:24 Mi 6:5 Ps 103:6; Isa 33:15 64:5 Ezk 18:24 (with עשה).

⁸ Charles Lee Irons, *The Righteousness of God: A Lexical Examination of the Covenant-Faithfulness Interpretation*, Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, Germany (2015): 112.

⁹ J. A. Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul: A Linguistic and Theological Enquiry*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge (1972): 33.

¹⁰ Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 115. Irons mentions that this legal category is commonly used, and it amounts to 44.6% in the OT.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹² *Ibid.*, 119.

¹³ Scullion, "Righteousness: Old Testament," 728.

¹⁴ M. A. Seifrid, "Righteousness, Justice, and Justification," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*: 743.

¹⁵ Scullion, "Righteousness: Old Testament," 735–736.

¹⁶ E. R. Hayes, "Justice, Righteousness," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets* ed. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville, IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press: Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England (2012): 471.

¹⁷ Reventlow, "Righteousness as Order of the World," 164.

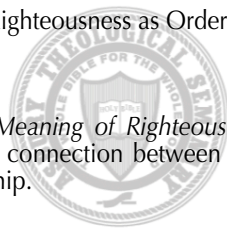
¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 40. In many passages there is a good connection between the words "righteousness" and "covenant" relationship.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*



²³ Peter Toon, "Righteousness," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Baker Reference Library, Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI (1996): 687.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.

²⁶ Mark A. Seifrid, *Christ, Our Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Justification*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 9, *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, Apollos: England (2000): 39.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 40. For Seifrid "'Covenant' is related regularly more with the legal terms; one 'keeps', 'establishes' 'remembers', 'breaks', 'transgresses', 'despises', 'forgets' or 'profanes' a covenant, and not, "act righteously or unrighteously with respect to it." Furthermore, "'covenants' establish and maintain 'familial' relations. The obligations of those 'in' a covenant are love and faithfulness, not merely a general rectitude (Hos. 6:6)." Seifrid, "Righteousness, Justice, and Justification," 741–42.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁰ Seifrid, "Righteousness, Justice, and Justification," 741–42.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Peter Toon, "Righteousness," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, electronic ed., Baker Reference Library, Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, MI (1996): 687.

³³ Hayes, "Justice, Righteousness," 471.

³⁴ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 43.

³⁵ Seifrid, "Righteousness, Justice, and Justification," 741–42.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

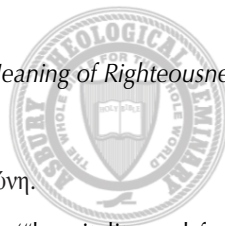
³⁷ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 46.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *BDAG* δικαιοσύνη.

⁴⁰ *BDAG* δίκαιος ("hospitality and fear of God mark an upright person; Dem. 3; 21 *ο δίκαιος πολίτης* gives priority to the interest of the state").

⁴¹ *BDAG*.



⁴² Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 49. Ziesler says “as early as Theognis, it is not only the judicial virtue rather it became the proper behavior of a person with the social relationship.”

⁴³ Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 127.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ John Reumann, “Righteousness: Early Judaism,” *AYBD* 5 (1992), 736–45:737.

⁴⁸ Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, 128.

⁴⁹ *BDAG* ἐλεημοσύνην.

⁵⁰ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 59.

⁵¹ Jean Maurais, “Righteousness and Mercy in Greek Deuteronomy: On the Translation of נקדצ by ἐλεημοσύνην.” *Journal of Septuagint and Cognate Studies*. 52 (2019): 108-17: 111.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁵⁵ Jeremiah K. Garrett, “Justice,” *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., electronic ed. Lexham Press: Bellingham, WA (2014).

⁵⁶ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 93.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

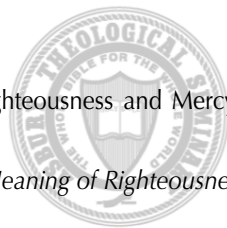
⁵⁹ Maurais, “Righteousness and Mercy in Greek Deuteronomy,” 112.

⁶⁰ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 135.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*



⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ John Reumann, "Righteousness," *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, electronic ed. (2000): 1129–30.

⁶⁶ Gottfried Nebe, "Righteousness in Paul," in *Justice and Righteousness: Biblical Themes and Their Influence*, ed. Henning Graf Reventlow and Yair Hoffman, JSOTSupp 137. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press: Sheffield, UK (1992): 134–35.

⁶⁷ Maurais, "Righteousness and Mercy in Greek Deuteronomy," 111.

⁶⁸ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 117.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 114.

⁷¹ John Reumann, "Righteousness," 739.

⁷² Nebe, "Righteousness in Paul," 134–35.

⁷³ Toon, "Righteousness," 687.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Michael F. Bird, "Righteousness," *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* ed. John D., electronic ed. (2016).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Reumann, "Righteousness."

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Garrett, "Justice."

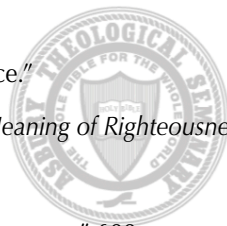
⁸² Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 143.

⁸³ Ibid., 135.

⁸⁴ Toon, "Righteousness," 688.

⁸⁵ Reumann, "Righteousness."

⁸⁶ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 134. Also, in 1 Pet 3:18; 1 Jn 2:1, 29; 3:7.



⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Reumann, "Righteousness."

⁸⁹ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 134.

⁹⁰ Ben Witherington III, *Matthew*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Smyth & Helwys Publishing: Macon, GA (2006): 140.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Reumann, "Righteousness."

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 135.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 133.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 143.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 142.

⁹⁹ Reumann, "Righteousness."

¹⁰⁰ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 132.

¹⁰¹ Reumann, "Righteousness."

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Nebe, "Righteousness in Paul," 144.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 135–36.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*. Fortress Press: Minneapolis, MN (1985): 207.

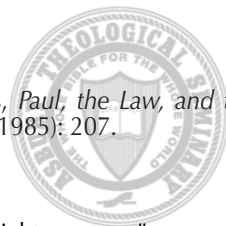
¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 208.

¹⁰⁹ Reumann, "Righteousness."

¹¹⁰ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 148.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 149.

¹¹² Ibid.



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¹¹³ Reumann, "Righteousness."

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 152.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 208.

¹¹⁹ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 169.

¹²⁰ Hayes, "Justice, Righteousness," 471.

¹²¹ Ziesler, *The Meaning of Righteousness in Paul*, 162.

¹²² Michael F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification and the New Perspective*. Paternoster: Great Britain (2007): 182.

¹²³ Craig L Nesson, "Law, Righteousness, Reason, Will, and Works: Civil and Theological Uses," *Currents in Theology and Mission*. 41(1) (2014): 51–56: 55.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹²⁶ John Wesley, *The Lord Our Righteousness: A Sermon Preached at the Chapel in West-Street, Seven-Dials, on Sunday, Nov. 24, 1765*. William Pine: Bristol, England (1966): 12.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ David Lowes Watson, "Christ Our Righteousness: The Center of Wesley's Evangelistic Message," *Perkins J.* 37 (1984): 34–47: 37.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹³¹ Timothy Tennent, "Holiness, Entire Sanctification, and the Redirected Heart," *Seedbed*, 6 September 2015, <https://seedbed.com/holiness-entire-sanctification-redirected-heart/>.

¹³² John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Beacon Hill Press: Kansas City, MO (1966): 488.

¹³³ Jones, "John Wesley's Practical Theology."

¹³⁴ Wesley, John. *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 195.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

¹³⁶ Watson, "Christ Our Righteousness," 45.

¹³⁷ Levi Jones, "John Wesley's Practical Theology of Entire Sanctification," *Kingdomcruciformity*, 4 March 2012.

¹³⁸ *BDAG* Δικαίω.

¹³⁹ Hayes, "Justice, Righteousness," 471.

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Paul Ekal Lokol

Mediating Role of Transformational Leadership on the Relationship between Pastors' Training and Healthy Congregations

Abstract:

The church remains a solid center for transformational leadership, bringing the required light to today's increasingly troubled world. Therefore, this study's objective was to establish the mediating effect of transformational leadership traits on the relationship between pastors' training and church congregational health in urban churches of the African Gospel Church, Kenya (AGC-K). The study adopted a descriptive survey design and correlation methods targeting 44 pastors, 44 LCC members, and 383 members in urban churches of AGC-K. Data was collected using pretested questionnaires and was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The findings revealed that while not all pastors manifested transformational leadership traits in their service, transformational leadership traits significantly, but partially, mediated the relationship between pastors' training and church congregation health. This could also explain why some of the congregations were exemplary in performance compared to others. Therefore, the study recommends that AGC-K encourage pastors and other church leaders to subscribe to transformational leadership training. Furthermore, transformational leaders within their congregations should also be encouraged to take some other leaders under their tutelage.

Keywords: pastor training, congregational health, transformational leadership, change, moral decay.

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Introduction

Change is rapidly occurring in the world today; therefore, transformational leaders are required to navigate the ever-changing landscape and bring about the needed and authentic change in the world today. Everyone is looking for solutions to some of the challenges that surround them. In as much as remedies to these global challenges are sought in every imaginable way, the church remains one of the core approaches, offering some practical solutions to these challenges as it has done over the ages. Therefore, it remains a place of hope. Thus, this positioning has given the church a unique position to be holistically involved in people's lives. The church remains a solid center for transformational leadership, bringing the required light to the world (Matthew 5:13-16). Indeed, previous studies have confirmed the transformational impact of the church on society. For example, a recent survey conducted by Africa Leadership Study in 2016 on African Christian leaders in Angola, Central African Republic, and Kenya revealed that the church plays a significant role in leading spiritual nourishment and impacting communities (Seedbed, 2016: 2). In the same study, Seedbed Resource (2016: 5); it was discovered that;

Churches play various strategic roles in the lives of African Christians and communities. Churches provide more than a context and base for mentorship and leadership training. They also provide leadership for strategic influence on youth, for poverty alleviation efforts, care for widows, education about financial matters, education about HIV/AIDS, education about issues of ethnic violence and political process, dissemination of Christian books, etc.

Transformational leaders reinforce their followers' capability to attain success by providing them with the know-how and materials needed to accomplish their tasks. Transformational leaders deploy intellectual stimulation to encourage followers not to hesitate to try new approaches or challenge existing postulates. They also enable the followers to re-examine and rephrase problems to find solutions (Ahmad et al., 2014: 15). Transformational leaders are required to navigate the ever-changing landscape and bring about needed and authentic change in the world today. Such leaders most likely improve the inspiration, drive, and performance of their followers by adapting to the needs of their followers (Greenleaf, 1991: 13-14). Such leaders are considered change agents with well-laid visions.

However, current trends in global Christianity cast doubt on the capability of the church to transform the world positively. If the church is in crisis, especially a leadership crisis, it would lose its ability to change the world. The former General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Rev. Samuel M. Kobia, explains the moral decay in our societies today:

A society in which corruption and graft are institutionalized and generally accepted as a standard behaviour will only progress in things. In many African and non-African countries, the churches have an enormous responsibility. This is even more so, as many of the countries heavily infected by corruption boast of very high percentages of Christianity. (Stuckelberger & Mugambi, 2005: 59)

Congregations must be healthy before we can talk about transforming the world, and leadership is central to this transformation. However, as pointed out by Donohue, “[there is need] to confront the serious shortage of [such] quality leaders in all of our institutions.” (in Neuschel, 1998). Therefore, the development of transformational leaders is essential in today’s world, and this requires training.

Even when there are natural leaders, training remains essential for leaders to deliver their mandate as expected. This agrees with R. Philip Roberts, who asserts, “God does not call the prepared, but he prepares the called” (Roberts, 2010: 2). The reason for this equipping is for the servant of God to divide the word of God rightly (2 Timothy 2:15). Mattingly observes that in as much as leadership is celebrated in the corporate world, “The spiritual gift of leadership is rarely acknowledged and even disparaged in the local church context” Mattingly (2016: 3). Therefore, the church does not have an emphatic approach to developing robust leaders, and this brings about a deficit of transformational leaders in the church.

In addition, a survey by Finzel (2007: 18) discovered that most seminarians had no formal training in leadership, which is worrying if it applied to the majority of leaders in the church of Christ today. Lack of leadership training was further supported by Mattingly (2016: 3), who wrote, “Many seminaries excel in preparing pastors for scriptural interpretation, theological reflection, and pastoral care,” but often fail to adequately educate and equip pastors for the task of leadership.” However, Bonis (2015: 5) observed differently that the current training of pastors is mainly focused on practical aspects of ministry, including administration,

preaching, leadership skills, small group dynamics, and other related duties. Bonis (2015: 43), nevertheless, says that pastoral training lacks theology-related focus areas. Further, an assessment of pastors trained at different institutions at different times by London and Wiseman (2006: 14) revealed that 90% of pastors believed their training was inadequate.

While pastors' training programs do not specifically focus on imparting transformational leadership skills, Bass (1990: 27) argues, "Transformational leadership can be learned, and it can and should be the subject of management training and development." However, such leaders need to possess what Maxwell (2007: 167) calls a teachable spirit to excel in learning. As such, no leader can be forced to be transformational, but transformation is a reality that entirely depends on the individual willing to be transformed and to pass this value on to others. Bukusi (2013: 65-66) suggests that transformational leadership can be taught while advancing the 12 competencies necessary for any transformational leader to acquire. Bukusi (2013: 65-66) further advances that these competencies can be taught and experienced in different formats depending on how well they can be taught and conceived by leaders. Therefore, it is essential to ascertain how such competencies acquired through training impact the church's congregational health. In particular, this paper focuses on the African Gospel Church of Kenya (AGC).

AGC is one of the leading evangelical denominations in Kenya which has existed in the country for over 100 years. The church traces its roots back to the work of World Gospel Mission missionaries, who came in 1905. The denomination was registered as an autonomous entity in Kenya on 29th August 1961. The church has grown to a membership of close to 1915 congregations spread through different parts of Kenya. The church has seen remarkable growth and development in rural and urban areas, and also in sending its missionaries to remote areas and unreached tribes in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Sudan.

According to the church's annual report presented at the 2018 Regional Conferences, the church's growth, especially in terms of focused mission and resource mobilization has been mainly from urban churches which numbered 40 by February 2018. The pastors in these 40 congregations were found to have demonstrated leadership capabilities in many sectors of the church, mobilize resources for outreach, and have enhanced discipleship programs that are reaching many groups of people. This group of pastors contributes significantly in leading congregations

to good health. This is not true for most rural churches, which form the majority of churches, but in most cases are struggling in many different respects.

AGC Director of Leadership Development Education (2018) also reported that about one third of the leaders in the Africa Gospel Church, Kenya have or are pursuing certificate courses in theology. This for a church with over 1900 congregations in Kenya alone is grossly inadequate. In a church that is growing by around 100 congregations per year with less than 30 pastors released annually to serve from the central theological institutions of training is alarming (Korir 2019). The data from AGC illustrates that severe gaps in the training of pastors must be addressed for the church to remain relevant in meeting congregants' spiritual needs. This study, therefore, sought to establish whether transformational leadership traits had enabled leaders to be more impactful apart from the training they received in seminary as AGC-K pastors.

