The Epistle of Paul to the Romans

For the Bible teaches us that Paul wrote the book of Romans in a season of crisis. The Apostle, Paul writes, was not an average man. He was a man who was called to that very office by God. From the very start, Paul develops the theme that men need God’s salvation. He tells us that the way is through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He tells us that we need to obey and submit ourselves to Him. Then Paul explains that faith in Christ brings us to salvation. The text of Romans is filled with examples of how our faith is to be expressed through our lives. We must be good citizens. We must be good neighbors. We must be good stewards.

I wrote this letter to give you a better understanding of the truth of God’s Word. I have always wanted to see the world the way God sees it. I believe that God is the one who meets everyone who seeks Him. I believe that God is the one who answers the call of those who seek Him. I believe that God is the one who gives the grace of salvation to those who seek Him. I believe that God is the one who saves us from the power of sin. I believe that God is the one who gives us the power to live a life of obedience to His will.

The word “righteousness” in Romans is used more than once. It is used in the context of personal righteousness. It is used in the context of justification by faith. It is used in the context of sanctification. It is used in the context of the church. It is used in the context of the kingdom of God. It is used in the context of the new creation. It is used in the context of the new testament. It is used in the context of the old testament. It is used in the context of the law. It is used in the context of the gospel. It is used in the context of the good news. It is used in the context of the kingdom of heaven. It is used in the context of the kingdom of God. It is used in the context of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. It is used in the context of the kingdom of heaven. It is used in the context of the kingdom of God. It is used in the context of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. It is used in the context of the kingdom of heaven. It is used in the context of the kingdom of God. It is used in the context of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. It is used in the context of the kingdom of heaven. It is used in the context of the kingdom of God. It is used in the context of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.
The Asbury Journal

EDITOR
Robert Danielson

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

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

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

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

© Copyright 2013 by Asbury Theological Seminary
The Asbury Journal

VOLUME 68:1
Spring 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial
4 From the Editor, Robert Danielson

Essays
6 Inductive Biblical Study: History, Character, and Prospects in a Global Environment
David R. Bauer
37 A Faculty Member’s Response to David Bauer’s Article
Ruth Anne Reese
42 Inductive Bible Study: Contextual Appropriation in Northeast India
M. Sashi Jamir
56 Colonialism and Post-Colonialism in the Philippine Chinese Context: How IBS Can be a Liberating Methodology to Find the Truth to be Set Free
Juliet Lee Uytanlet
69 Of Icons and IBS: Contextualizing the Inductive Bible Study Method Among Eastern Orthodox Background Believers
Curtis Elliott
76 Contextualizing Inductive Bible Study (IBS) in a Postcolonial Filipino American Setting
Peter Tan-Gatue
Art McPhee
97 Engaging Witchcraft Accusations among Christians as a Vehicle of African Traditional Religious Self-Advocacy in African Contexts
Robert Magoola
108 John Wesley’s Approach to Mission
R. Jeffrey Hiatt

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

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

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

2013 Subscription Rates

Individual:
- $20 (one year); $35 (two years); $50 (three years)

Institution:
- $40 (one year); $75 (two years); $110 (three years)

Student:
- $10 (one year); $18 (two years); $26 (three years)
In October 2012, the Post Graduate Colloquium discussed Inductive Bible Study (IBS) and its potential use in global contexts. IBS is a methodology for approaching scripture, developed in large part at Asbury Theological Seminary, through the work of Robert Traina. David Bauer, a student of Traina’s, presented the keynote address, which is printed in this issue. This address was followed by responses from a faculty panel that commented on the paper and the recent book written by Bauer and Traina (Bauer, David R. and Robert A. Traina. Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011). Ruth Anne Reese’s comments are printed in this issue as an example of some of the faculty feedback. A group of Post-Graduate scholars at Asbury Theological Seminary then presented papers about some of the potential advantages and problems IBS may face in crossing cultural borders: M. Sashi Jamir looks at the application of IBS for tribal communities living in Northeast India. Juliet Uytanlet examines the liberating potential of IBS for the Chinese Filipino context as it emerges from a colonial mindset. Curtis Elliott takes a closer look at the application of IBS in the Eastern Orthodox context of the nation of Georgia, and Peter Tan-Gatue focuses on the post-colonial context of Filipino Americans living in Los Angeles and how IBS can function to increase biblical knowledge through lay training.

In addition to these initial papers, several other papers in this issue were not presented at the Colloquium, but raise similar issues. Art McPhee’s article, which was presented as he was formally seated in the Sundo Kim Chair for Evangelism and Practical Theology Expertise: Evangelization Studies, raises the vital question of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission, and how human methodology has often overlooked this important theological key. Robert Magoola’s article on witchcraft accusations in Uganda illustrates how the Church must be flexible to applying scripture to local questions, contexts, and needs. Finally, R. Jeffrey Hitt’s article examines the application of Wesleyan history and theology to the challenge of other global faith systems and their unique forms of understanding.
Communicating the message of scripture cross-culturally is an essential task of the Church, and the skills of the entire seminary are needed to accomplish this task. IBS, like any methodology, needs to remain attuned to the cultural context and how that impacts learning. Is the culture more focused on oral methods of learning? Can we adapt the IBS method to various tribal contexts with different ways of understanding the spirit world? We also need to consider the socio-economic issues that impact our effectiveness: basic levels of education and health that may impact learning, work loads and time limitations imposed by poverty, as well as access to books and other educational materials. The historic value of IBS only increases as we as a community think seriously about the many barriers we may need to face in the rapidly globalized world we are challenged to serve. However, this is the challenge we have been given, and with the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, we can fulfill our common mission as we work together as the Body of Christ in the world.

— Robert Danielson, Ph.D.
Abstract

In this keynote address at the 2012 Interdisciplinary Colloquium, held at McKenna Chapel on the Kentucky Campus of Asbury Theological Seminary, October 12, 2012, David Bauer examines the history and development of inductive biblical study within its English-speaking environment. In addition, he proposes ways in which this approach can be understood in postcolonial environments as a way to open the methodology of Inductive Bible Study to a larger global audience.

Keywords: Inductive Bible Study, methodology, history, development, postcolonial

David R. Bauer is the Ralph Waldo Beeson Professor of Inductive Biblical Studies and Dean of the School of Biblical Interpretation at Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky.
The invitation to deliver the keynote address at the 2012 Interdisciplinary Colloquium is a singular honor and an exciting opportunity for me. I want to thank Dr. Pachuau for suggesting that we devote this Interdisciplinary Colloquium to the issue of inductive Bible study. Its long history and continuing prominence at Asbury Theological Seminary, and its broad dissemination throughout the world, led Dr. Pachuau to propose this topic as the focus of this Colloquium; and as a practitioner of inductive biblical study I am grateful. I am especially pleased that this Colloquium deals with inductive biblical study in global contextualized perspective. As we shall see, inductive biblical study was developed initially by persons within the western educational tradition, although it has been taken up and practiced and indeed enthusiastically embraced by many teachers and leaders in the Church throughout the Majority World. The issue of its usability and adaptability in the non-western world is of paramount importance; and indeed many of the considerations concerning trans-cultural usefulness will be pertinent to western exegetical methods in general and not solely to inductive biblical study.

I am gratified, too, and humbled, to address you this morning on a subject that is not only important to me but is, I believe, my calling. I first encountered inductive biblical study in my undergraduate program at Spring Arbor College (now University). And during my course work at Asbury Theological Seminary I came increasingly to believe that this approach offers an avenue for the study of the Bible that is compelling on a number of levels: It is built upon well-considered hermeneutical principles; it attends to the process of human learning and understanding and thus seeks to be responsive to sound educational insights; it provides a general framework into which virtually all methods and aspects of biblical interpretation and appropriation can be effectively incorporated; it offers a full, rich, and fruitful engagement with the biblical text; and it is appropriately tentative, inviting methodological criticism, correction, and enhancement.

A significant advantage of this approach, and perhaps an argument for its hermeneutical validity, is that although one can practice it in a simplified form at the lay level one may also employ it in the most sophisticated and academically demanding biblical scholarship. Indeed, perhaps most people in the Church associate inductive Bible study with its lay-oriented forms or identify it with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, which uses inductive Bible study as the basis for all of its discipleship training and development. Some persons are perhaps unaware that over the years it has been a significant part of the instruction at such institutions as Princeton Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, the Associated Mennonite Theological Seminaries, Regent College (Vancouver), Fuller Theological Seminary, Columbia Theological Seminary, Eastern Mennonite Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Dallas Theological Seminary, Regent
University, and Azusa Pacific University, to name only a few and to say nothing of the hundreds of colleges, universities, and seminaries in the Majority World that make use of inductive biblical study for ministerial preparation. Perhaps some persons do not know that inductive biblical study has profoundly influenced the work of several leading biblical scholars of global reputation, including Brevard Childs, Patrick D. Miller, Jr., James Luther Mays, Thomas W. Gillespie, and Daniel Fuller, again to mention but a few. Many of our own Asbury Seminary graduates who have pursued postgraduate degrees in Bible have testified to the direct value of inductive biblical study in their doctoral work.

Actually, I have known inductive biblical study only in its more rigorous, academic form. In fact, a large part of the appeal that inductive biblical study has always held for me is that it is intellectually demanding and academically challenging. Both the depth and breadth of inductive biblical study require much mental energy on the part of anyone who pursues it thoroughly. The reason: Through this study one can always find much more to discover in the biblical text in terms of profundity and range.

Since this Colloquium addresses inductive biblical study in global contextualized perspective, and since some of you may be unfamiliar with the inductive study of the Bible, the purpose of this first paper of the day is to provide a history and description of inductive biblical study, concluding with some thoughts on the relationship between inductive biblical study and one of the most prominent emerging methods of biblical engagement in the Majority World, postcolonial interpretation.