Statement of the Problem and Methodology

In times marked by uncertainties, turbulence, constant change, and moral decay, the church remains the only credible beacon of hope and leadership, as it has been for millennia. However, many churches face a leadership crisis, as evidenced by their slide to moral decay, corruption, and insensitivity to the community's needs. The congregational health in many churches is similarly at risk of degradation. This can be detrimental to society, which depends considerably on the church for spiritual and moral leadership. Therefore, having exemplary leadership in the church at this time is critical to the church and society. Such leaders not only transform congregations, but together with the congregations can transform society. Pastors are arguably the most visible church leaders, and the responsibility of leading the church largely rests on them. Training pastors as leaders is, therefore, necessary in this respect. However, there have been several challenges in this regard. First, it has been observed by Bonis and others that pastoral training needs to be improved and, further, it needs to focus on leadership training. In the AGC-K, it has been observed that only 30% of the pastors are trained or are in the process of training. Bass (1990: 27) and Bukusi (2013: 65-66) concur that transformational leadership can be learned and should be the subject of management training and development. However, as Maxwell (2007: 167) argued, no leader can be

forced to be transformational. Transformation is thus a reality that entirely depends on the individual willing to be transformed, and their willingness to pass it on to others. Nevertheless, Bukusi (2013: 65-66) maintains that it is possible to grow transformational leaders by inculcating transformational competencies. The disparities in the AGC-K could suggest the existence of transformational leadership traits among some of the pastors in the urban congregations. However, this has not been determined empirically, and it is important to establish the presence of such leadership traits and its moderating impact on the pastors' training in terms of its effect on local congregations. Congregational health could be instrumental in guiding the future training of pastors, and possibly result in improved congregational health in the AGC-K as a whole. Such training could also have a transformational impact on society. Therefore, this article focuses on establishing the mediating effect of transformational leadership traits on the relationship between pastors' training and church congregational health in African Gospel Church, Kenya.

A descriptive survey research design with a correlation method was utilized to investigate the correlation between transformational pastoral leadership and congregational health. The study focused on the urban churches of Africa Gospel church, Kenya, located in the urban areas within the counties of West Pokot, Nairobi, Nakuru, Narok, Trans-nzoia, Uasin-Gishu, Bomet, and Kericho in the Republic of Kenya. Urban centers are homogenous in terms of people groups' representations. According to the annual report presented at the 2018 Regional Conferences, AGC-K had 1915 church congregations, of which 44 are located in urban areas. The urban congregations have a total of 9,552 members comprising 44 pastors, 308 LCC members, and 9,200 congregants (Kisotu 2018). Thus, this study targeted 44 pastors, 308 local church council members, and 9,200 local church members in the 44 AGC urban churches distributed across the Rift Valley and Nairobi Regions in Kenya. The three groups of respondents were critical in enabling this study to achieve the required objective. The target population met the four qualities of an effective population sample: diversity, representative, accessible and knowledgeable (Kombo & Tromp 2006: 76-77).

The study used a sample size of 471 respondents comprising 44 pastors, 44 LCC members, and 383 local church members. The sample size was derived using both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. This was critical because it gave every participant an equal

chance to be selected while ensuring that key respondents were included and the element of randomness was upheld, thus “allowing generalizability to a larger population with a margin of error that is statistically determinable” (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003: 45). Purposive sampling was used in selecting the 44 local churches, which also translated to 44 pastors, while stratified random sampling was used to determine local church council members and local church members. The church membership data was obtained from a list of churches, pastors, local church council members, and local church members as provided by the AGC Central Office report of December 2018 (Kisotu 2018).

Data for the study was collected through pretested questionnaires. The pilot test was carried out among 4 AGC urban churches and involved four pastors, 4 LCC members, and 40 church members from AGC urban churches started after 2018. The reliability of research instruments was ensured through a test-retest technique. In contrast, instrument validity was achieved by administering the questionnaires to several persons in the AGC Central Office to ascertain the validity of the constructs and contents. This study used descriptive and inferential statistical methods to analyze the data. The descriptive measures included percentages, means, and standard deviations, while the inferential statistics comprised the bivariate and multivariate regression equations expressed in the following models;

$$\begin{aligned}
 Y &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots 1 \\
 M &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots 2 \\
 Y &= \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 M + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots 3
 \end{aligned}$$

- Where Y represents the church’s congregational health
- β_0 represents the regression constant or intercept
- β_1 represents the coefficient of pastors’ training
- β_2 represents the coefficient of transformational leadership traits
- X_1 represents pastors’ training
- M represents the transformational leadership traits
- ε represents the error term

The mediation effect was evaluated according to the criteria outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Mediation Decision Making Criteria

Outcome		Conclusions
1	β_1 is significant in model 1	Complete mediation
	β_1 is significant in model 2	
	β_1 is not significant and β_2 is significant in model 3	
2	β_1 is significant in model 1	Partial mediation
	β_1 is significant in model 2	
	β_1 is in model 3 significant but less than β_1 in model 1 and β_2 must be significant in model 3	
3	β_1 is not significant in model 1	No mediation
	β_1 is not significant in model 2	
	β_1 is significant and equal to β_1 in model 3 and β_2 is not significant in model 3	

Results

The study’s objective was to assess the mediating effect of transformational leadership on the relationship between pastor’s training and healthy congregations in the AGC-K. The pastors’ training in the selected congregations was first assessed, and the results are depicted in Table 1.



Table 1: Pastor’s Training

	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std.
Statement	%	%	%	%	%		Dev
God does not call the prepared, but He prepares the called	38.6	31.9	15.8	8.2	5.5	3.9	1.166
Our pastor has formal training in leadership	19.8	40.5	23.2	10.7	5.8	3.58	1.098
Our pastor’s leadership training so far is adequate	18.8	36.8	28.6	12.2	3.6	3.55	1.044
Our pastor is currently in training	19	37.6	22	16.2	5.2	3.49	1.127
Our pastor constantly practices spiritual disciplines in their life	27.7	41	20.7	7.6	3	3.83	1.017
Aggregate Scores						3.653	1.098

Table 1 shows that the aggregate mean (M) is 3.653 and the standard deviation (SD) is closer to one (1.098), which is a high mean. Most respondents agreed with the constructs describing their pastor’s training. However, there was considerable variation in the responses. With 38.6% of the respondents strongly agreeing with a mean value of 3.9, there were indications that the prevailing view among the respondents was that God does not call the prepared, but instead, God qualifies the called. That God’s calling should necessarily precede training. Most of the pastors were trained in leadership, indicated by 40.5% of the respondents who agreed with a mean of 3.58, and there were also indications that the pastor’s leadership training was so far adequate, as suggested by 36.8% of the respondents who agreed with a mean of 3.55. However, some pastors were currently in training, as indicated by 37.6% of the respondents who agreed with a mean of 3.49. This implied that while leadership training was well emphasized in the AGC-K, not all pastors had been fully trained, and some were being prepared even as they continued to serve in the church.

Similarly, the study sought to establish the pastors’ training approach to establish the areas of solid emphasis. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Pastor's Training Approach

Area of Training	First Priority %	Second Priority %	Third Priority %	Least Priority %	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal growth – Trained on achieving my personal dreams/visions.	67.6	24.3	5.4	2.7	1.43	0.728
Conceptual understanding – Taught theoretically to conceptualize phenomena	43.2	35.1	13.5	8.1	1.86	0.948
Feedback – Trained to appreciate my strengths and work on my weaknesses	59.5	24.3	10.8	5.4	1.62	0.893
Skill building – Trained to acquire appropriate skills for ministry	62.2	21.6	10.8	5.4	1.59	0.896

The results in Table 2 show that much emphasis during training was put on personal growth to achieve one's dreams/visions, as indicated by most respondents (67.6%). This could be explained from the point of view that through training on personal growth, the pastors could set career goals and achieve them, and these goals would translate well for the church's health, for example, an increase in membership. The second area of emphasis was skill building, where pastors were trained to acquire appropriate skills for ministry (62.2%). With the right organizational management skills imparted during training, pastors were expected to deliver well on their church responsibilities. High priority in training was also given to feedback, where the pastors were trained to appreciate their strengths and work on their weaknesses (59.5%). With feedback on their output, the pastors were expected to continually appraise themselves on their performance and improve where possible. However, less emphasis in training was comparably given to conceptual understanding, where the pastors were taught theoretically to conceptualize phenomena. Only

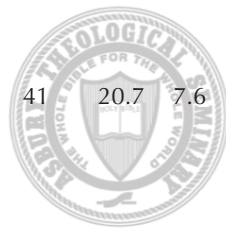
43.2% of the respondents indicated that the area was given first priority. The pastors’ training most emphasized personal growth, skill building, and feedback. However, the training did not focus on inculcating elements of leadership and, particularly, transformational leadership competencies.

The study also sought to determine whether the AGC-K pastors possessed transformational leadership traits. The results are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Pastor’s Transformational Leadership Traits

Statement	SA %	A %	N %	D %	SD %	Mean	Std. Dev
Our pastor is involved in training leaders under them	19.3	32.1	26	16.2	6.4	3.42	1.158
Our pastor ensures that there is appropriate training for everyone in their departments	19.8	29.6	32.9	11.3	6.4	3.45	1.121
The congregants are edified by my pastor’s ministry	57.1	34	7.9	0.6	0.3	4.63	2.81
They are always focused on the mission that Jesus called them	50.8	36.2	7.9	4.3	0.9	4.32	0.861
Our pastor constantly practices spiritual disciplines in their life	27.7	41	20.7	7.6	3	3.83	1.017

Table 3 shows that the aggregate mean (M) is 3.93 and the standard deviation (SD) is above one (1.393), and the mean is average. This means that while there was agreement among respondents on the pastors’ transformational leadership traits, there was much variation in the



respondents' views on whether they possessed transformational leadership traits. The ability of the pastors to edify the congregation received the highest rating, with 57.1% of the respondents strongly agreeing with a mean of 4.63 that the congregants were edified by their pastor's ministry. This implies that pastors could inspire people with their ministry, an essential transformational leadership competency outlined by Bukusi (2013: 65-66).

There were also strong indications that most pastors always focused on the mission Jesus called them for, as suggested by 50.8% of the respondents who agreed with a mean of 4.32. This corresponded with Bukusi's (2013: 65-66) visioning competence. The findings also show that most pastors in the AGC-K constantly practiced spiritual disciplines in their lives, as indicated by 41% of the respondents who agreed with a mean of 3.83. This implies that the pastors took it upon themselves to nurture their own spiritual discipline, which is essential in personal transformation and transformational leadership, as outlined by Bukusi (2013: 121).

However, with 32.1% of the respondents agreeing and a mean of 3.42, a lower score than those for the other aforementioned competencies, it was evident that the pastors placed less emphasis on training leaders under them. The findings also confirmed that most pastors did not ensure appropriate training for everyone in their respective departments, as indicated by 32.9 % of the respondents who agreed with a mean of 3.45. Therefore, it is evident that while some pastors trained the leaders under them consistent with the competency "Ability to train and mentor others" put forth by Bukusi (2013: 65-66), it was not strongly emphasized by the pastors.

The study finally sought to determine the status of the church congregational health. Congregational health is the sum total of what makes a local congregation fruitful in ministering to both congregants and the unchurched. According to the African Gospel Church-Kenya, congregational health constructs are measured along the 5 Es: E1 - Evangelizing the unsaved (demonstrated through evangelism and missions), E2 - Establishing churches (shown through church planting), E3 - Edifying believers (presented through discipleship), E4 - Equipping leaders (demonstrated through leadership development) and E5 - Exercising compassion (shown through compassion ministries). The characteristics of church growth were measured along a four-point scale, that is; A - Always happening, P-Partially done, N - nothing is happening, NM - nothing is even mentioned. The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Congregational Health

Description	A	P	N	NM	Mean	Std. Dev
	%	%	%	%		
Evangelism	36.5	46.5	13.1	4	3.16	0.795
Missions	41.3	45.6	10.9	2.1	3.26	0.736
Church planting	30.5	52.4	14.6	2.4	3.12	0.732
Discipleship	27.2	52.9	15.9	4	3.04	0.775
Leadership development	20.1	53.2	21.3	5.5	2.88	0.787
Compassion Ministries	18.6	48.8	26.8	5.8	2.8	0.805

Table 4 shows that, on average, most of the church’s congregational health constructs were, at best, partially emphasized. However, with a mean of 3.26, 41.3% of the respondents indicated that missions were always happening in their church. In comparison, 45.6% said that missions were partially being emphasized in their church. It is evident that the church was more active in missions than the other congregational health constructs. This implies that the congregations were mostly mission-oriented, which could be attributed to the local leadership. The findings also suggest that emphasis was put on evangelism with 36.5% (M = 3.16), indicating that this was always happening. Church planting (M= 3.12) and discipleship (M = 3.04) were also well emphasized. However, leadership and development programs (M = 2.88) and compassion ministries (M = 2.8) on the other hand, received comparably less focus in the congregations surveyed.

The mediating effect of transformational leadership traits on the relationship between pastors’ training and church congregational health in African Gospel Church, Kenya, was also examined, and the results were summarized in Table 5.

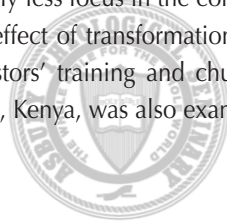


Table 5: Mediating effect of Transformational Leadership Traits

	Model 1		
		Statistic	P-Value
R		.136	
R Squared		0.018	
Adjusted R squared		0.014	
R Square Change			
F-Statistic (df, n)	(1, 319)	5.484	.04b
	Coefficient	t-Statistic	P-Value
Constant	20.824	20.118	0.000
Pastors Training	0.136	2.636	0.04
Transformation Leadership	-	-	-



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Model 2			Model 3		
	Statistic	P-Value		Statistic	P-Value
	.174			.154	
	0.030			0.024	
	0.027			0.021	
	0.03	0.002		0.024	0.005
(2, 318)	9.923	.002b	(2, 318)	7.821	.005b
Coeffi- cient	t- Statistic	P- Value	Coeffi- cient	t- Statistic	P- Value
21.095	19.808	0.000	16.868	13.994	
0.174	3.15	0.002	0.154	2.797	0.005
-	-	-	0.136	2.391	0.017



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Looking at the results of Model 1, the adjusted R-square value is 0.014, which is significantly higher than zero, suggesting that the model with pastors' training as the only independent variable could explain up to 1.4% of the variations in the dependent variable of church congregational health. The F-statistic is 5.484 and $p = 0.04$, where $p \leq 0.05$. This shows that pastors' training could significantly predict the variations in church congregational health of AGC-K. The constant coefficient is positive and significant at 20.824, $t = 20.118 > 1.96$, and $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ where $p \leq 0.05$, which suggests that apart from pastors' training, other variables significantly affecting church congregational health had not been factored in the model. Pastors' training is positive and significant at $\beta = 0.136$, $t = 2.636$, and $p = 0.000$, where $p \leq 0.05$. This indicates that putting all other factors at zero, a unit increase in the pastors' training would increase the church congregational health by up to 0.136 units.