**History of Inductive Biblical Study**

Although the “inductive biblical study movement” emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, inductive biblical study has precursors that extend back to the church’s study of the Scriptures from the very beginning. Inductive biblical study adopts certain reading strategies that go back to the early Church. Indeed, no one particular thing sets inductive Bible study apart from the study of the Bible as it has been conducted by many intelligent laypersons, ministers, and biblical scholars (“exegetes”) around the world. For example, inductive Bible study shares with responsible exegesis everywhere a concern for literary context, and for the precise meaning of biblical terms derived through proper word study. The distinctiveness of inductive Bible study involves its specific and purposeful attempts to maintain radical openness to the meaning of the biblical text wherever the evidence may lead, its various methodological emphases, and the intentional way in which it seeks to relate the multiple components of Bible study to one another, so as to provide an effective framework for the study of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, it is true that inductive biblical study traces its origins more specifically to the work of
William Rainey Harper and especially his student and associate Wilbert Webster White. The role of W. W. White is in the end more enduring because in founding The Biblical Seminary in New York, which became the center of inductive biblical study, he gave this inductive study an institutional base from which it spread throughout the world.¹

W. W. White was born in Wooster, Ohio, in 1863, into a pious Presbyterian family. He graduated from the College of Wooster with distinction in 1883; and upon his graduation from Xenia Theological Seminary in 1885 he served pastorates in the United Presbyterian Church. While a seminary student White took summer school classes at Morgan Park Theological Seminary, where he came under the instruction of William Rainey Harper, then a professor of Old Testament at Yale University and also the founding president of the University of Chicago. Harper had graduated from Muskingham College in Ohio at the age of fourteen and earned his doctorate at Yale when he was only eighteen. Harper was most impressed with White’s intellectual gifts and persuaded him to leave the pastorate for the pursuit of doctoral studies in Semitic languages at Yale University, with a view toward his eventually becoming a professor of Old Testament.

Through a number of influences at Yale White became interested in exploring the process of learning, that is, educational method. Later, White and the seminary he founded would develop a fruitful relationship with the great teacher and educational theorist from New York University, Herman Harrell Horne. During this Yale period, too, White became convinced of the significance of relationship; he came to see that the key to understanding anything is to consider its major components and the ways in which these components relate to one another. Later, White would require his students to read John Ruskin’s classic *Essay on Composition*,² in which Ruskin presented a taxonomy of relationships found in nature and in all forms of art; and he would require his students to analyze biblical books and passages according to certain “laws” or patterns of relationships, e.g., contrast, comparison, climax. White referred to this emphasis on relationships as the principle of composition.³ Actually, White’s understanding of composition was twofold. White embraced a general compositional theory, insisting that all things in the world cohere so that the study of all things in the world is bound together in a grand network of truth. One can enter this network at any point and eventually, under ideal circumstances (which, of course, never actually exist), encounter all truth in the world. Thus the study of the Bible leads to truth in all areas; and conversely, truth in all other areas relates, either directly or indirectly, to the study of the Bible. But White also adopted a specific compositional theory according to which individual books of the Bible cohere; thus everything within a biblical book is related, directly or indirectly, to everything else within that book. As he liked to say, “Things hook and eye together.”⁴ In fact, one
might add that White adopted a kind of intermediate compositional theory, viewing the whole of the canon as a unity according to which individual books and passages are to be understood. But White always began with the unity of the biblical book, and gave greatest emphasis to book coherence.

Under Harper W. W. White encountered higher-critical study of the Bible. In fact, Harper's critical views, particularly on the dating and authorship of the Pentateuch, were met with suspicion by many of his fellow Baptists. White was not convinced of Harper's views regarding some of these issues. But Harper acknowledged the limits of this critical study of the Bible. And White appreciated Harper's recognition that the study of the Bible must not be reduced to matters of authorship or sources, but rather that the study of the Bible must finally center on a theologically sensitive, and indeed theologically oriented, literary analysis of the final form of the text, that is, the books of the Bible as we have them. Although White tended to be more conservative, and certainly more cautious, on higher-critical matters than Harper, White never rejected higher criticism out of hand. In fact, he developed close relationships with several leading critical scholars of the time, such as Adolf Deissmann; and indeed White would invite many of them to lecture or teach at the seminary he would found. Still, White never completely worked out the precise relationship between the historical conclusions derived from what most evangelical scholars might consider appropriate or reliable higher-critical study on the one hand and the study of the text in its final form on the other. That task would be taken up by some of his successors.5

White was also influenced by Harper's insistence that, generally speaking, there should be an emphasis upon the study of the Bible in the student's own language. Harper recognized that people think in their native language and that consequently students should be saturated with the Bible in their own tongue. Indeed, Harper and White believed that the excitement that comes from the study of the Bible in the vernacular would lead students to pursue enthusiastically the original languages. Thus, as White was struggling with Harper's presentation of higher-critical views he also encountered through Harper “the method of the study of the Bible by books in the mother tongue,” as he would later put it. Harper suggested that the study of the English Bible (for English-speaking students) should constitute one-half of the seminary curriculum. In a survey Harper conducted in 1886-1887 he found that 888 of 1000 pastors said that the greatest lack in their seminary training was in the English Bible.5 This emphasis upon the study of the Bible in the vernacular was reflected in the fact that, later, courses in inductive biblical study were often labeled “English Bible” classes (for example, at The Biblical Seminary and for a time at Asbury Theological Seminary). But one must remember that both Harper and White were trained Semitists; and it is significant that in the curriculum of the seminary White founded, The Biblical
Seminary in New York, Greek or Hebrew was required in every semester of the program. Their convictions regarding the role of both vernacular translation and original languages were nuanced, balanced, and actually quite sophisticated.

Both Harper and White believed that the suspicions or doubts regarding the Bible that emerged from higher-critical study could be adequately addressed by the direct literary study of the Bible. They believed that as the student encountered the message of the Bible by examining the Bible book-by-book the student would experience the compelling force and authenticity of the Bible. in the process of pursuing its proper study, readers would find that the Bible authenticates itself. Thus, in his classes, Harper combined detailed critical study of minute points with the synthetic (i.e., holistic) study of whole books or groups of books in the mother tongue. This conviction that the Bible authenticates itself through direct study involved an (usually implicit) appeal to the witness of the Holy Spirit as one encounters God’s own revelation in the Scriptures. White referred to this self-authenticating function as the “apologetic by-product of direct contact with the Bible itself.” Although Harper and White were correct as far as they went in this regard, they failed to see the necessity of addressing methodologically the relationship between certain higher-critical conclusions on the one hand and the claims of Scripture and the Bible’s inspiration and reliability on the other (and, for that matter, the proper role of apologetics). Later certain scholars in the inductive biblical study movement would attempt to address this deficiency.

Upon earning his Ph.D. in Semitics from Yale University White joined the faculty of Xenia Seminary. But White, influenced as he had been by Harper, felt constrained by what he considered the stilted, doctrinaire character of this traditional “old-line” denominational seminary. According to White, at Xenia a deductive approach was practiced, in which students were spoon-fed information and told what to think over against an inductive approach that would give students the resources and encouragement to discover truth, and especially biblical truth, for themselves. While teaching at Xenia White continued Harper’s practice of giving over a portion of his instruction in courses in Hebrew and Old Testament literature to the study of larger swaths of the English Bible. During his years of teaching at Xenia, White was also exposed to Andrew Murray’s book, *With Christ in the School of Prayer.* Out of that encounter White experienced a deeper level of spiritual intimacy with Christ. White became convinced that seminary education must not only center on the study of the Bible, but through the study of the Bible it must also facilitate authentic spiritual formation.

White’s disillusionment with traditional seminary education such as he experienced at Xenia led him to leave Xenia to accept an invitation from Dwight Moody to teach at Moody’s recently inaugurated Bible college in Chicago. There White came to appreciate the value of an interdenominational
learning environment. But White chafed under what he considered to be a lack of intellectual rigor and a superficial spirituality. He became convinced that a great need existed for a new type of seminary, one that would serve as an alternative to the traditional seminary in that it would offer curricular coherence around the centrality of an inductive study of the Bible, and an alternative also to the Bible colleges which, at least at that time, were characterized by obscurantism and academic weakness.

It was during this period that his brother, J. Campbell White, on behalf of the International Committee of the YMCA, invited Wilbert W. White to go with him to work among college students in Calcutta, India. There White became convinced of the need, also in India, for knowledge of the Bible and for right method to study and teach it. White taught at United Presbyterian mission stations throughout India; and he held fourteen conventions attended by missionaries and college students from all over India. Missionaries and Indian students alike were gripped by White's studies and expressed the need for an emphasis on the direct study of the Bible and a method that would make such study fruitful.

On his return trip White stopped in England, where he presented Bible studies for the YWCA in London. When he came back to England the next year (1899) he taught over 12,000 people in his ten-week Bible studies in London. He returned for a third series of meetings in March 1900, when he gave studies in England, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. At this time White presented a plan to Lord Overtoun for a school modeled on the Teacher's College at Columbia University, but with a Bible-centered curriculum. Overtoun gave White £500 pounds to establish such a school in America, with the hope that White would found a similar school in London. The hope of a London school was never realized. But the American school would become The Biblical Seminary in New York.

On January 8, 1901 classes began at the “Bible Teachers College” in Montclair, New Jersey. The school moved to Manhattan in 1902; and in 1921 the name was changed to The Biblical Seminary in New York. The seminary was fully accredited to offer a range of degrees, included the Bachelor of Sacred Theology (S.T.B.), Master of Sacred Theology (S.T.M.), and Doctor of Sacred Theology (S.T.D.). The purpose of the school was “to make the study of the Bible in the mother tongue the organizing, dominating element in a school of preparation for Christian leadership.” It was established out of the conviction that “the ministry must be a bibliocracy, that it must know its Bible better than any other book,” a quote from P. T. Forsyth. The school was to insist that the Scripture itself must be allowed to establish its own criteria both as to its interpretation and its authority. The seminary reflected the emphases of Wilbert W. White: (1) a biblo-centric curriculum around the inductive study of the Bible; (2) concern for effective educational principles and practices to
facilitate the student’s own learning; (3) commitment to the devotional life of prayer toward spiritual maturity; (4) a cosmopolitan, global perspective (and hence New York City as the choice of location); and (5) commitment to evangelical Christianity and especially the authority of the Scriptures.

The Biblical Seminary flourished under the presidency of Wilbert W. White, who died in 1944, and his immediate successors. Inductive biblical study was developed and enhanced there through such teachers as Howard Tillman Kuist, who later taught at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia and was for twenty years the Charles T. Haley Professor of Biblical Theology for the Teaching of English Bible at Princeton Theological Seminary; Donald G. Miller, a scholar whose expertise spanned biblical studies, theology, and preaching, who also went on to teach at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia and to serve as president of Pittsburg Theological Seminary. From this center, inductive biblical study spread to hundreds of colleges, universities, and seminaries around the world, including Asbury Theological Seminary.

Inductive Bible study came to Asbury Seminary in 1940 with the appointment of Dr. Kenneth Plank Wesche, a graduate of The Biblical Seminary in New York. Inductive biblical study gained definition and prominence when Dr. George Allen Turner joined the faculty in 1945. Turner was also a graduate of The Biblical Seminary, where he had studied under W. W. White and other leaders of the inductive Bible study movement, and had recently completed his Ph.D. in Biblical Studies at Harvard University. With Turner, inductive Bible study became a Department (called at that time “English Bible”) within the Division of Biblical Studies; and inductive Bible study courses were required of all students. Turner possessed a powerful intellect and profoundly influenced generations of students.

But perhaps the most significant development in inductive biblical study at Asbury Seminary was the appointment of Dr. Robert A. Traina as Professor of Biblical Studies in 1966. Traina was a graduate of The Biblical Seminary and had served on the faculty of that institution for almost 20 years before coming to Asbury. Moreover, in 1952 he had published Methodical Bible Study, the most authoritative work on inductive Bible study to be produced up to that point. Like Kuist, Miller, and several others before him, Traina did much to relate inductive Bible study to mainstream exegesis and to biblical theology. He was a brilliant thinker, a skilled interpreter, and superior teacher who combined intellectual rigor with spiritual power. The Department of Inductive Biblical Studies currently includes six faculty members and additional adjuncts. And the Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies is just now being inaugurated in conjunction with the seminary’s First Fruits project. Thus, though it continues to be taught around the world, today inductive Bible study as a serious academic discipline is associated especially with Asbury Theological Seminary, which in some ways continues the tradition of The Biblical Seminary in New
York. In fact, Asbury Seminary may be considered the world center of inductive biblical study.

**Character of Inductive Biblical Study**

As we come to the discussion of the character of inductive biblical study it is appropriate to mention that quite naturally some methodological variation exists among the practitioners of inductive study. Nevertheless, for the most part the description I am about to offer stands in continuity with the thinking of the original leaders of the inductive biblical study movement, and for that matter with the majority of those who presently teach inductive biblical study in academic settings. At times I will make explicit what has been only implicit in the work of those who have practiced inductive biblical study over the years, for they have not always been as hermeneutically transparent as I have tried to be. Naturally, the mode of conceptualization and certain of the emphases are mine.13

The terms “inductive” or “induction” are of course used in a variety of ways; and therefore clarification of the basic nomenclature is necessary. We have included in the book *Inductive Bible Study* an appendix in which we explore in some detail the three major ways philosophers talk about induction/deduction. I will mention here that we use “inductive” as practically synonymous with “evidential,” and “deductive” as practically equivalent to “presuppositional.” As applied to biblical study, “inductive” involves a movement from the examination (or observation) of the evidence in and surrounding the biblical text to tentative conclusions regarding the text, whereas “deductive” involves a movement from presuppositions or assumptions to conclusions about the text. We judge that the study of the Bible calls for an inductive approach, since the fundamental reality of our experience of reading, including our reading of the Bible, is that of being addressed, of receiving communication from another. The message of the Bible does not reside inherently within us. The meaning of the Bible is not something that we properly bring to it, only to read it out again. To do so would amount to ventriloquism, not interpretation. Although the message of the Scriptures may very well connect with us in profound ways (a process which, according to the Bible itself, the Holy Spirit facilitates), still it comes to us from the o(O)ther. We are therefore called upon to hear it on its own terms, and to give proper space to its other-ness.

Accordingly, “induction” refers both to an attitude of radical openness to the message of the Bible as presented on its own terms, and to a process that emerges from and expresses that attitude. The “inductive attitude” is a commitment to radical openness to the evidence wherever the evidence might lead. This inductive attitude has a number of practical ramifications. I will mention two.
The inductive attitude has ramifications, first, in terms of the thinking process we employ for realizing the sense of the text, in that the inductive attitude leads to an inductive model of inferential reasoning over against a deductive model of inferential reasoning. It is important to understand that all attempts by anyone to realize the sense of the text involve inferential reasoning, i.e., the movement from one or more premises to inferences or conclusions. This is the universal reality, whether one is speaking of a Yale professor or a Ugandan layperson (who, by the way, may have better insight at points into the sense of the text than the Ivy-league professor). They may employ different types of premises; and one or both of these persons may not be fully conscious that they are engaging in an inferential process. The Ugandan layperson may not think of what he is doing as a logical project. But logic is always involved, although it may not be in every way a style of logic familiar to most western intellectuals. Inferential reasoning is occurring nonetheless. The operative issue is whether the reasoning is inductive, which means that the premises are evidential (i.e., arise from true observations of relevant realities), thus leading to inductive inferences or conclusions, or whether the reasoning is deductive, which means that the premises are presuppositional (i.e., expressions of untested or unexamined assumptions), thus leading to deductive inferences or conclusions.

So an inductive attitude has ramifications for the thinking process in biblical interpretation, leading us to adopt an inductive inferential model. But it also has ramifications for our orientation towards the Bible. Our orientation, or approach, to the Bible and its study should correspond to the biblical text in all of its aspects. As we think about how we approach the Bible we must attend to the operative issues of the nature of the Bible, the nature of the reader(s) and the reading process; and the relationship between the Bible and the reader. Given the nature of the Bible, the nature of the reader(s) and the reading process, and the relationship between the two, how should we pursue the study of the biblical text? We must avoid reductionism here, and attend rather to the full range of these realities. For example, when we speak of the “nature of the Bible” we refer not just ontologically to the character of the text itself (although that is certainly involved), but also functionally to its role as canonical Scripture within the Christian community of faith. As I shall mention below, this function is essential to the very notion of “Bible.” And when we speak of the “nature of the reader(s) and the reading process,” we recognize both the universal cognitive and epistemological realities that we all share and the fact that variations exist on the basis of the different cultural/psychological/theological experience of readers. The main point is this: The Bible in all of its ontological, functional, and relational aspects should determine how we approach it and how we study it. I turn now to some of the chief convictions that those in the inductive biblical study movement
have derived from their understanding of the Bible in all these aspects of its existence. I present these convictions as a series of dyads, reflecting an attempt to respect the comprehensive character of the Bible's realities and a resistance to the tendency to adopt a one-sided either-or approach.

The first conviction is that the study of the Bible involves both objective and subjective aspects. We have dubbed this inclusive objective/subjective matrix a “transjective” model. Perhaps the greatest issue in hermeneutics generally, and particularly in biblical hermeneutics, over the past half century has been the objective/subjective debate. Is it appropriate to approach the biblical text with detached objectivity, being careful to exclude completely our personal and communal experiences and background from the hermeneutical process? Or should we abandon entirely this attempt at objectivity and insist, along with Northrup Frye, for example, that interpretation is like a picnic to which readers bring their own meaning? The first option corresponds basically to naïve realism, and reflects the Enlightenment insistence that true knowledge must involve scientific objectivity. The second option, found, for example, in some extreme forms of “reader-response criticism,” represents existentialism, sometimes referred to as “phenomenalism.” This view is often associated with post-modernity. Yet existentialism arose within modernity as a reaction against the privileging of objectivity by the Enlightenment. And it is misleading to suggest that this present period is exclusively “post-modern” in terms of affirming phenomenalism; a pursuit of pure objectivity continues to be embraced by many in today’s world.

It is true that inductive biblical study is concerned to hear the text on its own terms and is thus resistant to reading our own assumptions, experiences, and concerns into the text in such a way that these would keep us from hearing the text in its otherness. This would seem to point to an objective emphasis. Some early leaders in the inductive biblical study movement boasted that this approach corresponded to “scientific method,” presumably drawing on the connection between induction and the natural sciences. Yet I suspect that the real basis for this concern for the objective meaning of the text is the issue of transcendence, the notion that in the Scriptures God speaks to us from God’s own perspective, one that is not only distinct but also different from that of humans in their creatureliness and their sinfulness. But the ways in which inductive Bible study was actually taught, say at The Biblical Seminary in New York, emphasized students’ personal existential engagement with the text. Nevertheless, at its beginning, inductive biblical study tended to reflect the attitude of western exegesis in general that the text was to be viewed as an object to be examined or analyzed with detachment so that it may be protected from the subjective intrusions of the reader.

This is an area in which inductive biblical study, at least as taught by many of us, has undergone modification. Hermeneutical reflection and the
emergence of reader-oriented approaches have made us sensitive to the fact that biblical study involves not only the text but also the reader as subject. The insights of Gadamer, especially as adopted by Thiselton, regarding the “two horizons,” and the specific ways in which the “horizon of the text” intersects with the “horizon of the reader” have proved significant for biblical hermeneutics in general and for many of us in inductive biblical studies in particular. Actually, we have found that the development of our thinking about the subjective/objective matrix is well reflected in “critical realism,” a philosophical and literary movement described by N. T. Wright as follows:

Thus, rather than objective and subjective elements standing in tension with each other, they actually work together in such a way that the key to understanding the (objective) message of the text is precisely through attending to our subjective involvement.