Model 2 shows that the adjusted R-square value is 0.027, suggesting that the model with pastors' training as the only independent variable could explain up to 2.7% of the variations in the mediating variable, transformational leadership traits. The F-statistic is 9.923 and $p = 0.002$, where $p \leq 0.05$. This shows that the pastors' training could significantly predict the variations in transformational leadership traits of pastors in the AGC-K. The constant coefficient is positive and significant at 21.095, $t = 19.808 > 1.96$, and $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ where $p \leq 0.05$, which suggests that apart from pastors' training, other variables significantly affected the transformational leadership traits that had not been factored in the model. Pastors' training is positive and significant at $\beta = 0.174$, $t = 3.15$, and $p = 0.002$, where $p \leq 0.05$. This indicates that for all other factors at zero, a unit increase in the pastors' training would increase their transformational leadership traits by up to 0.174 units.

Model 3 shows that the adjusted R-square value is 0.021, which suggests that the model with the mediating variable, transformational leadership traits, could explain up to 2.1% of the variation in the dependent variable; the rest are explained by the variables not fitted in the model. The F-statistic is 7.281 and $p = 0.005$, where $p \leq 0.05$. The adjusted R^2 before mediation was 30.90%. According to MacKinnon, Krull, and Lockwood (2000: 173-181), the results of the two regression models are first interpreted using the R^2 . This is done before and after mediation to confirm whether the data supports the hypothesis using the R^2 . According to the above rule, the direct effect in Model 1 is 0.018 while the mediated effect is (0.024 -

0.018) is .006 and is significant at $t = 2.391$, $p = 0.017$, and $p < .05$. Based on R^2 judgment, at this point the study can conclude that transformational leadership traits partially mediate the relationship between pastors training and church congregational health of AGC-K. However, according to Baron and Kenny (1986) and MacKinnon *et al.*, (2007) to make substantive conclusions on the mediating effect, the difference between the beta coefficients of the predictor variable should always be confirmed.

Table 6: Mediating effect of Transformational Leadership Traits

Variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Significance of change
	Base Model (step 1) Coefficient β	P value	(Step 2 Mediation) Coefficient β	P value	(Step 3, after Mediation) Coefficient β	P value	
Pastors Training	0.136	0.04	0.174	0.002	0.154	0.005	$P = 0.001, \alpha < 0.05; C > C1$
Transformation Leadership	-	-	-	-	0.132	0.017	$P = 0.036, \alpha < 0.05$ change is significant
$R^2 (r - r1)$	0.018	-	-	-	-	0.024	0.006

According to the above criterion and as presented in Table 6, the model satisfies the three conditions of partial mediation, where in model 1, the β coefficient is significant. In model 2, the β coefficient is also significant, and in model 3, the β coefficient is expected to be significant or not, but the mediating coefficient must be significant. This implies that transformational leadership traits partially mediate the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and state that transformational leadership traits statistically affect the relationship between pastors' training and church congregational health.

Discussion of Findings

The study aimed to establish whether transformational leadership traits mediated the relationship between pastors' training and church congregational health in Africa Gospel Church, Kenya. According to the findings, while the respondents agreed that pastors training approaches, pastors training of other leaders, succession planning, and practicing spiritual discipline were critical in influencing healthy church congregations, there were doubts over the effectiveness of the pastors' first leadership training which also failed to register any significant impact on the church congregational health constructs. This latter finding concurred with London and Wiseman (2006: 14), who found that *most (90%) pastors believed* their training was inadequate. The results also supported Mattingly (2016: 5), who said, "Many seminaries excel in preparing pastors for scriptural interpretation, theological reflection, and pastoral care, but often fail to educate and equip pastors for the task of leadership adequately." Therefore, a considerable leadership skill gap was evident in pastors' initial training.

However, transformational leadership can be experienced or formally learned through competencies. Bass (1990: 27) argues that "Transformational leadership can be learned, and it can and should be the subject of management training and development." But as Maxwell (2002: 167) observed, "No leader can be forced to be transformational, but the transformation is a reality that entirely depends on the individual who is willing to be transformed to pass it to others." In the case of this study, there was evidence to suggest that transformational leadership was learned during training in seminary for the pastors, and the transformational leadership traits could be observed by the respondents among pastors who exhibited these characteristics.

From the findings on transformational leadership, it was evident that not all pastors exhibited transformational leadership traits, as indicated by the variation in the respondents' views on the transformational leadership traits of their pastors. For instance, while most pastors were involved in training leaders under them, they were not keen on equipping everyone in their respective departments. This meant that not all departmental leaders and members were impacted explicitly by their pastors' leadership. According to Hickman (1997: 2), transformational leadership entails "developing core values and unifying purpose, liberating human potential and generating increased capacity that brings about a cohesive society that prides in interconnectedness." Also, there was much variation among respondents

on whether their pastors had been able to lead their churches relatively free of emotional baggage. The emotional component of transformational leadership has been underscored by Burns (1978: 20), who indicates that transformational leadership incorporates the subordinates' emotions, values, and creativity, thus leading to innovations. Further, emotional stability is an essential trait of transformational leadership as it first shows that the individual has been transformed and is likely to use logical solutions to problems rather than reacting emotionally to challenges. This allows the followers to trust leadership, leading to improved individual performance.

We observed that while not all pastors manifested transformational leadership traits in their service, transformational leadership traits significantly mediated the relationship between pastors' training and the church's congregational health. Further, we found a significant direct relationship between pastors' training and transformational leadership, indicating that better quality training was instrumental in improving transformational leadership traits. This suggests that transformational leadership had to some extent, been learned or acquired during training, and when the two aspects were combined, the church congregation's health outcomes improved as well. As such, these findings corroborate the assertions of Bukusi (2013) that pastors can also be trained on transformational competencies, which involve training competencies necessary for any transformational leader to acquire. They also support Bass's view that transformational leadership can be learned (1990: 27).

The impact of transformational leadership as a mediator on the relationship between pastors' training and congregational health was also expected due to the observed relationship between transformational leadership and the pastors' training. However, the fact that it did not have as substantial an impact as expected, and was a partial mediation, was because less focus was being put on leadership training in seminary for pastors, and given that transformational leadership is not something that can be forced, as indicated by Maxwell (2007). Therefore, there were variations in the transformational leadership abilities of pastors as observed across the AGC-K urban congregations. It could also explain why some of the congregations performed more efficiently than others.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study sought to establish the mediating effect of transformational leadership traits on the relationship between pastors' training and church congregational health in the African Gospel Church, Kenya. Various aspects of pastors ranging from the rationale for training that "God does not call the prepared, but he prepares the called" to the training approaches and succession planning, significantly influenced church congregational health in the AGC-K. This implied that increased pastor training could translate to improved congregational health in the church. However, the first leadership training did not significantly impact the church's health constructs. This underscored the observed fact in other studies that the pastors' training was inadequate, especially in leadership training. Nevertheless, it was observed that some pastors practiced transformational leadership in their congregations, though limitedly. When this aspect of transformational leadership was used to mediate the relationship between pastors' training and church congregational health, the relationship was significant, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The study, therefore, concludes that transformational leadership training was an essential factor that impacted church congregational health. This could explain why some of the congregations of the AGC-K, especially those located in the urban areas were performing better than other non-urban congregations.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that the AGC-K church encourage their pastors and other church leaders to subscribe to training on transformational leadership. The church leadership should also identify transformational leaders within its congregations and encourage them to take some of the leaders under their tutelage. The church should organize workshops with corporate leaders who have proven transformational leadership traits to help train their leaders and increase diversity in training. Finally, there is a need for more research in transformational leadership training within the church context. The findings can be precipitated to training manuals or programs for training church leaders in transformational leadership.

End notes

¹ Bonis, "The (Un) Successful Pastor: An Investigation of Pastoral Leadership Selection Within Churches in Ontario.," 43. In quoting Johnson (1995: 182-3), the current training of pastors is mainly on practical aspects of ministry, which includes administration, preaching, leadership skills, small group dynamics, and other related duties. He says that pastoral training lacks theology-related areas of focus. In examining three seminaries in Ontario, Bonis found a similar trend as stated by Johnson above though most of them identified a lack of training in administrative tasks. The problem is that each seminary may have its own area of emphasis and forget that the balance of the theoretical and practical is necessary without forgetting the current dynamics.

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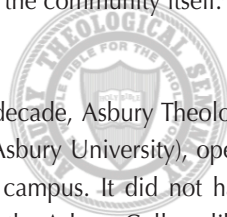
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From the Archives: *The Library at Asbury Theological Seminary: The Center of Academic Learning*¹

While many people think about the history of their institutions, and indeed often depend on the library and its archives for preserving that history, they seldom think about the history of the library itself. As we are in our 100th year celebration at Asbury Theological Seminary, it becomes important to note the significance of the library as the heartbeat of the community. This did not happen overnight or by coincidence, but through the hard work and effort of generations of people who desired to help Asbury's students develop the research skills and abilities to become world class scholars, academics, and pastors. Dr. R. David Lankes (director of the School of Library and Information Science at the University of South Carolina) has put it, "Bad libraries build collections, good libraries build services, great libraries build communities." While the library at Asbury Theological Seminary has developed a world class collection, especially in terms of the Holiness Movement, it has also helped shape and form the larger community in the process, especially through its services and the use of the collection by the community. The library of Asbury Theological Seminary owes its very existence and growth during hard times to the very community it serves; its history shows this well, and as such the collection is a very real reflection of the community itself.²

1923-1933

During its first decade, Asbury Theological Seminary was a part of Asbury College (now Asbury University), operating out of the Morrison Building on the College campus. It did not have a separate library, but students and faculty used the Asbury College library. However, during this time, President H.C. Morrison did begin the work of building the theological collection of the College for the use of the new Seminary. In February of 1924, in writing about the Seminary in *The Pentecostal Herald*, Morrison noted:



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We have at Asbury College a library of something over ten thousand volumes, but we desire very much to make a large improvement in our Theological Department and we would be profoundly grateful to anyone who may feel led to contribute to this department. We would be so thankful if old Methodist ministers, or their widows would give us books for this department. If there are aged ministers or their widows who have old Methodist books that they are not able to donate, we would be glad to get in correspondence with them. We might be able to make a trade that would be helpful to them and us. We want all the sound books we can get hold of in the realm of Theology and Philosophy. We are eager to get hold of the very oldest and the very latest books on all phases of biblical subjects that have been written by men who are true to the Bible and the Christ of the Bible.³

Kinghorn notes that one of the largest donations to come from this appeal for the Asbury College theological library was from W.W. Cary who gave over 3,000 books to the library.⁴ But for the most part, it was small donations from readers of *The Pentecostal Herald* that provided theological books to Asbury College on behalf of the new Seminary.

1933-1943

In 1939, it became important for Asbury Theological Seminary to be recognized as a separate entity. First, there was a need for a larger campus as the Seminary continued to grow. Second, Morrison wanted to develop a fully accredited theological seminary with a three-year program, but he had limited funding or endowments to accomplish this goal while connected to the College. Third, the accreditors wanted to see the Seminary as a separate institution apart from Asbury College, before it could be accredited.

It was decided to rent the Asbury-Talbott Inn, a hotel and restaurant owned by the College, across the street from the campus of Asbury College. While the building was rented for two years, accreditation of the Seminary required that it be a completely separate entity from the College, and so the Asbury-Talbott Inn was traded for the Morrison building, giving Asbury Theological Seminary its first independently owned building in 1941.

In the following division of resources, Asbury College provided 650 books from its collection as the core of the Seminary's library, keeping other volumes donated for their own accreditation needs. In addition, Seminary professors freely offered the use of their personal books to students when needed. With limited financial resources, the Seminary relied once

again on President H.C. Morrison's connections through his publication of *The Pentecostal Herald* to try and increase the library holdings instead of relying on the generous nature of the Seminary professors. Dean F.H. Larabee issued the call for book donations in January of 1941. Larabee wrote:

We believe that there is a large reading clientele of *The Pentecostal Herald*, who would become interested in such a worthy object as the building up of a fine Theological Library, which will become available for the use of young men in their training to become preachers of the gospel. It would, indeed, be an exceedingly worthy enterprise and should become the inspiration of hundreds and even thousands of men and women scattered over the entire area of the Holiness Movement.

We come to you, then, to ask that you allow yourself to become interested in this undertaking. The collection of such a library easily takes form that lends itself to the possible aid of nearly every man, woman and child in Christendom. There is scarcely a single person, who does not have control of at least one book, in which you have had an absorbing interest, and have perused its contents and made its material yours, and now can pass it on to others, who may also enjoy its inspiration and thus be able to make their lives richer by reading its pages. Just a few copper cents will pay the transportation of such a book to the doors of Asbury Theological Library and many young men in the course of years will be preaching a richer and more productive gospel, because they have read that book.⁵

This appeal worked and material began to arrive, making it important to develop the library staff. The first library worker, who started organizing the books, was a student named Harold Shingledecker who had some training in library science. He seems to have organized about 2,000 items as a volunteer in 1941, and the material was kept in a room in the basement of the Asbury-Talbot Inn (later renamed the Larabee-Morris Building).⁶

1943-1953

Asbury Seminary during the period of 1943-1953 continued to grow while actively seeking accreditation from the American Association of Theological Schools. A library report from October and November of 1943 exists in which the library spent \$7.92 on a subscription to the *Courier Journal*, bought one book, and the rest went for library and office supplies.

This report is signed by E. Edwin LeMaster, who is listed as the librarian, but his role is unclear.⁷ According to Shippo:

In order to comply with its quest for accreditation the Board of Trustees through its Executive Committee designated a minimum of five hundred dollars per year for new books. This annual influx of a thousand volumes soon over-taxed the housing space, and early in 1944 the library was moved to the alumni hall, an old store building rented from Asbury College at the corner of Lexington Avenue and College Street, just North of the Seminary building.⁸

As the collection grew, the funds were still not at a level deemed appropriate to achieve the goals of the administration for 15,000 volumes, so an appeal was made to the alumni for a gift of \$40 each. An account of a 1945 Executive Committee meeting, notes that following the death of H.C. Morrison, the Seminary was committed to constructing three buildings: a library, an administration building, and a chapel. Library material was part of the concern of the American Association of Theological Schools and so the Executive Committee approved a plan to raise \$10,000 for the purchase of books (\$2,500 from the Pentecostal Publishing Company, \$5,000 from the Glide Foundation, and \$2,500 to be raised by the Board of Trustees with each member asked to personally raise \$200). As Shippo notes, "The success of this movement to establish an adequate theological library may be seen as an important turning point in the general academic success of the Seminary."⁹ Also in 1944 or 1945, Dr. Harold Kuhn was designated as Director of Library Affairs by the Executive Committee.