The second conviction is that biblical study must be both individual and communal. To begin with the individual: A concern exists for both individual encounter and individual conclusions. When we consider individual encounter with the text, we recognize that in a sense each of us as individuals stands before the Word of God that we encounter in the Scripture. Accordingly, both the OT (e.g., Pentateuchal commands) and the NT deal not solely with the community but often focus upon the individual. John 3:16 declares not only “God so loved the world,” but also that “everyone [singular] who believes in him should not perish.” And Jesus insists, “the Son of Man shall repay everyone for what has been done” (Matt. 16:28). And Paul declares, “It is he whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone…so that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Col. 1:28). This individual attention within the Bible, among other things, warrants individual encounter with the text.

In addition to individual encounter, we must also acknowledge an individual aspect to interpretive conclusions. That is, we should allow, within limits, for individual differences in the interpretation of passages. In Methodical Bible Study, Dr. Traina wrote “In a given context every Biblical term and
statement has one meaning and one meaning only. In other words, all persons should arrive at exactly the same interpretation, thus leaving no room for the acknowledgment of legitimate individual differences in interpretation. This sentiment reflects the extreme objectification of interpretation in western exegesis prominent in the early 1950s, which gave scant attention to the role of the reading subject. In recent years we have come to see that such a statement is incorrect. Although we affirm the concern behind the statement, viz., that interpretive boundaries exist for every passage and no passage can mean just anything, we realize that the insistence on a “single meaning” is problematic, and that for two reasons.

For one thing, many biblical passages are multivalent, i.e., they allow for more than one specific interpretation. An example is John 11:35 (“Jesus wept.”) In my judgment, the context points equally to two quite different construals. On the one hand, the passage may indicate that Jesus is weeping for Lazarus. Although Jesus knew that he was about to resuscitate Lazarus he also knew that Lazarus would die again; and the sight of the mourners draws Jesus into the universal human experience of grieving. Such a reading provides a warrant for the proper role of grief and suggests that a place for genuine grief exists on the part even of those who affirm resurrection faith. On the other hand, the passage may indicate that Jesus is weeping for the mourners, profoundly saddened to see the pain experienced by those who fail fully to embrace the ultimate reality of the resurrection. This reading critiques a kind of grief that excludes or at least diminishes resurrection faith. These different interpretations are not mutually exclusive; but they are quite different. And both seem to be present.

But we encounter not only multivalence in the Bible, but (related to it) also some measure of indeterminacy (to borrow insights from Umberto Eco and Paul Ricoeur). All biblical passages stand somewhere on a continuum of determinacy and indeterminacy. Determinant passages are those whose range of plausible construals is quite narrow; whereas indeterminate passages have a much wider range of legitimate interpretations. It is important to note, though, that even passages on the indeterminate end of the spectrum have firm boundaries; the passage can mean only certain things and other construals are illegitimate. Conversely, passages on the determinate end of the continuum have some range of plausible construals. The range may be narrow; but some range exists nonetheless. In all cases, the interpretation that one draws within the range typically reflects that person’s experiences and/or ecclesial and cultural background. The ideal, of course, is to become aware of all legitimate interpretations within the sense boundaries of the passage so as to derive a full and rich understanding of the text. Such awareness comes through conversation with other interpreters, and especially those from other cultures and ecclesial traditions. And this consideration leads us
to speak of the communal aspect of interpretation.

If it is helpful to give space to individual encounter with the text, it is essential to give attention also to conversation with other readers, or conversation among readers. The Bible as canon belongs to the Church; and consequently the task of interpretation has been given not to isolated individuals but finally to the Church. Individual interpreters, then, participate in a vocation that has been given to the entire Church. Such a conversation with others in the Church can be direct or indirect. Direct conversation involves discussing biblical passages in groups or with other individuals. Indirect conversation pertains to becoming aware of the history of interpretation. We believe that this consultation with the history of interpretation is critically essential, and is part of the overall inductive process. It is essential because such consultation will prevent individual interpreters from idiosyncrasy as they test their own construals with insights from other interpreters. It is not that the interpretation of individual readers will necessarily be collapsed into what others have always said; but rather the history of interpretation will serve as a touchstone, with the result that individual interpretations will seek at least some connection with the judgment of other interpreters. Because of the importance to consult those who represent not simply one’s own culture and ecclesial tradition, one will be intentional in hearing voices from other cultures and theological traditions, including other periods of the church, e.g., the patristic, medieval, and Reformation periods.

The third conviction is that Bible study should include both intuition/imagination and linear logic. Dr. Traina used to say that inductive biblical study involved an “element of genius.” By this statement he did not mean that one either possessed this ability or one did not; but rather, he intended to suggest that the project includes an intuitive aspect. This statement agrees with the often-repeated dictum that interpretation is as much an art as it is a science. It belongs to the character of encounter with the biblical text that insights regarding passages (including theological significance and relation to other passages) flood upon us as we read the Scripture. Naturally, one’s background and experiences will play a key role here. But it is equally a part of biblical study to test these intuitions logically with firm evidence from the text and the history that bounds the text. In the parlance of inductive reasoning, this dual process involves putting forth hypotheses (imagination/intuition) and testing hypotheses (logic).

The fourth conviction is that Bible study should include both direct study of the text and indirect study of the text in the form of consultation of secondary sources. From the very beginning, inductive biblical study has privileged the direct study of the text, insisting that direct encounter should be given priority in terms of both emphasis and sequence. That is to say, as a general rule, students should give relatively greater attention to examining the
biblical text(s) itself than to examination of books/articles about the text; and, again as a general rule, students should begin with the rigorous scrutiny of the biblical text before moving into an investigation of scholarly treatments. Yet the communal character of biblical study requires that, as part of an overall inductive process, students acquaint themselves with insights from the scholarly community, from those, in other words, whom God has gifted to assist the Church in the right reading of the text. Some take “inductive Bible study” to refer to the direct study of the text, with the corollary that when one consults scholarly treatments, e.g., Bible dictionaries, histories, monographs, articles, or commentaries, one is no longer engaged in “inductive study,” but rather has moved to “deductive study.” Of course, this view pertains to the meaning of “inductive” and “deductive,” which I discussed earlier. Suffice it to say that our understanding of induction (and we think this is in line with the intention of most of those who have practiced inductive biblical study in academic settings) does not pertain to what is studied, but rather how one studies. Induction involves an open and tentative attitude towards all evidence, whether it is found in the biblical text or encountered in scholarly treatments about the text. It is for this reason that I typically require students who have completed their survey of a biblical book on the basis of direct encounter to immediately consult scholarly treatments of critical introduction. This process allows students, for example, to compare their understanding of the structure of a biblical book with scholarly presentations, including those that discuss ancient rhetoric and the ways in which insights from first-century Greco-Roman rhetoric might inform or clarify the structure of a NT book.

Related to this conviction that Bible study should include both direct study of the text and indirect study in the form of secondary sources is the fifth conviction, viz., that the study of the Bible should be text-centered but not text-exclusive. We do privilege the communicative sense of the text, attending especially to the form of the text (its literary structure and genres), because the Bible is essentially text, having communicative purpose. But inductive biblical study is not text-exclusive. After all, the Bible emerged from non-textual (or other-textual) historical realities (events, sources, etc.); and it reports or references historical realities; and it produces effects on readers (historical, theological, personal) that go beyond the text. We do justice to the full-orbed character of the Bible only if we attend to realities behind the text, surrounding the text and its production, and in front of the text in terms of its reception and implementation by readers. Thus, inductive study includes matters of historical background, critical introduction, and the history of effects, gathered from an examination of the ways in which the text has been used in liturgy, hymnody, literature, art, and theology (Wirkungsgeschichte), but all with a view towards illuminating the message of the text.
The sixth conviction is that inductive biblical study is a canonical approach that attends both to the unity and diversity of Scripture, and to the complex relationship between the message of the Bible and the faith of the Church.

I will discuss first the canon as pointing to the unity and diversity of Scripture. When one talks about the “Bible,” one is implying the canon of the Old and New Testaments. Thus it seems to us that “Bible study” takes seriously the fact that the canon is an assemblage of various originally separate books. The consideration that the canon contains various books reminds us that the basic literary unit in the Bible is the biblical book. This is a literary reality, in that writers produce books. Almost all biblical books bear the mark of careful planning and arrangement. That the basic unit of the Bible is the biblical book is also a canonical reality; for the canonical process in both Judaism and early Christianity involved making decisions regarding the inclusion or exclusion of books. Thus, the canon has a “book-ness” character. This means that the literary context for any biblical passage is the biblical book of which it is a part. When a writer produces a book he creates a “textual world,” and accordingly everything within a biblical book relates either directly or indirectly to everything else within that book. This insight reflects White’s specific compositional theory, which I described earlier.

This consideration that the canon contains various books alerts us also to the possibility of diversity within the Bible. In our judgment, an inductive examination of the whole of the Bible reveals that each book has its own perspective and emphases, with the consequence that it is problematic in an uncritical way to read the message of one book into another one, or to interpret passages in terms of the Bible as a whole without first attending seriously to their function and meaning within the biblical book in which they are found.

But it seems to us, too, that it is possible to overemphasize the diversity of the biblical canon at the expense of its underlying unity. The Bible evinces a profound unity, expressed both in the metanarrative (I prefer mega-narrative) that runs from beginning to end and in the recurrent themes which in most cases receive significantly consistent treatment (though with some variation). The existence of an underlying unity among the biblical books is suggested, among other things, by the consideration that the community of faith (both Jewish and Christian), after a prolonged process of use, reflection, and discussion, brought these specific books within the canonical assemblage, a testimony to the fact that the community recognized a profound coherence. One does not need to appeal to the role of the Holy Spirit in the process (although this is a supremely important consideration, and I personally affirm this reality); as a matter of purely historical probability, it is likely that these religious communities, engaged in such an extended and deliberate process of selection, recognized a theological coherence that is genuinely present.
Thus, the concept of canon, with its theological unity and interconnectedness, requires that we finally understand the message of individual passages and books in terms of their function within the canon as a whole.

I discuss now, and all too briefly, the significance of the canon for the relationship between the message of the Bible and the faith of the Church. The notion of canon suggests not only that it is an assemblage of books but also that it functions as the rule or norm for the community. This function of the biblical canon raises the question of the relationship between the Bible and the theological tradition of the Church, including the Church’s ecumenical creeds. This question involves a host of complex issues. Because of time constraints I will speak specifically of the relationship between canon and creed, making two critical observations.

First, in developing both the biblical canon and the great ecumenical creeds the Church averred that neither canon nor creed is sufficient in itself. The faithful life of the Church requires both. Second, we note that the canon is extensive and the creeds are skeletal. The creeds (and the various patristic expressions of the “rule of faith,” which are actually in a sense “proto-creeds”) provide a general theological framework, or a theological synthesis, of the biblical revelation, a synthesis to be sure that is itself historically conditioned, e.g., by the ecclesial controversies of the time and by the attempt to relate the truths of revelation to the thought categories of the late Graeco-Roman world. Thus, the canon gives specific and robust content to the affirmations of the creeds and develops aspects of the faith that are not addressable by the creeds, given their laconic form. On the other hand, the creeds provide assistance to our understanding of the broader contours of the biblical revelation; the creeds do not in themselves provide that understanding, but provide aid to our work in discerning the broad theological structure of biblical revelation. Because the Church made decisions establishing both canon and creed, we are justified in approaching the issue of their relationship with an expectation of correspondence, while at the same time, avoiding naked fideism; we are obliged respectfully (and for those in the community of faith, reverently) to test this correspondence. This seems to have been the position of W. W. White and The Biblical Seminary in New York, where the Seminary insisted that study there must be conducted in the context of evangelical commitment (which presumably includes at its center orthodox faith) and the Apostles’ Creed.

The seventh conviction is that the study of the Bible should be methodologically both broad and targeted. One of the effects of the attempt over the years to relate inductive biblical study to mainstream exegesis is the recognition that inductive Bible study is not actually one method alongside other methods, but is, or should be, a broad methodological approach that seeks to incorporate at the optimum point and in the optimum fashion
every legitimate exegetical task and every appropriate method (including critical methods).

Over the past thirty years a number of methods have burst upon the world of biblical studies, in addition to older ones, such as source, form and redaction criticism. We now have narrative criticism, social-scientific criticism, and various forms of socio-rhetorical criticism, to name but a few. And all too often the various exegetical tasks (e.g., word studies, research into historical background) as well as the several methods are understood in virtual isolation from one another. Books that present the various methods often suggest that readers have a smorgasbord from which they can choose the method they wish to employ, with the recognition that the method that is chosen will essentially determine interpretive results. For the most part, one looks in vain for a synthesis of the various methods and a discussion of the ways in which the individual exegetical tasks or the various methods relate to and impinge upon one another.

In our judgment, a major challenge facing biblical studies today is synthesis of these various exegetical processes and of these different methods into a holistic approach, which relates the various processes and methods to one another, and which adopts an eclectic orientation according to which the interpretive demands of individual passages determine which of these processes or methods will be most helpful. We have attempted just such a synthesis.

Yet the mention of synthesis implies a cohering center. Thus, inductive biblical study seeks to be not only broad, but also targeted. All that we do is directed toward the theological interpretation and appropriation of the final form of the text. Clearly, not all readers of the Bible accept this target as the primary goal of biblical study. But in our judgment this target reflects the essential character of the Bible. As to targeting theological interpretation and appropriation: Although the Bible contains history, science (broadly conceived), politics, and a host of other considerations, its essential Sachen, content, is theological; it centers upon God, and God’s relationship to his creation, especially his human creation, including his people. As to targeting the final form of the text: The final form of the text is the only text we have. All scholarly reconstructions of earlier sources, or even the reconstruction of events, involve to a greater or lesser degree academic speculation. At any rate, the final form is essentially the canonical form. Insofar as we emphasize the Bible as canon we will focus on the final form.

The last conviction I will discuss is that an inductive approach involves a methodological process that is both specific and flexible. As I mentioned earlier, inductive biblical study pertains to both an attitude and a process that flows from it. Although some speak disdainfully of method in the sense of concern for specific process, the reality is that biblical study necessarily involves specific tasks performed in a specific order; and that is method. In other
words, everyone has a method for the study of the Bible. It may or may not be a consistent method; it may or may not be helpful or effective; it may or may not be carefully considered. But even the most haphazard approach represents method. The question is not whether all persons employ method; they do. The question is whether the process adopted stems from proper considerations regarding the broad realities of the Bible, the reader(s) and the reading process, and the relationship between the Bible and the reader(s).

Inductive biblical study affirms that the matter of proper process must be characterized by flexibility. This conclusion stems from considerations regarding the nature of the reader(s), and attends to the fact that great differences exist among readers in terms of culture, background, mental processes, purpose, and time constraints. It is therefore both unrealistic and unreasonable to insist upon the adoption of one single proper procedure. In the end, the method that any reader adopts must be his or her own.

Yet many of us who have taught inductive biblical study have come to the conclusion that beginning students benefit from a structured approach that sets forth, as a working hypothesis and a place to start, a specific tentative model. It is of utmost importance that this model be presented as provisional and experimental. It is important, too, that as they progress students be not only encouraged but required to assess this procedure so as to decide what they should accept or reject, and to adapt what they do accept to their own mental processes, time constraints, needs, and purposes.

The provisional model that we adopt, and that is generally associated with the inductive approach, includes four broad phases: (1) Observe; (2) Interpret; (3) Appropriate/Apply; (4) Correlate. Observation includes the survey of the biblical book, survey of extended sections within the book, and detailed analysis (close reading) of individual paragraphs and sentences, all of which includes, but is by no means limited to, attention to the form of the text as expressed in literary structure and genre. From these observations students generate interpretive questions. Interpretation is the answering of questions raised in observation, by using relevant evidence, including literary context, word usage, historical background, history of the tradition, and interpretation of others, to mention but a few types of evidence. Appropriate/Apply includes evaluating the biblical passage/teaching as to its suitability for contemporary appropriation and assessing the contemporary situation to determine its relevance to the biblical passage/teaching and specifically and creatively bringing the biblical teaching to bear upon contemporary life. Correlate involves relating the teaching of individual passages and books to other portions of the Bible and dynamically synthesizing the teachings of individual passages and books within the whole of biblical revelation towards developing a biblical theology.

Although these phases are presented in a specific order, beginning with observation, one should realize that this is not a simple linear process. These
phases tend to impinge upon each other; and, indeed, students necessarily move back and forth. Thus, e.g., students who are focusing upon interpretation will have occasion to make additional observations. Moreover, encountering the sense of a biblical passage in interpretation is, or should be, a formative experience, and thus may involve profound appropriation. These phases, then, are “targets,” or points of focus, assuring that the various essential aspects of biblical study are given sufficient attention. In addition, the specific four-phase procedure that I have just described pertains only to individual passages and books. Inductive biblical study attends not only to individual books and passages, but also to the broad presentation of themes or motifs throughout the biblical canon.

Inductive Biblical Study and Postcolonial Interpretation

As I mentioned earlier, inductive biblical study is methodologically tentative and constantly open to new insights. And from the very beginning, inductive biblical study has had a global concern, insistent that inductive study connects with persons coming from all of the world’s cultures. Both of these considerations prompt contemporary practitioners of inductive study to enter into conversation with major hermeneutical developments in the Majority World. One of the most prominent emerging hermeneutical movements in the Majority World today is postcolonial biblical interpretation.

Postcolonial interpretation is a burgeoning field of study; and the literature is increasing exponentially. For this reason, I will focus on just two representative treatments. I examine first the work of the Sri Lankan R. S. Sugirtharajah, and especially his book, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation.* Sugirtharajah explains that postcolonial criticism arose initially from Edward Said’s monumental book, *Orientalism,* in which Said described the western way of “dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.” This awareness led to postcolonial studies, which “emerged as a way of engaging with the textual, historical, and cultural articulations of societies disturbed and transformed by the historical reality of colonial presence.” Thus, according to Sugirtharajah, “postcolonial” signifies “a reactive resistance discourse of the colonized who critically interrogate dominant knowledge systems in order to recover the past from western slander and information of the colonial period, and who also continue to interrogate neo-colonizing tendencies after the declaration of independence.” It is thus “an instrument or method of analyzing situations where one social group dominated another.” We should note that “postcolonial” does not necessarily imply that the period of colonialism is in the past. This postcolonial response of the colonized toward the colonizer may occur while experiencing colonial domination. Although Sugirtharajah and most other postcolonialists rely upon Marxism and Postructuralism in response to the colonial programs
of European capitalistic countries, they acknowledge that postcolonialism may include response to colonizing, or domination, by powerful elites within the nation.