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Lena Barbara Nofcier, the first Professional Library Director at Asbury Theological Seminary from 1945-1949. She was both a Librarian and Student at Asbury College from 1925-1930 (on the left) and the Director at Asbury Theological Seminary (on the right)

(Images Courtesy of Asbury University and the B.L. Fisher Archives and Special Collections)

In 1945-1946, Asbury hired its first professional librarian, Lena Barbara Nofcier (1945-1949) who reclassified the library's holdings following the Union Catalog. She came to Asbury College in 1925 as a student and a librarian, and in this role, she was active in planning the Morrison Memorial Library Building and reorganizing the College library. Due to her work, she tripled circulation of materials and doubled the size of the staff. Nofcier graduated from Asbury College in 1927, had a Library Certificate from the University of Iowa in 1926, and received a B.S. in Library Science from the University of Illinois in 1928. She continued to work at the Asbury College Library until 1930, when she followed Fannie C. Rawson as the Secretary of the Kentucky Library Commission. For fifteen years she was also the Director of the Library Extension Division of the Kentucky Library Association. Working with the Kentucky Parent Teacher Association and Elizabeth Fullerton, the state director of women's and professions projects for the Federal Works Project Administration, Nofcier

was a key part in developing the Pack Horse Library Project and raising funds for it.

As director of the Kentucky Library Commission, Nofcier's staff compiled statistics and information on libraries in Kentucky compared with national standards. Her official correspondence reflects a determined woman who doggedly encouraged KCPT (Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers) members to voice library issues to their state legislatures. In 1934 she argued to the KCPT the need for the state to provide printed materials to schools. "It is impossible for a teacher to conduct classes without books and other printed aids," she reasoned. "After a child learns to read, he must have access to books." The next year she argued to the KCPT that "adequate library service should be provided to all people, rural as well as urban, colored as well as white." But to do this more funds had to be available, "a more adequate state appropriation is necessary to meet the present demands for service," she flatly stated. "With such a distressing picture of library conditions and needs in Kentucky should we not bestir ourselves to provide not only adequate library facilities, but also equal library privileges for every citizen?"¹⁰

With her support, the packhorse library project was approved by the KCPT Board of Managers in 1936. She encouraged PTA involvement and asked every PTA member to give at least one penny to buy new books for the project. Raising money and promoting the work, Nofcier helped encourage and develop the project. She also emphasized carefully selecting materials to avoid those, "that might offend the mountain sentiments and destroy trust in the service. If local trust were destroyed then the entire service would be rendered useless."¹¹



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Packhorse Library Carriers Outside a Packhorse Library in Hindman, Kentucky (nd).

(In the Public Domain. Goodman-Paxton Photographic Collection, Kentucky Digital Library)

This unique project sought to encourage literacy in rural Appalachia by sending out librarians on horseback taking reading material to the people of the region. Reports indicate that one of the most requested books was the Bible, and librarians would often take the time to read books including portions of scripture at people's request. Schmitzer writes that travelling libraries were a key part of library service in Kentucky, "Mounted carriers averaged over 5,000 miles per month visiting over 4,000 families and 55,000 individuals... Four pack horse carriers in Leslie County covered an area greater than the state of Delaware to serve 8,000 people in fifty-seven mountain communities."¹² Nofcier's work during the Depression and the years of World War II are credited as important periods of leadership in the history of the Kentucky Library Association.¹³ Nofcier would go on to run the public library in Lima, Ohio for fifteen years (1950-1965) before she retired. She would be known for her work in Lima by introducing the first radio paging system in U.S. libraries to increase efficiency.

While at Asbury Seminary, Nofcier also served as an associate editor on the first two issues of *The Asbury Seminarian* (now *The Asbury Journal*), and published one of the articles in the first issue in 1946 entitled, "The Library in a Growing Theological Seminary." The next year, a cataloguer and an assistant librarian were added, all holding faculty level status, so by 1947 there were three full-time professional librarians at faculty status and ten part-time workers on staff. Both Fraley¹⁴ and Shipps agree that the development of the library and its staff were essential factors in making accreditation of the Seminary possible (Asbury was officially accredited by the American Association of Theological Schools in 1946). In 1947, the library moved into the basement of the Henry Clay Morrison Administration Building, which had just been completed, and in 1949, Susan A. Schultz became the second Library Director (1949-1966 and 1970-1978).¹⁵



From 1947-1954, the Library was on the Bottom Floor of the H.C. Morrison Administration Building.

Here are Several Early Library Workers: Ruth Warnock, Jane Lowell, Frieda (?), Myrtle Lamb

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1953-1963

By 1954, still running out of room, the library was moved into the ground floor of Estes Chapel. In the 1954-1955 report to the Board of Trustees, Shultz wrote, "On August 6, 1954, after the new book stacks had been assembled and arranged in the new library room, the moving of the book collection was begun. Two men, using book trucks, moved the collection in about 125 hours. When the Fall quarter opened everything was in place except 90 new chairs on which shipment was delayed until late September." She noted later in that same report:

It is now ten years since the first professionally trained librarian was employed by the Seminary. Since that time the book collection has increased from about 5,000 poorly selected books classified by the Dewey Decimal System to over 34,000 all classified according to the Union Seminary classification system and fully cataloged. Then the library occupied one small room poorly equipped. Today it is located in a large room 117 ft x 50 ft equipped with modern steel book stacks and attractive furniture to fulfill the functions of an active library.

Shultz also wrote later that in most of the time before the move, the "furnishings consisted of a motley variety of army surplus tables and chairs," and "shelves warped so badly, frequently requiring a kind of carpenter's surgery so that the books could stand upright. Strips of linoleum lined the shelves to protect the books from the rough surfaces of the unfinished wood."¹⁶ Shultz also noted that the move to Estes was delayed due to a lack of funds for furnishings. This was solved by a firm closing out a line of library furniture, so that the furnishing of the Estes library only cost \$9,603.43 which included shipping! Susan Schultz's primary work during this period was passionately advocating for a new building. In 1955, B.L. Fisher, an ardent supporter and board member of the Seminary, died and left an estate worth close to nine million dollars to the Seminary, a portion of which was set aside to construct the new library. Schultz was actively involved in all aspects of planning and designing the new facility, and it became her most enduring legacy.



**From 1954-1967, the Library was on the Bottom Floor of Estes Chapel,
Here Full of Students**

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For the most part, the library collection continued to grow through small individual donations and a limited budget. But this situation was to change quite rapidly. In 1961, a matching grant from the Sealantic Fund was made to accredited seminaries, which the Seminary administration decided to accept. This meant an additional \$6,000 for the purchase of books annually for three years above the usual book budget. This grant was designed to strengthen the library's holdings in standard theological works.¹⁷ Susan Schultz wrote of this in her 1977-1978 report as an important step for the library:

A significant event which greatly stimulated the development of this library was the announcement at the ATLA conference at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. 1961 about the Library Development Program. This was made possible with a large grant from Sealantic of the Rockefeller Brother's Fund. Accredited members of the then named American Association of Theological Schools were offered three annual grants of up to \$3000 on a matching basis on condition that this would be added to the normal book budget. The "normal" figure was based on the book and periodical expenditures of the previous five years and Asbury's was set at \$5523! Overnight our book budget more than doubled and we were able to fill in many gaps in our

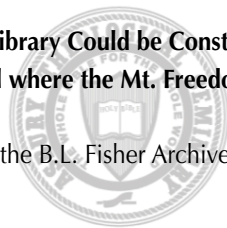
collection. After the first three years this program was extended with slight modifications for two more years. It is to the credit of the Seminary Administration that we were able to participate in this program receiving the maximum amount. Fortunately, the amount budgeted for library materials since then has been steady or increased regularly to meet the demands of a fast-growing institution, though not always keeping pace with inflation.¹⁸

The Sealantic Grant would put the Asbury Theological Seminary Library on solid footing, with a sound core collection of theological material including a good run of historic periodicals, making it a true academic research library at the Masters level.



Before the B. L. Fisher Library Could be Constructed, the Seminary had to Purchase the Land where the Mt. Freedom Baptist Church sat.

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Mt. Freedom Baptist Church
was demolished to make way for the B.L. Fisher Library.
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In the Early 1960's Work was Underway to Design a New Library to be Named After Board Member B.L. Fisher. Here President Stanger and Susan Shultz Stand Beside a Drawing of the Newly Designed Face of Lexington Avenue in Wilmore.

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1963-1973

The library at Asbury Theological Seminary continued in this period under the able leadership of Susan Shultz, except for a brief break from 1967-1969 when Onva K. Boshears, Jr. served as Director and Schultz as Associate Director. The work on the new library building continued, as well as the active shifting of material to keep pace with growth (even storing boxes of material in a hallway for a time). Finally, on October 10, 1967, the new B. L. Fisher Library building was dedicated. This move led to several important purchases and donations.

In 1969, the library purchased the official, numbered Faith and Order Documents gathered by A.T. DeGroot over 30 years, described as "the second-best set in the world, surpassed only by the file in Geneva."¹⁹ This was also the year that the John Paul Papers were donated by his widow. As material like this was becoming available, and with the passing of many of the founders of the Seminary, the need for preserving Asbury's heritage

became important. In 1970, a Heritage Room was established, and the *Bulletin of Asbury Theological Seminary* for 1971 notes:

The Heritage Room on the second floor was designed for the preservation of mementos related to the history of the Seminary and other old and historically significant materials. Dr. and Mrs. Lowell O. Ryan (Dr. Ryan serves as chairman of the Seminary's Board of Trustees) donated the furnishings of this room in honor of Miss Susan A. Schultz, Director of Library Services, in recognition of her years of service and her part in planning the new library building. A dedication was held on January 28, 1970.²⁰

This would provide the future foundation for the Archives and Special Collections of the B. L. Fisher Library, and would attract more donations and gifts of primary research material as it developed.



In 1970 Susan Shultz Set up a Heritage Room in the New B. L. Fisher Library, Which Would Become the Start of the Archives and Special Collections of Asbury Theological Seminary

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Another major purchase made in 1972 was a collection of books from the Mercantile Library in New York City. In total, 8,275 volumes were purchased for the cost of \$1.00 per item. A total of 4,499 were added to the collection and the remainder sold to students. A number of titles were extremely brittle, since the collection mostly dated to pre-1920, so these items were kept off of the main shelves for the future archives collection.

In a final note on this period, Schultz had a passion for really seeing the library become a center for academic research in the Holiness Movement, and her passion was contagious. In 1971, she set off on a project for the library to publish a series of Occasional Papers, which were academic bibliographies. These papers were written by young librarians who would go on to become major scholars in the field of the Pentecostal and Holiness Movements. They included Dr. Donald Dayton²¹, Dr. William Faupel²², and Dr. David Bundy²³. They proved that the library could do more than collect material; it could also produce world class scholars and publish material of value as well.²⁴

1973-1983

As Susan Schultz entered her third decade of leading the library, she initiated the establishment of the Archives and Special Collections in 1973. This period of time became strongly focused on collecting primary source material for the library, with the ongoing aim of creating a world class academic research library focused on the Holiness Movement. Most of the notable collections of this period are elements of this effort. One major donation to impact the book collection in this period was a \$25,000 anonymous grant given in 1978 which was used to purchase the Assyriology Library of Dr. William Martin for \$4,700, and the rest was used to supplement the regular collection development. Another possibly significant collection was a gift of over 1,000 books from Berea College made in 1975, but there is very little said about this collection, so it is hard to evaluate its significance. In addition, in 1982, a collection of early Wesley editions and 18th century Methodist material was also purchased. The library staff of the time was intensely busy with the decision in 1974 to move from the Union Catalog to the Library of Congress Classification System.

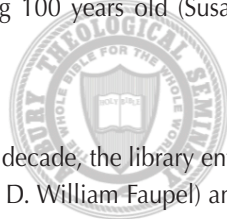
One of the earliest major collections for the growing Archives and Special Collections was the Christian Holiness Association Collection. Both Dr. Delbert Rose and Dr. Melvin Dieter were historians for this group

and were instrumental in making it the backbone of Asbury's Special Collections. This collection appears to have arrived in 1974, but was not completely processed until 1987. Additional collections of this time were mostly smaller, such as the Frank C. Laubach Library (1974), the Albert Day Papers (1975), the Harry C. Asbury Papers (1976), and material from Emily Morrison Chandler, the daughter of H.C. Morrison, including personal letters (1977). Of special note, a manuscript of E. Stanley Jones was given in 1977, which would pave the way for major future collections. In addition, the Order of St. Luke placed its collection on deposit of the Alfred W. Price Healing Collection of 530 books in 1975. Seminary organizations also began to see the value of the archives, and the Charles Killian Dramatic Ministries Collection was donated in 1980. With the growing archival collection, Michael Boddy was hired part-time as the Seminary Archivist and would serve until 1983.

With an archivist on staff, the collection became stronger. The Papers of Hannah Whittall Smith were purchased in 1982. This was the first collection to begin to put Asbury on the national map in terms of archival material. Dr. D. William Faupel, who had served as Public Services Librarian since 1970, replaced Susan Shultz as Library Director in 1978. Shultz left a much stronger library than she found in 1949, one with a new building, a strong foundational collection of over 112,000 volumes and 699 periodical titles (compared to 28,000 volumes and 266 periodical titles in 1949), and a growing Archives and Special Collections to establish a strong academic presence for Asbury Theological Seminary. Susan Schultz then launched into a new life, marrying Dr. Delbert Rose in 1986 and moving to Shell Point, Florida. They both became involved in mission work, Susan working with libraries while Delbert taught. Both Susan and Delbert would pass away just short of turning 100 years old (Susan in 2011 and Delbert in 2012).

1983-1993

In the following decade, the library entered well-equipped with a new Library Director (Dr. D. William Faupel) and a new full-time archivist (Sylvia Brown) who had been hired at part-time in 1983, but moved to a full-time position in 1984. In 1985, due to space considerations, the Archives moved down to the bottom floor of the library from the old heritage room on the second floor. In terms of collections, the archivist focused on material related to Asbury Theological Seminary with papers of faculty



like: Gilbert James, Ada B. Carroll, George Turner, Herbert Livingston, and Robert Coleman, as well as the papers for Presidents J.C. McPheeters and Frank Bateman Stanger taking precedence. The focus was on organization and processing these collections. By the end of this period the Papers of Paul Rees, the Papers of Delbert Rose, and the Papers of the Ed Robb Evangelistic Association would be added along with many similar collections.