Accordingly, “the greatest single aim of postcolonial biblical criticism is to situate colonialism at the center of the Bible and biblical interpretation.”35 Thus, “what postcolonial biblical criticism does is to focus on the whole issue of expansion, domination, and imperialism as central forces in defining both the biblical narratives and biblical interpretations.”36

Postcolonial biblical criticism gives primary place in the study of the Bible to the varied contextualized experiences of the colonized. It employs the idea or ideology of the experience of colonization as the criterion to assess both biblical interpretations and the biblical text itself. As Sugirtharajah puts it: “Postcolonial criticism is at its best when it seeks to critique not only the interpretation of texts but also the texts themselves. In this, postcolonial criticism is allied with most oppositional practices of our time, especially feminist.”37

Therefore, on the one hand, postcolonial criticism examines how biblical interpreters engage their task in such a way as to ignore anti-colonial elements within the text or even to adopt interpretations that can be used imperialistically to dominate other groups (metacritical). On the other hand, postcolonial criticism approaches the biblical text with the suspicion that colonizing elements exist within the text itself. As Sugirtharajah says: “Anyone who engages with texts knows that they are not innocent and that they reflect the cultural, religious, political, or ideological interests and contexts out of which they emerge. What postcolonialism does is to highlight and scrutinize the ideologies texts embody and that are entrenched in them as they relate to the fact of colonialism.”38

The result is that Sugirtharajah engages in a hermeneutic of suspicion towards the text, essentially adopting a canon outside the canon. The operative canon for Sugirtharajah is the situation or experience of the colonized. In cases where the biblical text aligns with that situation/experience the sense of the text is probed, employing the processes and methods that are used by exegetes generally, including practitioners of inductive biblical study. In these cases, Sugirtharajah rails against interpreters who misconstrue passages because of failure to take literary and historical context into account.39 This process of attending to the issues of domination and imperialism as they are embedded within the text often yields genuine new insight into the sense of the text. In other words, this process contributes to an inductive study of the text, revealing aspects of the text and the meaning of the text that we who belong to colonizing societies miss because of our own social and cultural location. We greatly benefit, then, from hearing these other interpretive voices. And this consideration re-enforces the importance, in an inductive approach, of engaging
in conversation with other interpreters, especially those who are dispossessed and dominated.

But in cases where the biblical text does not align with the situation/experience of the colonized the biblical texts are themselves accorded the status of texts of terror that must either be resisted or appropriated contrary to their textual sense. Thus, Sugirtharajah attacks liberation theology for its “textism,” i.e., linking the meaning of the Bible to the sense of the text. According to Sugirtharajah, “Scriptures are not simply texts…but narratives and scenarios for episodes of life, and along with reading, these invite and call for a more varied expression of interpretive avenues—theatrical performance, iconography, visualization. What postcolonial biblical criticism tries to do is to liberate the field from one-sided literary emphasis and identify and encourage other forms of expressions.”

This language may sound evocative and creative, but it is actually an attempt to employ biblical passages in ways that contradict their textual meaning. Sugirtharajah insists: “For too long, the focus of biblical criticism has been on verbalization. It has been seen as a literary activity dealing exclusively with texts and words.”

Sugirtharajah’s orientation here arises out of the conviction that the communicative sense of the biblical text often fails to address helpfully the situation of most contemporary persons, and especially the colonized: “Biblical studies is still seduced by the modernistic notion of using the rational as a key to open up texts and fails to accept intuition, sentiment, and emotion as a way into the text. By and large, the world of biblical interpretation is detached from the problems of the contemporary world and has become ineffectual because it has failed to challenge the status quo or work for any sort of social change.”

Thus, Sugirtharajah seeks to make the Bible relevant by pure contextualization, leading to the rejection of “textism” and for that matter, the role of ecclesial theological tradition as an interface partner with biblical studies; for the tradition of the Church is viewed as reactionary and serviceable to colonizing interests.

A number of issues arise here. Hermeneutically, this approach fails to embrace the reality that the Bible is fundamentally text. As I mentioned above in the discussion of transjective study, emotion, experience, and intuition play a critical role in biblical interpretation; but they provide critical resources for textual construal, and are not a substitute for the attempt to hear the message of the text. We are told, e.g., that in the study of the Book of Ruth we ought to focus upon and praise Orpah at the expense of Ruth: “While Ruth, the Moabite, is willing to assimilate with the dominant culture and espouse ethnic and cultural harmony, her sister-in-law, Orpah refuses to be part of the hegemonic agenda and goes back to her mother’s house, and thus to her own gods and goddesses and to her ancestors.” (And certain other postcolonialists, such as Laura Donaldson, tell us that we should read Joshua from the Canaanite perspective, since the Canaanites were victims of
Israelite imperialism.\(\text{45}\) These readings favor the point of view of postcolonialists over the point of view of the text in interpretation. And we are told regarding the exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac in Mark 5: “Demonic possession was a type of social coping mechanism developed by the colonized to face the radical pressures imposed by colonialism.” \(\text{46}\) Thus, the text’s emphasis upon transcendent cosmic powers, including God, is replaced by an exclusive imminentalism; for the transcendent emphasis in the biblical message is judged to be at best irrelevant to the practical needs of the suffering dominated and at worst itself imperialistic and thus a tool in the hands of colonizers. Even Jesus is critiqued as tacitly imperialistic and as insensitive to the subaltern in that he failed to call for “radical overhaul of the [oppressive] system.” \(\text{47}\) The upshot is that many of the major perspectives of the biblical text—transcendence, eschatology, mission, faith, grace, the people of God—are either ignored or repudiated.

Yet these readings that are alien to the point of view of the text do have some value for us, in that they cause us to look at biblical passages in new and different ways that we would not have considered otherwise. And even if we cannot finally accept these interpretations they often yield indirectly a kind of interpretive clarity, perhaps a clarity that illumines the meaning of the text itself and is thus quite different from what the postcolonialists intend.

We are disappointed that in Sugirtharajah’s approach the Bible’s implicit canonical claims regarding unique revelation are not seriously considered: “Subjecting the Bible to postcolonial scrutiny does not reinforce its authority, but emphasizes its contradictory content. At a time when, outside of fundamentalist circles, Christian doctrines carry little weight and moral questions are less likely to be settled by biblical teachings, the Bible’s place has to be rethought…” \(\text{48}\) For all of its critical scrutiny directed at the Bible, however, the postcolonialism of Sugirtharajah is notable for the lack of any self-criticism. We see not the slightest hint of any openness to the possibility that the message of the Bible might rightly challenge some of the perspectives embraced by postcolonialists. This absolutism is the hallmark of every ideological reading. The ideology is rendered unsusceptible to any critical assessment. In the end, this is the essence of a deductive approach.

While the postcolonialism of Sugirtharajah is primarily ideological, the version of postcolonialism represented by the Indian Simon Samuel in his book, \textit{And They Crucified Him: A Postcolonial Reading of the Story of Jesus},\(\text{49}\) is primarily heuristic, i.e., it seeks to use postcolonial insights to arrive at an enhanced understanding of the message of the Bible. Samuel objects to Sugirtharajah’s almost exclusive employment of modern postcolonial experience under European capitalist domination as the framework for understanding the dynamics of hegemonic power. He wishes to broaden postcolonial criticism to include ancient experiences of both colonial and
Samuel also resists the reliance of Sugirtharajah and most other postcolonists upon Marxist and Poststructuralist models, which tend to be binary, i.e., to think of postcolonial response as either anti- or pro-colonial. Samuel insists that the response of postcolonials is more complex, ranging from disruption (contradiction and antagonism toward colonizers) to mimicry (imitation of the rhetoric of colonial or nativistic powerful elites in order to subvert their power and epistemic constructions) to ambivalence and hybridity (symbiosis of acceptance and rejection of colonial or nativistic power discourse) to acceptance (submission to colonial or nativistic power).

Samuel employs the Gospel of Mark as a test case. His purpose is “to read the story of Jesus according to Mark as a postcolonial discourse of a minoritarian community under subjection and surveillance that tries to create a space in between the Roman colonial and relatively dominant native Jewish collaborative and nationalistic discourses of power. Its focus is to explore and find whether or not Mark is a resistant anti-colonial…discourse that mimics the imperium of Rome or a colonial/postcolonial discourse that accommodates and disrupts both the native elite Jewish and alien Roman discourses of power.” He concludes that “the portrait of Jesus in Mark can…be decoded as a colonial/postcolonial conundrum affiliative and disruptive to both the native and the colonial discourses of power.”

We see, then, that Samuel’s method is more empirical (i.e., attentive to the range and complexity of responses actually found in the text) and thus more inductive than that of Sugirtharajah. Accordingly, Samuel acknowledges and embraces the role of the divine in Mark’s presentation of postcolonial responses, and refuses to reduce the hermeneutical project to human imminentalist considerations. He insists that “[in] practicing postcolonial studies in biblical studies it is important to treat the biblical discourses as imaginative, faith-centered, ficto-historical writings and popular postcolonial writings, which emanated from the colonial contexts of biblical antiquity…” Samuel thus insists that applying postcolonial analysis to the text can reveal significant aspects of meaning that otherwise remain hidden. Like Sugirtharajah, Samuel makes use of methodological practices that are employed in our IBS process in order to identify and highlight postcolonial elements in the text. But he does so more consistently than Sugirtharajah, since Samuel is not bound to ideology in the same way or to the same extent.

Samuel also suggests that Afrasian Christians who have actually experienced postcolonialism and marginalization are more adept at postcolonial analysis than western readers who belong to colonizing cultures: “But unlike the west where Christianity grew under imperial and state patronage to become a colonial religion it remained a persecuted minority even after the two thousand years of its history not only in the place of its birth but also in many
neighboring Afrasian countries. The biblical discourse in most of these countries continues to remain a minoritarian discourse. Christians in the east, just as in the days of biblical antiquity, are still a ‘colonised’ minority in most Asian and African societies where they continue to experience ‘otherness’ in one way or another. The biblical discourses as far as they are concerned are anti- or postcolonial rather than colonist in nature.”

This statement reminds us that Christians in most of the Majority World are in many ways situationally closer to the biblical narratives and the original audience of the biblical writings than are we who are in the west, thereby suggesting the critical importance of hearing these voices as we seek to understand the biblical text in greater accuracy and depth.

Yet one wonders whether Samuel is warranted in insisting that the experience of the colonized or dominated is the key feature to interpretation of biblical passages in general. I suspect that Samuel’s choice of the Gospel of Mark as a test case is not accidental. For many years scholars have recognized that of all the Gospels Mark is arguably the most resistant to the Roman imperium. Nevertheless, even in Mark Rome does not receive a great deal of explicit attention. Samuel himself acknowledges, “It may be rather puzzling that in the early part of Mark’s story we neither read of any direct reference to the Roman colonial presence nor get an impression that the story has anything explicit to say about this political phenomenon. However, this need not necessarily surprise us because avoidance of a direct reference to colonialism can be a strategy in any anti or postcolonial writings, which originate in colonial contexts.”