The B. L. Fisher Library Leadership About 1982: (Left to Right) John Seery (Public Services Librarian), Michael Boddy (Seminary Archivist), D. William Faupel (Library Director), Kenneth A. Boyd (Director of Instructional Design and Media Services,) Donald Butterworth (Technical Services Librarian)

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There were, however, some very important archival collections to arrive outside of material tied to Asbury Theological Seminary. Material was added to the Hannah Whitall Smith material with the Papers of Robert Pearsall Smith (her husband) and the Papers of Ray Strachey (the Smiths' daughter) in 1983. In the same year came the Records of Japan Mission, and this was followed in 1985 when the Seminary became the formal custodians of the Records of the United Methodist Church Kentucky Conference, which were placed on deposit. The Overseas Mission Society Collection

would follow about 1987, along with the Papers of Arthur Greene (which include a number of large paintings on canvas made for use in holiness camp meetings). These collections were followed by the Records of the Kentucky Mountain Holiness Association (1988), the Papers of E. F. Ward (1988), and the Records of the United Christian Ashrams (1991). These represent the major archival collections of the time, but there were many other smaller collections added or started during this period.

Donations grew in this period, and increasingly important collections of historical material were being purchased to add to the collection. But more often the library was being tasked with issues involving technology, and this period of time was heavily involved with cataloging issues, especially working on an electronic catalog to replace the outdated card catalog system. Electronic security and a growing computer lab also required technological investment and expertise.

In terms of purchasing book collections, some material, such as the collection of Dr. Frank Baker, was primarily older, hard-to-find material. The library purchased his 400-volume collection of early Methodist material for one-third of its appraised value. Over this period, the library worked out an arrangement with Dr. Melvin Dieter, one of the foremost scholars on the Holiness Movement, to purchase some of his library over a five-year period for a minimum of \$2,500 and a maximum of \$5,000, with any material over this amount being considered as gifts. Well over 2,000 books of significant historical value would enter the collection over this period, either through purchase or as outright gifts from the Dieters. However, the most significant donation was the news in 1987 that \$150,000 had been given from the Beeson family, with an additional \$290,000 expected in future wills, to create a restricted account for the acquisition of missions and evangelism material, which was a passion of Frank Waldo Beeson, the son of John Wesley Beeson, a former president of Meridian College, a holiness institution in Mississippi. The timing of this gift worked well with the starting of the E. Stanley Jones School of World Missions and Evangelism and its aim for Ph.D. level support for research. By 2004, the income from the gift was \$30,000, and by 2012 when the gift ended, almost \$824,000 had been used for mission material from 1987 to 2012. Mr. Beeson also created a \$2 million endowment for the Beeson Library Collections in Pastoral Leadership and Related Interdisciplinary Studies which goes to the purchase of books. In 2021, the income from this endowment was nearly \$162,000 and has provided \$3.2 million toward book purchases since

1990. In its final form, the Beeson gifts count as the largest single gift to the library to directly impact its collections (with both the gift and endowment the total is about \$4 million to date).

As an immediate result of both the establishment of the E. Stanley Jones School and the Beeson gift, a collection of 500 volumes related to missions in the Philippines was purchased from Dr. Gerald Anderson, the director of the Overseas Mission Study Center in 1987, and this was followed the next year with a purchase of 1,100 back periodicals and 300 pamphlets on mission in Southeast Asia. As a result of these events, the B. L. Fisher Library at Asbury Theological Seminary achieved a Ph.D. level collection in the area of mission and evangelism quite rapidly.

In terms of donated items, this decade was also a rich period for the B. L. Fisher Library. In 1984, several significant libraries were given, including the library of Kenneth Eyer of 19th and 20th century holiness material, the library of Dr. Julian McPheeters- the second president of the Seminary, a library of 19th century revivalism books and early material on Wesley from Rev. Walter Price, and the library of Benjamin T. Roberts—the founder of the Free Methodist Church.

1993-2003

As Dr. Faupel entered this next period directing the library at the Seminary, the collection reached some definite high points. In fact, this decade can be considered the historical highwater mark of the library in terms of its collection development. In 1994, the John Carver Healing Collection was purchased, as perhaps the most expensive collection in Asbury's history. This massive collection, which documents the healing ministries of around 300 healing evangelists of the 1950s, cost \$150,000, paid in four installments, but was valued at the time as being worth \$250,000. The collection was formally opened on April 18, 1999. Along with the earlier Hannah Whittall Smith Collection, this addition again proclaimed Asbury's position nationally among religious archives. Other important archival collections came in, including the Papers of E. Stanley Jones (2000), the Papers of David L. McKenna (2000), the Papers of Beverly Carradine (2000), the Papers of United Christian Ashrams International (2001), and the Papers of Dewey M. Beegle (2002).

Several other collections came in as gifts or purchases, including 1,715 books from President David McKenna in 1995. The Bammel Library was gifted in 1998 from Thomas and Alette Eberlein with valuable historical

material in German, French, Italian, and Latin, and an additional 200 books on German Methodism were purchased from Drew University in 2003. Donations of material also continued at a strong pace; however, most donations were the gifts of individuals as had been the tradition of the past. Significant donations came from faculty who retired or passed away including: Dr. William Arnett (346 volumes), Dr. Donald Joy (680 volumes), Dr. Harold Burgess (916 volumes), Dr. Ron Crandall (239 volumes), Dr. John T. Seamands (700 volumes), Dr. Herbert W. Byrne (226 volumes), Dr. Burrell Dinkins (1231 volumes), Dr. Kenneth Kinghorn (116 volumes), Dr. Robert Tuttle, Jr. (1118 volumes), Dr. Darrell Whiteman (1471 volumes), Dr. Matthias Zahniser (1482 volumes), Dr. Paul Chilcote (166 volumes), Dr. Charles Killian (197 volumes), and Dr. Lowell O. Ryan (862 volumes). A few important gift collections came from sources outside of the seminary including Dr. Dewey M. Beegle whose material included archaeological artifacts from the Middle East, a collection of 1662 books from Bishop James K. Matthews—the son-in-law of E. Stanley Jones, material from missiologist Dr. Norman Thomas of over 1500 items, and a collection of 132 items from noted scholar Professor Thomas Oden. One of the largest gift collections came in over these years from Dr. John Vayhinger, which formed a strong basis for the library collection in Christian counseling. It came to a total of around 4500 to 5000 volumes given over a number of years. Fewer and fewer donated books from individuals were added to the collection as gaps were filled and material added from other collection development approaches, which included a larger budget for purchasing material that took the place of relying on individually donated items.

The issue of technology also became increasingly important in 1997 as Asbury Theological Seminary launched its Virtual Campus and teaching online. More materials had to be located in digital formats; this included a dramatic increase in Interlibrary Loan and in experimenting with mailing books to distance students. While technology was increasingly taking more attention and resources from the library staff, an additional complication arose when Asbury Theological Seminary decided to open a campus in Orlando, Florida, in 1998. This meant there was a need to collect for an additional library. In August of 1999, the Florida Library was opened with some 22,000 volumes being moved from the Wilmore Library. In some cases, the opening of this new campus generated more donations, such as Dr. Burrell Dinkins who donated 625 books in 1999 for the new Florida Library.

2003-2013

In 2003, technology became the driving concern for the Seminary, and Dr. Kenneth Boyd replaced Dr. Faupel as the Dean of Information Services. Dr. Boyd had served as the head of technology since 1981 for the campus, but in August of 2003 the B.L. Fisher Library and Technological Services merged. In the process, the B.L. Fisher Library became more focused on digital materials and meeting the technological needs of library users. The strong academically-minded library staff retired or left for other positions. Dr. John Waters had left earlier, but was followed by the retirement of John Seery in July of 2003 and the relocation of Dr. D. William Faupel and Dr. William Kostlevy to other institutions. This necessitated training a new group of young librarians inhouse which included: Paul Tippey, Jared Porter, Joy Blankenship, and Robert Danielson. In the process, library professionals lost their full faculty standing, which was replaced with a non-voting faculty associate status.²⁵ The era of full academic integration of librarians with the institution was replaced with a service-oriented model. The physical appearance of the library and its services became more important than the collection itself. Donations of book collections dropped to levels seen back in the 1970s, and purchases of significant collections simply ended. In 2005, the Library did receive a collection of paintings of Dr. Richard Gilmore Douglas, a British artist whose work centered on early Methodist themes, which were primarily used to redecorate the library building.

Within the Archives and Special Collections, new collections were also at a minimum. Some materials came in tied to previous collections, such as the Papers of United Christian Ashrams International in 2008, but few new collections were added. Among the collections which were obtained, the most significant were tied to religion in the former Soviet Union. The Papers of Mark Elliott: Institute of East-West Christian Studies (2005) and the Records of the Russian-American Christian University (2013) form a strong research foundation for this significant historical period. Other significant collections included the Shelhamer Family Papers (2008), the Papers of Gerald Anderson (2008), and the Papers of Roger Hedlund (2010). Both of the latter were significant missiologists, but with the exception of the Shelhamer Papers, little material was obtained related to the Holiness Movement, which was the historic center of the Seminary and the foundation of archival collections.

In 2005, the Seminary also launched a Ph.D. program in Biblical Studies, with a sizable grant from the Amos Family Foundation, and a

portion of this was designated for Ph.D. level collection development in this area. This brought in an important source of financial support for developing a Ph.D. level collection alongside of the Beeson gift which continued to fund the Ph.D. collection in Mission and Evangelism during this period. The Beeson gift was ended in 2012 (although the endowment continued), creating another crisis in terms of the collection and maintenance of Ph.D. level materials in missions and evangelism. These funds, along with the experience and knowledge of Don Butterworth, effectively prevented the growth of the collection from being completely separated from a working knowledge of how the collection was used. The Technical Services side of the Library had been relocated to become part of the Technology side of Information Services during the 2003 merger.

In 2010 Dr. Boyd retired, and the library was once more split from technology services, but it was merged again shortly after Dr. Paul Tippey became the Dean of Library and Technology Services. The period from 2003-2010 had been difficult for the collection in terms of donations, gifts, and purchases. The library did emerge with a stronger understanding of the role of technology, a more modern organization, and a renovated building, but in terms of the collection itself, this was definitely one of the lower periods in the history of the library at Asbury Theological Seminary.



Janice Huber, Information Commons Manager at the circulation desk of the B. L. Fisher Library in 2011

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For the Florida Library during this period, several key events relating to collections occurred after 2010, and included the opening of the Justo González Center in the Fall of 2011. This was part of an emphasis on Spanish language resources, which were housed primarily at the Florida Library from the start of the Florida Campus. This was particularly important for the growing Latino-Latina Studies Program started in 2001. In 2012, the Harry Hoosier Center for Black Studies was also created in the Florida Library as a place to house collections of material related to African-American Studies.

One of the most important donations at the end of this time period was the donation of the KIRTAS KABIS III scanner in 2012. This allowed for the library to be more actively involved in digitization projects involving historic material. The digitization of *The Pentecostal Herald* and books from the Pentecostal Publishing Company became possible, as well as the development of First Fruits Press in 2012, which allowed the library to both publish material and promote material from the historic Holiness Movement globally online.

2013-2023

Under the leadership of Dr. Tippey, the library collection has begun to make a comeback, while still incorporating advances in technology and digital access to information. This decade has been full of challenges, and of course, as the most recent period of time, its role in the history of the library is still not solidified or well understood. Its place in history will be better understood only by future librarians at Asbury Theological Seminary.

In terms of book donations, this last period of our history has seen a continued decline; however, the number of books being donated in the largest collections has increased. The rise of eBooks and the ease of doing research online has led to fewer students and pastors accumulating and thus donating libraries. Most of the donated materials have come from professors who retired or passed away. The libraries of Dr. Don Demaray (2015), President Ellsworth Kalas (2016), Dr. George Hunter (2017), and Dr. Ken Kinghorn (2017) are examples of these important donations. Likewise, donations from Debbie Mostad (2020) and John Paul Vincent (2021) are related collections of materials made during a golden age of print books. One other important collection was the library of British theologian C.K. Barrett (2016) of 2,444 books, for which the library paid \$2,000 to cover shipping from England.

In terms of the Archives and Special Collections, the number of significant collections has increased. In 2016 Asbury became the home for the extensive Records of the Institute of Religion and Democracy, including the Presidential Papers of Diana Knippers, documenting the role of Conservative Christianity in American politics. This collection, once again puts Asbury in a place of national prominence in religious archives. Other important smaller collections of significance include the Records of Ichthus Ministries, Inc. (the oldest outdoor Christian music festival- which was made of several smaller collections coming together after the festival ended), the Papers of T. B. Arnold (an important radical Holiness leader) (2017), the Papers of Mabel Lossing Jones (the wife of E. Stanley Jones), the Records of the Indian Springs Holiness Camp Meeting (2021), and the Papers of Ruth Tipton (focusing on mission material from Papua New Guinea) (2020).

However, the most significant collection in terms of the archives has been material related to the Christian Endeavor Society. These collections include the Records of the International Christian Endeavor Society (2016), the Records of the World Christian Endeavor Society (2015), the Records of the Irish Christian Endeavor Society (2018), and the Records of the Texas Christian Endeavor Society (2019). This collection, once processed, will move Asbury Theological Seminary into a world class level of archival collections. Christian Endeavor is still active globally and these collections open the possibility of future collections and researchers far beyond any other collection we currently own. This collection is truly an exciting, significant collection with long-term implications.

Challenges in this period have included the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, with the closing of the library and the campus for a short period of time. This moved the library into a greater focus on digital resources to meet the needs of distance education. It also led to fewer donations and less ability for travel and collecting materials for the archives. Another challenge was the closing of the Florida Campus in 2022, which has also created work in dealing with the Florida Library and moving needed material back to the B.L. Fisher Library and disposing of the remaining volumes. The most recent collection has been the Papers of Dr. Charles Edwin Jones, one of the foremost authorities on the Holiness Movement, which came in late 2022.

The importance of technological librarianship and digital collections is an essential area for providing access to students, faculty, and staff, and so this is rightfully a focus of the modern collection. Making wise

budgetary choices to maintain and grow a collection to support Ph.D. level research is also essential. Yet, increasingly digital material is becoming more and more abundant and available. The real value of any future academic research library is going to lie in its access to unique primary source material found in its archives and special collections. This is the source of Ph.D. dissertations and the draw for high level academic scholars and faculty. The library also functions in a crucial way to help students evaluate and access the *right* information and not just *any* information in our modern age with its overabundance of unreliable information. Being able to critically assess information is part of the task, and teaching these skills to students is more essential than ever before. So, while building the collection and providing immediate access is critical, both are really just stepping stones to building a stronger academic community at Asbury Theological Seminary for the next 100 years.

The archives of the B.L. Fisher library are open to researchers and works to promote research in the history of Methodism and the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. Images, such as these, provide one vital way to bring history to life. Preservation of such material is often time consuming and costly, but are essential to helping fulfill Asbury Theological Seminary's mission. If you are interested in donating items of historic significance to the archives of the B.L. Fisher Library, or in donating funds to help purchase or process significant collections, please contact the archivist at archives@asburyseminary.edu.

End notes

¹ All images used courtesy of the Archives of the B.L. Fisher Library of Asbury Theological Seminary who own all copyrights to these digital images, unless otherwise noted. Please contact them directly if interested in obtaining permission to reuse these images.