Apparently if colonialism is mentioned it suggests postcolonial interest; and if it is not mentioned that likewise suggests postcolonial interest.

Moreover, Samuel largely neglects those passages in the Gospels where Sugirtharajah and other postcolonialists, with some justification, see imperialistic aspects in Jesus’ teaching, e.g., the coercive and punitive power of Christ at the coming of the Kingdom of God in consummation. One value of Sugirtharajah’s study is the acknowledgment that the Bible does not universally adopt a subversive stance in relation to imperial power, but sometimes seems to embrace it, as in the wars of extermination in the Book of Joshua, for example. It may be that an inductive examination of the entire canon reveals that the Bible is not unequivocally postcolonial, that its attitude towards colonialism or imperialism is complex, and that the Bible resists attempts to read every passage according to a postcolonial response to dominant power.

Nevertheless, postcolonial criticism can inform inductive Bible study insofar as postcolonialism is incorporated into a broad program that inductively assesses the issues of individual passages and, in an eclectic fashion, utilizes those specific exegetical procedures and critical methods that are required by
the interpretive demands of the particular passage. But in addition, an awareness of issues of power and domination suggested by postcolonial criticism can make those of us in the western interpretive tradition more sensitive to these elements within the text, and can help us to see the implicit pro-colonial bias in our interpretations.

Conclusion

We have seen that inductive biblical study has both a history and a future. The history provides the basic orientation and the essential contours. The character of inductive biblical study, informed by its history, is that although it is not methodologically fluid yet it is methodologically open. Inductive biblical study maintains an inductive stance not only towards the text but also towards its own methodological process. It engages with all methods and hermeneutical approaches practiced around the world and seeks, on the basis of honest assessment, to adopt and incorporate what is deemed legitimate and useful, as well as responsibly and frankly to offer critique, even as it seeks to receive critique. And in this day of global awareness, inductive biblical study will be especially attentive to insights from the Majority World in order both to enhance the study of the Bible for those in the western world and to make inductive biblical study all the more relevant and compelling for those in the Majority World.

Endnotes


2 Ruskin’s essay appears in Howard Tillman Kuist, These Words Upon Thy Heart: Scripture and the Christian Response (Richmond: John Knox, 1947), 161-81. This appeared originally in John Ruskin, Elements of Drawing and Perspective (New York: Dutton, 1932), 144-94.

3 Eberhardt, 145-159.

4 Ibid., 145.

Change Process, Deterministic Agents (or you can use “Determinism”), Emergence, Missiology, Paradigm Shifts, Technology.

6 Eberhardt, 31.
7 Eberhardt, 52.
8 Bauer and Traina, 281-87.
9 Andrew Murray, With Christ in the School of Prayer: Thoughts on our Training for the Ministry of Intercession (Chicago: Revell, 1885).
11 Eberhardt, p. 76.
13 For significant literary, audio, and visual resources on the history and character of inductive biblical study, see the website www.inductivebiblicalstudy.com.
14 Bauer and Traina, 363-69.
15 Bauer and Traina, 28-37.
17 Traina, “Inductive Bible Study Reexamined in Light of Contemporary Hermeneutics I,” 54-62.
20 Traina, Methodical Bible Study, 182.
23 Bauer and Traina, 50-52.
25 This term is notoriously difficult to translate. It is usually rendered “history of effects” or “history of response.” It pertains to the practice of examining the various ways in which passages have been employed in a variety of venues, e.g., literature and art, in order that these insights might be used as a heuristic (discovery) device to illumine aspects of the meaning of the text that we otherwise might miss. Several recent commentaries employ this method, especially the German commentary series Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament. For examples in English see the articles by Rudolf Schnackenburg and Ulrich Luz in David R. Bauer and Mark Allan Powell, eds., Treasures New and Old: Contributions to Matthean Studies (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 251-310.
26 Note here the extensive work done on this issue by Francis Watson, *Text, Church, and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

27 Eberhardt, 211-16.

28 Bauer and Traina, 71-74.


32 Sugirtharajah, 11.

33 Ibid., 13.

34 Ibid.


36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid., 79.

39 Ibid., 98-99.

40 Ibid., 94-95.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 26.

43 Ibid., 112.

44 Ibid., 86.


46 Sugirtharajah, 94.

47 Ibid., 90.

48 Ibid., 101.


50 Samuel, 9.

51 Ibid., 10.

52 Ibid., 5.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid., 144.

55 Ibid., 16.

56 Ibid., 170.
Works Cited
Bauer, David R. and Mark Allan Powell, eds.

Bauer, David R. and Robert A. Traina

Donaldson, Laura

Eco, Umberto

Eberhardt, Charles R.

Kuist, Howard Tillman

Meyer, Ben F.

Murray, Andrew
1885 With Christ in the School of Prayer: Thoughts on our Training for the Ministry of Intercession. Chicago, IL: Revell.

Osborne, Grant R.

Ruskin, John

Said, Edward

Samuel, Simon
Sugirtharajah, R.S.

Thiselton, Anthony C.

Traina, Robert A.

Valdés, Mario J., ed.

Watson, Francis

Wright, N. T.
“This is the best kind of introduction to a book of the Bible—informative, engaging, scholarly with a light touch, well-calculated to help people read the Bible not to be a substitute for reading it, and capable of encouraging people to water-ski across the Psalms (as the authors themselves put it).”

—John Goldingay, Fuller Theological Seminary

978-0-8010-3186-1 • 320 pp. • $27.99p
AVAILABLE MAY 2013
In this addition to the well-received Paideia series, respected New Testament scholar Raymond Collins examines cultural context and theological meaning in Second Corinthians.

978-0-8010-3643-9 • 1,280 pp. • $49.99c
AVAILABLE JUNE 2013
Leading evangelical scholar Millard Erickson offers a new edition of his bestselling textbook, now substantially updated and revised throughout, with added material on the atonement, justification, and divine foreknowledge.

978-0-8010-3962-1 • 672 pp. • $49.99c
AVAILABLE AUGUST 2013
In this volume, two respected senior scholars have brought together a team of distinguished specialists to introduce the Jewish, Hellenistic, and Roman backgrounds necessary for understanding the New Testament and the early church.

RUTH ANNE REESE

A Faculty Member's Response to David Bauer's Article

This paper was part of an oral panel presentation that was given on October 12, 2012 at Asbury Theological Seminary. The panel was asked to engage with the question of Inductive Bible Study and its relationship to the global church. The paper is only minimally revised from its original oral presentation.

Unlike others on this panel, I come to Inductive Bible Study (IBS) as an outsider. I did not study at Asbury or at another institution that taught this particular method. However, I do come from programs that are also deeply concerned with a close reading of the biblical text and with the detailed observation that is part of that quest. When I first came to Asbury back in 2000 I was able to sit in Dr. Bauer’s Matthew class, to discuss some of the interpretive issues that arose in that context, and to think about the IBS method. I have found Dr. Bauer and my other IBS colleagues to be good and gracious conversation partners on questions of interpretation. Over the years I have read Dr. Traina’s Methodical Bible Study, Dr. Thompson’s Bible Study that Works, and now the joint volume by Bauer and Traina Inductive Bible Study. In addition, I have taught 600 and 700 level exegesis here at Asbury for more than a decade. Almost every student that I have had in those classes comes to me having taken IBS as a prerequisite for further exegetical work, and to some extent student’s facility with interpretive questions has been impacted by their engagement with the inductive method of study. I’m also well aware from conversations with my colleagues that there are different perspectives on IBS and on how it is taught. So, while there is agreement amongst my IBS colleagues, there are also areas of difference. My own comments today will be a reflection on the recent volume Inductive Bible Study by Bauer and Traina.

In my remarks today, I want to affirm many strengths that I see within the IBS method while also drawing attention to some particular critiques that I have as well. Finally, I want to raise some questions for consideration as we think together about the needs of the global church and the potential contribution of inductive biblical study. Let me begin with the strengths.
First, IBS teaches a method or approach to the text. In other words, this form of study is, as Traina called it in his earlier book, methodical. It presents an order for students to follow as they approach the text. They are not “left on their own” to somehow, someway come up with some insight from the text. This is especially helpful for students that are new to biblical study and who need a guide to follow. Bauer and Traina’s book aims to present a comprehensive description of the method. This can be a deterrent since it can take a long time to read and digest this book, especially for the beginner, and because the method can seem overwhelming and intimidating. On the other hand, the information that is needed to work with the method for many years is supplied in this guide. In any case, whether one begins with a book like Thompson’s *Bible Study that Works* or delves into Bauer and Traina’s *Inductive Bible Study*, you will find a methodical approach to the study of the Bible.

Second, IBS has long championed book level and segment level context as particularly important areas of study. This is a particular area of strength that I want to affirm within the IBS method. Knowledge of a whole biblical book, its structures, its textual markers, and its style helps the interpreter to study the smaller parts of the book more effectively. It helps the interpreter to see both the big picture and the smaller details at the same time. This is a very important area of study that can also be one of the more difficult areas of study. I think that this is especially true when it comes to larger books where there is a lot of material to be analyzed in comparison to some of the smaller biblical books. At this point, Bauer and Traina lay out good procedures for beginning this type of study. This includes multiple readings of the whole text, labels for particular parts of the text, attention to repeated textual markers, and other elements that help to structure the whole of the biblical book under consideration. This type of study helps protect the interpreter against proof-texting and other types of reading that rip verses from their literary context. This attention to the whole of the book in its final literary form is another strength of the method.