² A collection like that at Asbury Theological Seminary is not built by one person, and so this essay is dedicated to the memory and honor of the library directors of the past and present: Lena Barbara Nofcier (1895-1988), Susan A. Schulz (1911-2011), Onva K. Boshears (1939-), Dr. D. William Faupel (1944-), Dr. Kenneth A. Boyd (1949-), and Dr. Paul A. Tippey (1977-). There are a host of other library workers also responsible for the building and cataloging of this collection to make it usable, but there is not space to list them all here. Yet the collection itself remains as a lasting tribute to their hard work and effort in helping to train "sanctified men and women" for the work of the Kingdom of God.

³ H.C. Morrison, "The Theological Seminary at Asbury College, Part II." *The Pentecostal Herald*, February 20, 1924: 8.

⁴ Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, *The Story of Asbury Theological Seminary* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2010): 49.

⁵ Dean F.H. Larabee, "An Appeal for Books." *The Pentecostal Herald*, January 1, 1941: 4.

⁶ Howard Fenimore Shipps, *A Short History of Asbury Theological Seminary*, (Wilmore, KY: First Fruits Press) 2013 (originally 1963): 59-60.

⁷ Ernest Edwin LeMaster appears to be a student who graduated in 1947, but it is not clear from the documents when he served in the role of librarian or for how long.

⁸ Shipps, *A Short History*, 60.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Jeanne Cannella Schmitzer, "The Pack Horse Library Project of Eastern Kentucky: 1936-1943." Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, 1998: 22-23. https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/2236/

¹¹ Ibid., 27.

¹² Ibid., 28-29.

¹³ Cf. Donald C. Boyd, "The Book Women of Kentucky: The WPA Pack Horse Library Project, 1936-1943." *Libraries and the Cultural Record*, vol 42 (2): 111-128 (2007).

¹⁴ Robert Owen Fraley, "An Historical Survey of Asbury Theological Seminary." Master of Religious Education Dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary (1949).

¹⁵ Schultz served as Associate Director for a short time in 1967-1969 when Onva K. Boshears, Jr. became the Library Director, but she resumed the position when he left.

¹⁶ These quotes are from Susan Schultz, the library director as she was preparing to retire in 1978. They are recorded in the 1977-1978 annual library report to the President and Board on page one.

¹⁷ Shipps, *A Short History*, 61-62.

¹⁸ The 1977-78 Annual Library Report, Susan Schultz: 3.

¹⁹ 1970 *Bulletin of Asbury Theological Seminary*.

²⁰ 1971 *Bulletin of Asbury Theological Seminary*, 14.

²¹ Dayton's works include: *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (1976), *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (1987), and *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage* (2014), among many other articles and papers.

²² Faupel's work includes: *The Everlasting Gospel: The Significance of Eschatology in the Development of Pentecostal Thought* (1996) as well as other important papers and contributions to other edited works.

²³ Bundy's work includes: *Holiness and Pentecostal Movements Intertwined Pasts, Presents, and Futures* with Geordan Hammond and David Sang-ehil Han (2022), *Spirit-Filled Protestantism* with Luther Jeremiah Oconer (2017), *Visions of Apostolic Mission: Scandinavian Pentecostal Mission to 1935* (2009) as well as many other papers and presentations.

²⁴ These papers have been republished by the library's First Fruits Press and are freely available online: Donald W. Dayton, *The American Holiness Movement: A Bibliographic Introduction* (<https://place.asburyseminary.edu/firstfruitspapers/3/>), David W. Faupel, *The American Pentecostal Movement: A Bibliographical Essay* (<https://place.asburyseminary.edu/firstfruitspapers/5/>), David D. Bundy, *Keswick: A Bibliographic Introduction to the Higher Life Movements* (<https://place.asburyseminary.edu/firstfruitspapers/2/>). It is significant that these three items together have been downloaded about 12,000 times to date, demonstrating the ongoing need for such resources.

²⁵ This process actually began in the late 1980s with Dr. McKenna's belief that librarians were not "real" faculty unless they taught classes. Librarians which already had faculty rank were grandfathered in, such as John Seery, but newly hired librarians were not. The idea at the time was that faculty associate levels would be equal to the faculty levels, including pay and privileges, but this was ignored at the time and never spelled out in the faculty handbook, and so when those holding faculty status left (except for the Library Director, which maintained faculty status), professional librarians were effectively reduced to service positions without professional recognition.



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Book Reviews

God at Work in the World

Pachau, Lalsangkima
Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic
2022, 177 pp., paper, \$22.99
ISBN 978-1-5409-6136-5

Reviewed by Michael D Simants

In his new book, *God at Work in the World*, Lalsangkima Pachau seeks to clear “a pathway in the thick jungle of theological thoughts,” leading the reader to a “theology of mission” (15). Consequently, Pachau’s work winds its way through various theological thoughts, traditions, and individuals, exploring various soteriological, missiological, ecclesiological, and anthropological ideas. He aims to present the reader with a framework for thinking about the theology of mission.

The book opens by setting the background of what is to come, exploring the idea of God’s mission in the world, and defining theology of mission as an understanding of God that “has been passed down through the tradition of theological discussions” (15). The first chapter explores the doctrine of the Trinity from various perspectives, including Kant, Tillich, Barth, and Rahner. He also creatively engages with the theandric ideas of Raimundo Panikkar and Brahmabandhab Upadhyay’s connection of the Trinity with the Hindu concept of Satchitananda. Pachau then turns his attention to the *missio Dei* construct, and its place in Trinitarian and Incarnational thought. In this discussion, he pays particular attention to the work of T.F. Torrance.

From there, Pachau spends the following two chapters exploring his central theme of soteriology. He takes this theme into two parts: Biblical Images and Christological Motifs (Chapter 2) and Dimensions and Scope

(Chapter 3). Throughout this discussion, Pachuau continues engaging with various theologians and theological traditions to create typologies of soteriology. In Chapter 2, he creates a series of frameworks that build upon each other to outline various soteriological theories ranging from liberation readings of salvation to ideas of new birth and ecological renewal. In Chapter 3, Pachuau frames the debate regarding the universalness of salvation in “two major circles” (96): pluralism and the fate of the unevangelized. He reaches an “inconclusive conclusion,” arguing that the “overemphasis” of either extreme “sacrifices interpretive credibility” (108).

In Chapter 4, Pachuau turns his attention to ecclesiology by using Nicea’s definition of the church as “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic” as his outline. He offers a historical reading of ecumenical ecclesiology, calling ecumenism one of the most significant movements in church history. He then explores a variety of “analogical images” that includes Dulles’ five models, Sherman’s three rubrics, and Jenson’s characterizations of church, which he uses as the framework for the remainder of the chapter. In this vein, he explores the church as God’s covenant people, the Body of Christ, and the Spirit-led servant-herald of the Kingdom.

Finally, Pachuau engages with Kathryn Tanner and others to explore connections between theology and culture. Here he draws on Stephen Long’s work to build a framework of culture’s place in the theological discussion. He then re-centers the discussion moving from cultural to theological anthropology. In this part of the discussion, he explores Nicean and Chalcedonian Christology to argue for consideration of the Incarnation as God coming in the person of Jesus in a particular place, culture, and time. He offers this as a hermeneutic for reading mission and human culture, concluding that in the particularities of Jesus’ incarnation, we can see a model of God working in the world.

While his engagement with non-majority world scholars could be more robust, especially concerning ecclesiology and anthropology, Lalsangkima Pachuau’s work provides a helpful and wide-ranging literature review of four crucial issues in formulating a theology of mission. By carefully articulating various views on the Trinity, soteriology, ecclesiology, and anthropology, he guides the reader through a complex jungle of thought, providing the reader with a series of typologies and frameworks that are helpful in the reading and creation of a robust theology of mission.

Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament: The Evidence for Early Composition

Bernier, Jonathan

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2022, 336 pp., paper, \$23.49

ISBN: 978-1-5409-6180-8

Reviewed by Alberto I. Bonilla-Giovanetti

Jonathan Bernier's *Rethinking the Dates of the New Testament* provides a fresh look at the dating of the New Testament (NT) texts and key early non-canonical Christian texts. His methodology is striking for its simplicity and the extent of its implications if adopted by the scholarly community.

The book is divided into front matter (Acknowledgments, Abbreviations, and an Introduction), five parts that are composed by five different literary corpora of the New Testament and early Christian literature, and back matter (Conclusion, Bibliography, Author, Scripture and Ancient Writings, and Subject Indexes). The five parts are: "The Synoptic Gospels and Acts"; "The Johannine Tradition"; "The Pauline Corpus"; "Hebrews and the Letters of James, Peter, and Jude"; and "Early Extracanonical Literature" (i.e., 1 Clement, the Didache, the Epistle of Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermas).

In his Introduction, Bernier lays out his methodology, his presuppositions, a brief history of scholarship regarding the dating of the NT documents, and tentative conclusions. Each subsequent part is the application of the methodology to each NT corpus. (This review will focus mainly on Bernier's methodology and will give examples of its application.) The author begins by noting that the NT as we have it today is inextricably interlinked to itself, so that redating one NT book would require the redating of other ones (1). Thus, a synthetic approach is needed. Based on his research, Bernier will argue for a "lower" chronology despite the majority of scholarship leaning on a "middle" chronology for dating NT texts. Bernier concludes that, except for the undisputed Pauline letters, "the majority of the texts that were eventually incorporated into the New Testament corpus were likely written twenty to thirty years earlier than is typically supposed by contemporary biblical scholars" (1).

While most of modern critical scholars argue for middle and late chronologies (3–8), even dating some books into the early 100s AD, Bernier follows John A. T. Robinson’s instincts as presented in his *Redating the New Testament* (published in 1976). This was the only systematic presentation for a “lower” chronology in the twentieth century—Bernier seeks to be the first in the twenty-first century. While greatly appreciative of Robinson’s argument and approach, Bernier finds some problems in his methodology—namely, arguments from silence regarding AD 70, the “Neronian error,” and ineffective presentation of the data (8–9).

Bernier seeks to remedy these issues by clearly defining the question at hand and evaluating the data clearly and arriving at defensible conclusions. To define the question, Bernier seeks to know when the completed texts of the NT were written. He will seek to answer this question by understanding synchronization between NT texts by using the common critical methodologies of “textual, reception, source, and redaction criticisms” (23). These should at least narrow down the possibilities. Beyond this, Bernier seeks to use the historical context of the early church (contextualization) to understand when NT texts were written based on how their views of Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology, and other such doctrines align with what is historically known to have been the case in different periods of the early Jesus movement (26–27). Finally, Bernier seeks to discern the authorial biographies of the NT writers and decide if the traditional authors are the actual authors or not (27). After these data are gathered, Bernier will seek to find answers that are as free from logical fallacies as possible and provide solid evidence for conclusions that can explain the data in the simplest manner (cf. Occam’s razor [28–29]). While certainly interacting with relevant secondary literature, Bernier will seek to lean on primary sources as much as possible to arrive at his conclusions (30–31).

Since Bernier systematically goes through his methodology on each of the NT corpora, I will choose one of these to exemplify how he proceeds (you can read the rest of his conclusions in his book). The Gospel of John is usually dated around AD 90, but Bernier dates it between AD 60 and 70 (87–111). Why? First, he does the heavy work of synchronization. External attestation of early NT manuscripts and early Christian reception of John suggest composition of the Gospel post-120 to be unlikely, though not impossible (89). The relationship of John to the Synoptics is sufficiently complex and ambiguous that no solid conclusions may be arrived at to date

John (90). After these, Bernier analyzes several passages in John's Gospel that may be relevant to its dating (90–102): Peter's death (John 21:18–19), the Beloved Disciple's death (John 21:22–23), passages that describe synagogue expulsions (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2), the Temple being raised after the third day (John 2:19–22), the proper place to worship (John 4:21), and the pool of Bethsaida (John 5:2). Bernier considers the narrative of the deaths of Peter and the Beloved Disciple to further neither the pre- nor post-70 dating for John since the data are ambiguous and could be read to favor either possibility, thus he considers them "nonprobative." Regarding the synagogue expulsion passages, Bernier argues that scholarship's comparison of these Johannine narratives with the Birkat Haminim (attested ca. 85) are faulty. After reproducing the text of this prayer against heretics and an early account from the Talmud, Bernier concludes that this prayer and John lack thematic parallels and have difficulties with dating, since it is quite possible that the Birkat Haminim postdates John. Thus, the Birkat Haminim are nonprobative for Bernier. For archaeological and interpretive reasons, Bernier considers the narratives of Jesus raising the Jerusalem temple and his conversation with the woman in Samaria to be nonprobative since it is not clear whether reading them as texts from before or after 70 would have greater explanatory power. One data point that proves key for Bernier is the reference to the pool of Bethsaida. John 5:2 states that "there *is* a pool . . . *having* five porticoes" (NASB; emphasis added). Bernier goes through the grammatical and archeological data to sustain that the verbs *eimi* and *echō* should be considered as present temporally, not just grammatically, which suggests that the pool was there at the time of the writing of John. This is significant if it is assumed that the pool was probably destroyed in the Roman invasion that culminated in AD 70, though this is not certain. Thus, this passage provides Bernier with his strongest positive synchronic evidence that John was written before 70.

Now, regarding the historical context of John, Bernier evaluates the author's knowledge of pre-70 Palestine, the scholarly understanding of the development of the Johannine tradition, whether or not there were proto-gnostic elements addressed in John, the development of Johannine Christology (102–08). Bernier considers John's knowledge of pre-70 Judea, Samaria, and Galilee to be interesting, but nonprobative. The author likewise considers the Johannine tradition to be unhelpful to date the Gospel since there are elements of circular reasoning for arriving at absolute dates. Since many of the scholarly comparisons of John with Gnosticism were done

before the discoveries in Qumran and Nag Hammadi, Bernier considers Gnosticism to not have influenced John, since it is more likely a second century development. Johannine Christology is traditionally thought to be high and late, but after the works of Richard Bauckham and Larry Hurtado, among others, it is equally if not more plausible to argue high Christology came at earlier dates, thus making it unnecessary to date John to later dates for his high Christology. Since there are similarities with Paul's high Christology, Bernier dates John no earlier than around 60, but considers Christology to be a hard element to use to date John.

Finally, Bernier goes over the authorial biography of John. He considers the author of John to have been an actual "John," but the question remains which John from the NT it was. After going through the evidence, Bernier considers the author's identity to be inconclusive to date the Gospel.

Thus, Bernier concludes that John was written between 60 and 70 based on John 5:2 and the pool of Bethesda being in existence at the time of writing, that there is no evidence in the Gospel that is more intelligible after 70 than before 70, and John's Christology having similarities with Paul's (111). Bernier acknowledges that it would be preferable to have stronger evidence for dating John, but he does not wish to go beyond what the evidence suggests.

Now, to evaluate Bernier's method and conclusions. It is worth noting that Bernier's methodology is not entirely groundbreaking in that he introduces no new methods. Rather, he utilizes familiar methodologies and reapplies them to the question of dating the NT. This is significant, however, if one considers why many NT scholars arrive at such later dates for the NT texts. If Bernier is not applying a new method, not utilizing new data, and not arguing beyond what the data can sustain, what does this suggest about those who argue for middle or higher dates of composition? Bernier's approach is minimalistic in a way, in that he does not wish to provide complex theories with possible, or even plausible elements, but that are ultimately unprovable. In this way Bernier provides a subtle and implicit challenge to scholars who base their interpretive conclusions of NT texts on hypothetical grounds. For this Bernier is to be commended.

Likewise, Bernier strongly focuses on primary sources from the NT and early Christian literature, as well as wider Greco-Roman and Second Temple Jewish texts and realia. While he helpfully interacts with secondary sources as necessary, he does well to avoid the interminable debates that scholars have with each other and instead he goes back to the primary data

once more. In this sense, his inductive approach to the primary source data helpfully brings his audience back to the most important aspects regarding the question of dating the NT.

A possible critique, however weak, is that at times Bernier could have given more evidence or explanation for his conclusions. For example, Bernier argues that John's knowledge of pre-70 Palestine should be considered non-probative since the Gospel would be intelligible equally well if it was written before or after 70 (103). However, one of his main arguments for a pre-70 composition of John is that the author understood the pool of Bethesda to be still in place in pre-70 Jerusalem, which would obviously mean the author had knowledge of the city before its destruction. His dismissal of geography and topography for the dating of John may have been abrupt and warranted further justification, especially considering one of his main arguments depended on these data.

In conclusion, Bernier provides a challenging argument to the academic community. If scholars wish to make a strong argument for an interpretive or theological point that depends on a middle or higher dating system, they should reckon with Bernier's work. His simple and profound arguments should not be ignored—they should be evaluated and even challenged, something the author himself invites (280). Bernier's work is a helpful starting point for scholars who wish to reevaluate what many in the scholarly community take for granted.

Romans: A Theological and Pastoral Commentary

Gorman, Michael J.

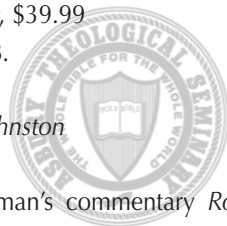
Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

2022, 325 pp., hardcover, \$39.99

ISBN-978-0-8028-7762-8.

Reviewed by Kenny R. Johnston

Michael J. Gorman's commentary *Romans: A Theological and Pastoral Commentary* is a refreshing take on Paul's letter that will prove pleasing and helpful to the pastoral theologian within the Wesleyan tradition. Gorman grounds his discussion theologically in a *participationist Trinitarianism* whereby believers are shaped and formed as they mutually participate in the life of the trinitarian persons (15, 39–42). He grounds his



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discussion pastorally in *transformationalist cruciformity* whereby believers experience transformed lives that take the moral shape of the cross of Christ (11, 16–17). These two themes pervade the entire commentary. “Salvation,” he writes, “means participation and transformation; it means life through death and resurrection; it means becoming more and more Godlike by becoming more and more Christlike,” (38). Structurally, he approaches the text of the epistle as a “series of arguments” in the form of diatribe set “within an overall careful plan” for the church at Rome (32–3). He divides the epistle into five sections set between an opening and a closing (33–5). At the end of each section of the commentary are a summary of important points, pastoral reflections and questions for further discussion, and bibliographies for further reading that range on a variety of technical and practical issues related to each section respectively. Additionally, maybe unfortunately, the text of the epistle is not included but is assumed throughout.

Gorman’s book is divided into two primary sections, an introduction and commentary. The fifty-five-page introduction provides the interpretive and methodological sinew of the commentary by disclosing major themes and assumptions that Gorman incorporates when addressing the text. This proves important given that his style of persuasion uses what I can only describe as an *overarching coherence* of the whole utilizing said themes and assumptions. The introduction is further divided into two subsections, one introducing Paul and one introducing the letter to the Romans itself. In the introduction, readers will quickly recognize Gorman’s use of the most influential theological ideas of recent years including G.E. Ladd’s *already not yet* (“now but not yet” 14; see also Gorman’s use of *inauguration* 117–18) distinction alongside of Gordon Fee’s assimilation of the same regarding the age of the Spirit (though he references neither theologian); N.T. Wright’s version of the *new perspective*, *anti-imperialism*, and the use of *grand narrative* thinking (5, 10, 13); and even Matthew Bates’ recent use of “allegiance” as the heart of faith (“what we might call believing allegiance” 15; see also 30–1, 125, 148, and 242). And yet, readers will also quickly pick up on the more ancient Orthodox Trinitarian themes of *perichoresis* and its corollary in *theosis* (see especially 47), which Gorman has written about elsewhere (see Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul’s Narrative Soteriology* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009]). In this book, however, these ancient themes are identified more practically as *mutual indwelling* tending toward Christlike

cruciformity (16, 40–1). Additionally, Gorman lets his readers know that he adopts a *reconstitution* view of Israel as opposed to a *replacement* view in his approach to the epistle (49).

The commentary divides the letter to the Romans by seven sections. The first section (1:1–17) is the opening of the letter that Paul uses to “whet” the appetite of its readers and to “set the stage” by introducing key themes related to the letter’s argument (59, 63). Particularly, these themes are Christocentric *grace* and the obedience of *faith* as conjoined in the Gospel (61–2, 71–3); and the *righteousness* of God as “God’s covenant fidelity to Israel demonstrated in saving power to make things right” (68). In section two (1:18–4:25) Paul is said to be “gospelizing in absentia” (77) whereby he “retrospectively ... views humanity’s dire straits and God’s gracious solution through the lens of the crucified and resurrected Messiah,” (76). Key to this section is the idea of *covenantal dysfunctionism* whereby all persons, Gentile and Jew, are subject to the empire of Sin (77, 80). Section three (5:1–8:39) “[p]rincipally...functions to spell out the multifaceted meaning and character of justification” (143) and progresses along “three sets of narrative antitheses,” (145). The result of Paul’s argument in section three is that “[j]ustification means to experience the fullness of the life of the triune God,” (145, italics original). Section four (9:1–11:36) deals with the problem of Jewish unbelief within a covenantal framework, the conclusion of which is that God has a “habit of demonstrating undeserved mercy in unexpected ways” (229, italics original). Section five (12:1–15:13) explores the life of holiness that is rooted in believing allegiance and which has the form of “resurrectional cruciformity” (242, italics original) working itself out in hospitality (266–7). Section six (15:14–33) takes believing allegiance to the ends of the earth missionally. Finally, the final section is Paul’s closing, and Gorman focuses particularly on Paul’s deliberate inclusion of diversity in his list of people to greet as a demonstration of how “several house churches of Rome embody the Pauline vision of an inclusive community: gentiles and Jews; slave, free, and freedpersons (former slaves); elite and non-elite; men and women; from all corners of the empire” (294).

This commentary will be a cherished volume in any library on Paul’s epistle to the Romans. Furthermore, for pastors in ministry, it should be recommended as a must read for theological grounding and holiness living. This is perhaps the first thing to be said about the volume. It promotes themes that are near and dear to Wesleyan pastors particularly. Transformation for holiness is a central theme defended

throughout the entire work. This is demonstrated in Gorman's perspective on the controversial passage in Romans 7:7–13, which he interprets as a "description of the frustrated human (and especially Jewish) condition apart from Christ in spite of the law" (184). Also, Gorman clearly rejects Calvinistic interpretations of Romans 9–11 in favor of a wider view of the "ongoing universality of the Gospel" (226). Anyone looking for a take on Romans that argues these Wesleyan themes alongside of a participationist Trinitarianism will be excited with this volume.

On the other hand, Gorman's work has two perceivable weaknesses, both related to Romans 9–11. First, his interpretive work on Romans 9 is underwhelming compared to the rest of the commentary. Second, his conclusions on Romans 11 are questionable. In Romans 9, Gorman is so focused on God's surprising and unexpected mercy that he fails to offer a sense-making interpretation of the more concerning aspects of Paul's claims, though plenty are available in the scholarly literature. Compared to the other sections, this one appears to receive much less serious engagement from both Gorman and in reference to the literature in the bibliography section. In Romans 11, he argues for the strong possibility of a Pauline universalism regarding the salvation of the Jews in 11:30–2 (though he gives evidence against such a reading as well). I found Gorman's arguments here a bit unscholarly and unconvincing. Throughout the commentary on Romans 9–11 I was left baffled by the lack of equal theological treatment compared to the rest of his work in the book. Better and more thorough work on this section would have made this an almost flawless commentary.

In the final analysis, Gorman's treatment in this book will become an essential reference for both lay people and scholars who are looking for the larger picture, particularly in the Wesleyan and Methodist traditions. Though needing more clarity on Romans 9–11, it is one of the most satisfying treatments on Romans that is non-technical and accessible to the laity. Readers will not find detailed scholarly discussions on the stickier questions surrounding Romans, but they will find a very compelling theological vision for Paul's letters as a whole. I can honestly conclude that this is a new favorite and I am now looking forward to more of Gorman's work.

Religion's Power: What Makes It Work

Wuthnow, Robert

New York, NY: Oxford University Press

2023, 248 pp., hardcover, \$35.00

ISBN: 978-0-19-765253-4

Reviewed by Zachariah S. Motts

Robert Wuthnow has created an excellent sociology of religion textbook for understanding the various exercises of power within religious contexts. In *Religion's Power: What Makes It Work*, Wuthnow shows a magisterial command of the discourse within sociological scholarship related to power, giving the reader an overview of the field as well as a superb source to mine for further reading. The framework within the text also provides a lucid structure to begin thinking through the various manifestations of power within the religious sphere.

How power works, what it means, where it comes from, and who it benefits are not easy questions to answer. That can be especially so in religious settings where the use of power can be obfuscated or mystified by commonly held and strongly defended narratives and normalized practices. While this is not totally unique to religion, there is a certain flavor and unique features to the flow of power in this area. Wuthnow points out early on that this discussion is not only about abuses of power but will look closely at the use of power in general, the good and the bad. There are many instances of power being used in the name of religion to do both wonderful and terrible things.

The five main chapters give a schematic for thinking through the issues involved. They cover ritual practice, discursive power, institutional power, identity power, and political power, giving multiple facets through which to view power in religious life. What, though, is the concept of power that Wuthnow is piecing apart? He defines it as "the asymmetric capacity that enables a person, group, or whole sector of a population acting in the name of religion to accomplish what it wants" (2). How this asymmetry comes about will be different if the mechanism is ritual, discourse, or some combination. It is easy to spot the asymmetric capacity when we think about hierarchies of religious leaders and laypeople, boundaries around who is and who is not allowed to fulfill roles, choices about the use of money and resources, or discrimination by class, race, gender, or sexuality.

However, it takes a critical eye to see the ways that this imbalance is maintained through time, and Wuthnow directs the reader toward the large and small ways that power is created, maintained, and, often, usurped.

The references and illustrations are dense throughout the book. Usually, the examples of uses of power are brought up in an irenic, neutral style; thought-provoking without being incendiary. There were times where one would expect a hard-hitting example of an abuse of power that easily comes to mind, but the text alludes to these more often than entering into the particulars of a current, controversial debate. There are also places where the text moves very quickly over references, noting rather than delving. In some ways, this leaves a desire for directly confronting more contentious examples and a slower pace to analysis. In other ways, though, one can see how this approach would serve the pedagogical purpose of drawing in a wider audience and would generate classroom discussion, with students bubbling to bring up their own examples and talk about this or that use of power. There are plenty of openings where instructors could push the conversation deeper.

Religion's Power is an insightful work that would shine in a sociology of religion classroom. Though scholarly, critical, and having a bibliography that is impressive in scope, Wuthnow has a style that is approachable and engaging. While touching on subjects that have been the center of volatile and polarized debate, the conversation always stays focused on the topic at hand: growing the skills to recognize and understand uses of power in religious contexts. *Religion's Power* is a worthwhile resource for the professor, the student, and the curious.

What is a Gospel?

Watson, Francis

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans

2022, 353 pp., hardcover, \$49.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-7292-0



Reviewed by Tyler Hallstrom

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Readers versed in the debate concerning the genre of the Gospels readily recognize the long shadow cast over the discussion since the 1992 publication of Richard Burridge's seminal monograph, *What are*

the Gospels?, a shadow that Francis Watson seeks Gospel scholarship to step out of in his evocatively titled 2022 publication, *What is a Gospel?* Whereas Burridge's work focused on the four canonical Gospels, Watson calls for a critical reexamination of "the ancient boundaries that created binary distinctions between 'canonical' and 'apocryphal,' 'orthodox' and heretical'" (xii). Instead, he posits that these boundaries should be erased in order "to view the diverse field of early gospel literature as a single undivided whole," an interrelatedness which constitutes the book's "primary theme" (xii–xiii). Offered as a sequel to his *Gospel Writing* (2013), the present volume is largely a compilation of previously published essays (11 of 14 chapters) brought together in service of answering the question, "What is a Gospel?"

The clearest and most direct answer to this question comes from both the first and last chapters of the book, appropriately titled "What is a Gospel?" (chapter 1) and "A Reply to My Critics" (chapter 14). Although the consensus view since Burridge's work has been to see the Gospels as Greco-Roman biographies, Watson maintains that this thesis is only sustainable if one neglects the noncanonical gospels and the dynamic nature of genre (13). Having redrawn the boundary of investigation to include non-canonical gospels and "gospel-like" texts, such as the Gospels of Thomas, Peter, Mary, etc., he posits that these texts exist within a "new" and "emergent genre" characterized by "(1) a focus on the human, earthly Jesus in his interactions with other humans; (2) an emphasis on his supreme and unsurpassable authority; and (3) direct or indirect attribution to an apostolic or quasi-apostolic source" (1, 13). Aware of the controversial nature of his claims, the final chapter likewise addresses the "substantive criticism" he has received by a number of notable Biblical scholars (279).

The intervening chapters offer a series of wide-ranging and heavily detailed studies on the interrelatedness of early gospel literature. Chapter 2, for example, traces the tradition of Judas Iscariot through the Gospel of Matthew, Acts, Papias, Apollinaris, the Gospel of John, the Gospel of Peter, and the Gospel of Judas. Alternatively, Chapter 4 argues that Luke's use of Matthew, which scholarship has "widely regarded as virtually impossible," should instead be seen as "highly likely" (66). Other topics include the *Epistula Apostolorum* (chapter 7), the conflict between Tertullian and Marcion (chapter 10), the Lindisfarne gospel codex (chapter 11), and Albert Schweitzer's eschatology (chapter 13). Since the volume is a collection of

individual essays rather than a carefully structured monograph wherein each chapter builds upon and extends the argument of the previous chapter, one disadvantage is the sense of disjointedness that attends to the work as a whole. Watson has attempted to alleviate this issue by adding italicized introductions to each chapter to show how the material bears upon the central thesis, though with limited success, and a concluding chapter summarizing and synthesizing the material would have added to its strengths. Nevertheless, while not all will agree to Watson's daring proposals, all may appreciate the rigor and erudition manifest in his various studies which already have and will continue to provoke discussion within Gospel scholarship. As he rightly concludes, "It is never a bad thing to be made to think again" (303).

Reading the Prophets as Christian Scripture: A Literary, Canonical, and Theological Introduction

Tully, Eric J.,

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2022, 432 pp., hardcover, \$49.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-9973-1

Reviewed by Marshall C. Johns

The section of Christian scripture entitled "The Prophets" encompasses a corpus that can, simply, be described as "enormous." The Prophets possess enormous content, several hundred pages in most Bibles. They also proffer an enormous amount of diversity; genre distinctions are myriad. This is not to mention the enormous, though understandable and expected, ideological diversity among more than a dozen implied authors covering, conservatively, a period of roughly four hundred years that saw no fewer than three major, oppressive, foreign regime changes. And, considering the majority of the written prophets' work is in an "elevated" or "poetic" style, the task of interpreting any given prophetic oracle (let alone book!) can require an enormous lift on the part of the interpreter. Eric J. Tully's *Reading the Prophets as Christian Scripture: A Literary, Canonical, and Theological Introduction*, however,

is not enormous, nor does it seek to crush its reader under the potential enormity of its task.

Tully's *Reading the Prophets* is a compact book that seeks to survey the entirety of what is termed "prophetic literature" in Protestant, Christian Bibles. In this endeavor, Tully is, by necessity, brief and selective; to "distill" something requires an outside apparatus to heighten desired aspects of the finished product at the expense of "incidental" aspects, and this survey is certainly a distillation. Tully is not to be faulted in this; *Reading the Prophets* is one volume within Baker Academic's burgeoning "Reading Christian Scripture" series which seeks to distill the proliferation of biblical studies work termed "biblical theology." The vagueries of this nomenclature notwithstanding, Tully's work fits within what this series hopes to provide: "interdisciplinary" approaches to the Protestant scriptures for introductory classes.

Many features of this book, and series, should be praised. Though not unique to the series, Tully's contribution includes helpful charts for issues of chronology and full-color inset texts with visual aids to manageably chunk sections of in-text reading. In fact, the series has these inset text boxes flagged with individual color-coded icons based on different scholarly approaches to queue readers to the correct supplemental material; for example, a reader may find icons of a yellow book and a group of tan figures at the end of a paragraph to signal them to both literary and reception history notes that the author has deemed helpful for the biblical passage just discussed. Other color-coded inset categories include "canonical connections," "historical matters," "theological issues," and "thinking visually." Alongside this are the choices to use endnotes rather than footnotes, to have maps strategically placed throughout the chapters, to have chapters use tables to visualize aspects of structural importance (e.g. outlines of biblical books), and to conclude chapters with proposed discussion questions. Thus, if only for the overt pedagogical decisions in the formatting of the material, Tully's text should be praised. It is clear that this series is thoughtfully incorporating new and developing instructional research, and any tool that seeks to engage more students is worth familiarizing oneself with.

Reading the Prophets is divided into three major sections, though the first two ("The Context of the Prophets" and "The Old Testament Prophet") can, for the sake of review, be taken together. As is often the way with scholarship, it is here that the dreary, yet important, work of establishing

definitions and the construction of a framework will set the trajectory for both the project and its impending critiques. Tully situates the prophetic tradition both “theologically” and “historically” before beginning the task of defining what a prophet is/does in scripture; Tully gives an overview of “covenant theology” (reminiscent of Gentry and Wellum’s *Kingdom through Covenant*) for the theological context and walks briskly through Israel’s history from “the wilderness” to the postexilic period for the historical context. He then defines a prophet as someone “chosen by God to receive his [sic] message and then to proclaim it to an audience in a particular historical setting” (58), requiring that a prophet be selected from the covenant community by God to speak a specific message dictated by God. This definition deftly navigates many pitfalls for Tully’s overall goals. Many Christian interpreters desire a position that sees the ancient Hebrew prophets as distinct from diviners of the ANE, especially since (outside of Deuteronomy 18:19-22) the understanding of what an ancient Hebrew prophet was/did seems more implied by narratives than by strict prescription in the Hebrew scriptures, and Tully’s definition can concretize this position. Though with a self-admitted lack of consistency across all the prophetic books, Tully also uses a five-fold formal schema for understanding prophetic writings: 1) Accusation of covenant unfaithfulness in the past, 2) Warning of God’s judgment in the near future, 3) Call to repent/prediction of restoration in the near future, 4) Announcement of restoration in the eschatological future, and 5) Announcement of final judgment in the eschatological future. Tully closes this section with respective overviews of “persuasive strategies” used by prophets and the process of canonization of prophetic works. These two chapters do leave versed practitioners wanting, but are helpful guides for introductory material; an example is the limited exposure to theories of poetics or redaction in their respective chapters.

The third section, “The Prophetic Books,” is understandably the largest section. It is also a very predictable section given the definitions and framework laid out by Tully in the first two sections. If one is familiar with more traditional or “evangelical” approaches to prophetic literature, much of this section can be predicted. Tully, for example, wants to hold to a singular “historical prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem” (152), bristles at the conclusions (that are largely agreed upon by critical scholars) of redaction criticism related to dating books in the Book of the Twelve, and considers Daniel 1) prophetic literature that is 2) predictive. That is to say, while individual points of exegesis may differ from the likes of J. Daniel Hays

or Robert B. Chisholm, Tully's thrust is similar. To return to the idea of *Reading the Prophets* as a distillation, this thrust is due to the "outside apparatus" used to heighten the desired aspects of this project: An overtly "Christological" framework of approaching the Hebrew scriptures. Tully, to his credit, does hedge in some areas where previous interpreters within conservative, Protestant thought have not; his tempered approach to "messianic" aspects early in Isaiah is an example, where he cautions readers against too quickly assuming Jesus to be the fulfillment of the sign-acts of chapters seven and nine. Said differently, Tully does (expectantly) take every uncontroversial opportunity to bring out messianic or Christocentric approaches to interpreting the Prophets, but he does not do so in areas where it would be an overstatement.

Considering the pedagogical strengths of this book mentioned above, the main critique Tully's work suffers from is, ironically, pedagogical. Tully seems to be more bent on answering the questions he creates for the text than creating space for the texts read in Christian communities to raise questions for readers, unintentionally implying that his Protestant reading of the Prophets is the reading of the Prophets. There is an overall lack of engagement with global and historic voices, something that could have been leveraged quite easily given the use of prophetic literature in early church theologizing and sermons. This lack of inclusion of the early church also silences any mention of the different ordering of the Book of the Twelve in the LXX; though somewhat of an open question, scholars who see the Twelve as a singular unit do agree that this different order in the first six books (Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah in the LXX vs. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah in the MT) changes the theological thrust of the Twelve, something that would leave out innumerable "reception history" dialogue partners from modern scholarship and the early church, since the LXX was overwhelmingly the text they used while engaging "Hebrew scripture." Put succinctly: Tully's pedagogical decision to distill what "Christian scripture" is (i.e. the Protestant canon) dictates the questions addressed herein, at points to the detriment of a holistic approach to issues in interpretation.

Another critique should be noted. Tully does at times go out of his way to "modernize" aspects of societal sin and injustice, particularly around the issue of sexual and gender expression. Though dressed in polite language, this book does harbor a "traditionalist" bent that may leave a bad impression on queer Christians and their allies. It is striking that Tully foists

this approach to this issue upon the text; prophetic literature obviously has much to say about infidelity through the literary foil of sexual expression, but this corpus is relatively silent about the “specifics” of sexual ethics. By comparison, however, social injustice perpetrated through economic systems and the unrighteous individuals within them is a topic the Prophets speak to through both literary foil and specific examples. Even with these critiques, Tully’s *Reading the Prophets* would be a welcomed addition to introductions to prophetic literature at private, undergraduate Christian institutions, or even adult Sunday School classes for local congregations.



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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.

Adams, Edward, Dorothea H. Bertschmann, Stephen J. Chester, Jonathan A. Linebaugh, and Todd D. Still, eds.

2023 *The New Perspective on Grace: Paul and the Gospel after Paul and the Gift*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7891-5. Price: \$64.99.

Allen, Holly Catterton, Christine Lawton, and Cory L. Seibel

2023 *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community, and Worship*. Second edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5140-0142-4. Price: \$40.00.

Barrett, Matthew

2023 *The Reformation as Renewal: Retrieving the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic. ISBN: 978-0-3100-9755-6. Price: \$59.99.

Barron, Robert, Scott W. Hahn, and James R. A. Merrick

2023 *Engaging Catholic Doctrine: Essays in Honor of Matthew Levering*. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic. ISBN: 978-1-6458-5306-0. Price: \$54.95.

Beale, G. K.

2023 *Union with the Resurrected Christ: Eschatological New Creation and New Testament Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6042-9. Price: \$49.99.

- Bergsma, John S. and Jeffrey L. Morrow
2023 *Murmuring Against Moses: The Contentious History and Contested Future of Pentateuchal Studies*. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic. ISBN: 978-1-6458-5149-3. Price: \$39.95.
- Boyle, John F.
2023 *Aquinas on Scripture: A Primer*. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic. ISBN: 978-1-6458-5265-0. Price: \$34.95.
- Campbell, Constantine R.
2023 *The Letter to the Ephesians*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7585-3. Price: \$45.00.
- Chalk, Casey J.
2023 *The Obscurity of Scripture: Disputing Sola Scriptura and the Protestant Notion of Biblical Perspicuity*. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic. ISBN: 978-1-6458-5227-8. Price: \$24.95.
- Collins, Helen
2023 *Charismatic Christianity: Introducing Its Theology through the Gifts of the Spirit*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6390-1. Price: \$24.99.
- Crean, Fr. Thomas, O.P.
2023 *Vindicating the Filioque: The Church Fathers at the Council of Florence*. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic. ISBN: 978-1-6458-5317-6. Price: \$49.95.
- Dorrien, Gary
2023 *The Spirit of American Liberal Theology: A History*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. ISBN: 978-0-6642-6841-1. Price: \$90.00.
- Félix-Jäger, Steven, and Yoon Shin
2023 *Renewing Christian Worldview: A Holistic Approach for Spirit-Filled Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6591-2. Price: \$26.99.
- Finley, John Desilva, ed.
2022 *Sexual Identity: The Harmony of Philosophy, Science, and Revelation*. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic. ISBN: 978-1-6458-5189-90. Price: \$24.95.
- Henze, Matthias, and David Lincicum, eds.
2023 *Israel's Scriptures in Early Christian Writings: The Use of the Old Testament in the New*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7444-3. Price: \$79.99.

- Ireland, Daryl R., ed.
2023 *Visions of Salvation: Chinese Christian Posters in an Age of Revolution*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press. ISBN: 978-1-4813-1624-8. Price: \$69.99.
- Johns, Cheryl Bridges
2023 *Re-enchanting the Text: Discovering the Bible as Sacred, Dangerous, and Mysterious*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6513-4. Price: \$22.99.
- Kantor, Benjamin
2023 *The Pronunciation of New Testament Greek: Judeo-Palestinian Greek Phonology and Orthography from Alexander to Islam*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7831-1. Price: \$99.99.
- Kantor, Benjamin
2023 *A Short Guide to the Pronunciation of New Testament Greek*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7832-8. Price: \$14.99.
- Klink, Edward W., III
2023 *The Beginning and End of All Things: A Biblical Theology of Creation and New Creation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8308-5522-3. Price: \$24.00.
- Macchia, Frank D.
2023 *Introduction to Theology: Declaring the Wonders of God*. Foundations for Spirit-Filled Christianity. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6337-6. Price: \$24.99.
- McCall, Thomas H., Caleb T. Friedman, and Matt T. Friedman
2023 *The Doctrine of Good Works: Reclaiming a Neglected Protestant Teaching*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6520-2. Price: \$27.99.
- McKnight, Scot, Lunn H. Cohick, and Nijay K. Gupta, eds.
2023 *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*. Second edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8308-1785-6. Price: \$70.00.
- Metzger, Paul Louis
2023 *More Than Things: A Personalist Ethics for a Throwaway Culture*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8308-5091-4. Price: \$48.00.
- Nogalski, James D.
2023 *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand

Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6427-7. Price: \$54.00.

Ollenburger, Ben C.

2023 *God the Creator: The Old Testament and the World God is Making*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4866-1. Price: \$25.99.

Papanikolaou, Aristotle and George E. Demacopoulos, eds.

2023 *Faith, Reason, and Theosis*. New York, NY: Fordham University Press. ISBN: 978-1-5315-0302-4. Price: \$40.00.

Pearcey, Nancy R.

2023 *The Toxic War on Masculinity: How Christianity Reconciles the Sexes*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-7573-5. Price: \$24.99.

Rhodes, Michael J.

2023 *Just Discipleship: Biblical Justice in an Unjust World*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5140-0600-9. Price: \$32.00.

Schumacher, Michele M.

2023 *Metaphysics and Gender: The Normative Art of Nature and Its Human Limitations*. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic. ISBN: 978-1-6458-5290-2. Price: \$29.95.

Smith, Ted A.

2023 *The End of Theological Education*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7887-8. Price: \$19.99.

Stewart, Alistair C.

2023 *Breaking Bread: The Emergence of Eucharist and Agape in Early Christian Communities*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-8302-5. Price: \$49.99.

Strange, James Riley

2023 *Excavating the Land of Jesus: How Archaeologists Study the People of the Gospels*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-9650-0. Price: \$29.99.

Strawn, Brent A.

2023 *The Incomparable God: Readings in Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7949-3. Price: \$59.99.

Twomey, Vincent

2023 *Apostolikos Thronos: Rival Accounts of Roman Primacy in Eusebius and Athanasius*. Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Academic. ISBN: 978-1-6458-5310-7. Price: \$58.75.

- Tyra, Gary
2023 *Introduction to Spirituality: Cultivating a Lifestyle of Faithfulness*. Foundations for Spirit-Filled Christianity. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5409-6522-6. Price: \$24.99.
- Walton, John H.
2023 *Wisdom for Faithful Reading: Principles and Practices for Old Testament Interpretation*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5140-0487-6. Price: \$26.00.
- Wilson, Jared C.
2023 *Friendship with the Friend of Sinners: The Remarkable Possibility of Closeness with Christ*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-1-5409-0135-4. Price: \$18.99.
- Wilson, Walter T.
2023 *The Wisdom of Sirach*. Eerdmans Critical Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-8176-2. Price: \$85.99.
- Wong, Maria Liu
2023 *On Becoming Wise Together: Learning and Leading in the City*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7906-6. Price: \$19.99.
- Wood, Mark D.
2023 *Shepherds of the Steppes: The Experience of Male Evangelical Mongolian Church Leaders, An Ethnographic Approach*. American Society of Missiology Monograph Series. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications. ISBN: 978-1-6667-9959-0. Price: \$40.00.
- Yong, Amos and Dale M. Coulter
2023 *The Holy Spirit and Higher Education: Renewing the Christian University*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press. ISBN: 978-1-4813-1814-3. Price: \$49.99.





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