Third, IBS gives attention to the book in its final literary form and also gives attention to the shape of the canon as a whole. This is particularly helpful for those who will use the book in ministry within the church and in other contexts where the Bible is read in its final form. At the same time, it does raise question about the value of other types of criticism—those criticisms that have been typically labeled as “historical criticism.” However, that is an issue that I will leave with Dr. Arnold for further discussion.

While IBS has strengths to commend it, there are also some critiques of the method that can be offered.

First, throughout the *Inductive Bible Study* volume special terminology is employed with many categories ending in – “ization” (plain English should be preferred – why not just call it summary rather than summarization or talk
about a crucial turning point rather than cruciality?). Some students think that they have accomplished something by giving a label to the text, but simply being able to label the text does not indicate that they have deeply grasped the meaning of the text. Related to this issue is the construction of the categories themselves. It is quite tempting for students to take the categories that are given and to begin to employ them without raising questions about where the categories come from, or who determines them, who decides what to look for. Although this may not be the intent of Bauer and Traina, it is difficult for students to question the categories that are given. In one sense, if students accept IBS categories as simply something to learn and employ without any engagement at the “meta” level regarding the identity of these categories, then IBS categories become the new set of presuppositions about what the text will contain and what will be found in the text. Thus there is a tension between an “inductive” approach and the giving of categories, which has the appearance of a deductive method. On the one hand, the argument is to study the text on its own terms. And I am very sympathetic to that approach. However, as soon as one turns to the actual methodology, one is introduced to category after category—different “general materials” (persons, events, chronology, geography, and ideology), different “relationships” (recurrence, contrast, comparison, climax, particularization, generalization, substantiation, cruciality, summarization, etc.). Too easily these can become logical categories into which the text is slotted rather than tools or aids in the interpretive process.

I want to finish this first critique by talking about the role that learning styles and types of intelligence have in the appropriation of IBS as a method. IBS relies highly on two types of intelligence—Logical-Mathematical and Linguistic—those who have these types of intelligence are generally “pattern smart” and “word smart.” In other words, seeing the patterns in texts comes easily to them and engaging words comes readily to them. However, there are other kinds of knowing and these are less easily accessed through the IBS method as it is currently presented. Some of these include spatial intelligence, kinesthetic intelligence, and existential intelligence. Might a different type of knowledge and an equally valid understanding of a Scriptural text come about through acting out the text? Painting a text? Through meditating on the text? Through manipulating concrete representations of the text as children do in Godly Play types of curriculum? What role do intuition and imagination play in the interpretation of the biblical text? In other words, does the IBS method rely too heavily on logic and linguistics without enough inclusion of other types of learning?

My second critique relates to the topic of presuppositions. There seems to be ambivalence in the volume between an acknowledgment that everyone has presuppositions and a desire to rise above these or to in someway put...
presuppositions aside. This is a repeated tension that is evidenced in the book, especially in the first 35 pages. There is a well written and well thought out appendix at the end of the book that deals with the role of presuppositions in our approach to the Bible. There is much that I find helpful in the appendix, but I wish that that material had been included in the book itself and that the insights about presuppositions (especially their inescapable nature) had been incorporated more fully into the book itself.

One of the issues that I want to raise is that one cannot rise above presuppositions. There are always presuppositions ready to take the place of those that have been revealed for what they are. One can hope to continue peeling back layers of presuppositions, but the desire to rise above presuppositions is a false hope. In addition, there are whole sets of presuppositions that we have that are extremely difficult to peel away. Many of these were imbibed along with milk when we were infants – the mother-tongue that we speak, the cultural water that we swim in, and the familial lives that we live all contribute to the sets of presuppositions that allow us to function in the world and even to read and comprehend the biblical text itself.

Again, these can be pressed against (or even peeled back); we can become fluent in another language (although the older one becomes the more difficult that can be); we can move to other parts of the world and live among other cultures (this is an especially effective way to reveal cultural blinders), but there will always be presuppositions that impact and influence our understanding of the text.

Third, IBS sees the text as an “object of study” (albeit one that should be near to the interpreter rather than held at arms length and one that should be experienced as transformational), but it is an object to be appropriated rather than a “narrative to be told” in such a way that the past becomes a real aspect of the present (cf. Willie Jennings, p. 55). In a similar way, there is attention given to the personal needs and questions of the interpreter, but these are approached as a matter of attention and analysis rather than as part of the narrative that forms the identity that engages the text. Let me contrast the IBS method of study with the kind of narrative attention that I’m talking about.

In his book *The Christian Imagination* Willie James Jennings describes someone who is a “place-maker” – a person who is a guide to the bond between places and bodies. This story teller has the task of telling the story in such a way that they are “creating in the process a vivid sense that what happened long ago – right here, on this very spot – could be happening now.” (Jennings, p. 55). This is a form of narrative reading that invites the hearer to participation and to a sense of the self as one of many who have participated in the unfolding story. And as such it presents an alternative way of thinking about both the method itself and the purpose of the method. The text is no longer something to be applied but rather something to be experienced.
Finally, in this context I have one last set of concerns to raise. Part of our discussion today is around the topic of whether or how IBS might be appropriated for the global church. Here are some questions that I would like to raise about that topic.

1. To what extent does IBS rely upon a high level of literacy in order to be effective? Are there other methods that are more suited for oral cultures or for persons with a low level of literacy or with limited access to the printed text of Scripture?

2. To what extent should persons from other cultures be invited to construct their own way of seeing and approaching the text? In other words, does the idea of taking IBS to other cultural settings urge them to adopt the same categories and language that is already in place around this method? To what extent would this be a benefit and to what extent a hindrance?

3. How might IBS be changed by an encounter with non-western, non-linear ways of thinking and engaging? For example, what implications might the high value placed on oral story telling in many other cultures have for IBS?

Thank you for the challenge to read and comment on this comprehensive guide to Inductive Bible Study.

**Ruth Anne Reese** is professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.

**Works Cited**
Bauer, David R. and Robert A. Traina

Jennings, Willie James

Thompson, David L.

Traina, Robert A.
M. Sashi Jamir

*Inductive Bible Study: Contextual Appropriation in Northeast India*

**Abstract**

M. Sashi Jamir examines the application of Inductive Bible Study to the tribal communities of Northeast India. This postcolonial situation has some positives such as a context with a higher degree of education, but it has also lead to a prominence of Western philosophy over traditional ways of understanding, which need to be reclaimed. The reality that larger national forces in India often overshadow tribal communities also poses potential problems that prevent the local theological voice from being heard.

**Keywords:** Inductive Bible Study, tribal theology, Northeast India, contextualization, tribals

M. Sashi Jamir is a Ph.D. student in Biblical Studies (Old Testament) at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.
**Introduction: Back to “The Source”**

The goal of this paper is to assess whether Inductive Bible Study (IBS) can invigorate a post-colonial Christian context. To this end, I will identify briefly some issues within the Northeast India context followed by my assessment of IBS and its contextual appropriation.

**Context**

Northeast India formerly consisted of seven states, but with the induction of Sikkim, today it has eight. It is bordered in the north by Bhutan, Tibet, and China; in the east and southeast by Myanmar; and in the west and southwest by Bangladesh. It is connected to mainland India by a narrow strip of land in West Bengal. It is a nation within a nation. Demographically, Northeast India can be divided broadly into “tribal” and “non-tribal” peoples. A majority of the tribals are Christians whereas the non-tribals are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, or Buddhist.

Christianity came to Northeast India via the British colonizers and missionaries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The missionaries were chiefly from the American Baptist and Welsh Presbyterian missions. Although the impact of Christianity amongst the tribals varies from one state to another, one common negative impact, despite some positive signs, is the presence of modernistic philosophy, the intellectual basis of the missionaries. In other words, the tribals were not only converted to Christianity but were also converted to modernistic philosophy—a philosophy that imprinted on the minds of the tribals that their culture was archaic and needed to evolve like that of Western civilizations. A. Wati Longchar asserts, Christian missions, no matter which denomination or society, all considered themselves “superior” and consistently maintained an exclusive attitude towards indigenous religion and cultures. They came with a strong view to conquer the “other world” by Christian faith. Conversion was understood in terms of replacement of the old ways of life, which include rejection of traditional cultures and value system. Today many people have forgotten and have been uprooted from their traditional value system.

This mentality by the missionaries caused many tribal Christians to move away from their ancestral culture and yet remain far behind their surrogate culture. The major consequence of such an impact has been the creation of an identity crisis and a shallow theology among the tribal converts. This is vividly described by K. Thanzauva, who avers that one of the characteristics of Northeast tribals is an identity crisis.

This vulnerable plight of the Northeast tribals has been intensified by two more factors: first, since India got her freedom from the British the...
Northeast region of India has been engaged in multiple armed conflicts (an endogenous factor). Second, the inevitable expansion of the phenomenon of globalization and neo-liberalism has penetrated this part of India (an exogenous factor). As a result of such complex clashes of geo-socio-political, economic and religious worldviews, the tribals in this part of India appear to vacillate according to which way the wind is blowing.

**Tribal Theology**

In response to this situation, there has been an effort among tribal scholars to articulate contextual theology. Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, Assam has been one of the main centers of “tribal theology,” and Wati Longchar has contributed immensely toward its progress. He has argued elaborately for a more comprehensive tribal theology. He avers that tribal theology is a type of liberation theology because it aspires to liberate the oppressed tribals from the dominant culture. He claims that land is the most fundamental feature for the tribals. In fact, land has a sacred identity amongst the tribals. Thus, he proposes a tribal theology under the theme of land. Longchar critiques modernization for ushering in ecological disorders, which have directly impacted the main source of survival for the tribals. For Longchar, this modernization that impairs ecology is the tool of the dominant cultures to exploit land and conversely, the tribal people.

Thus, he argues that tribal theology should be able to liberate land occupied by the oppressors. In order to support his theology of land, Longchar narrates three tribal mythical stories that explain the interconnectedness of a Supreme Being, land, and humans. He continues that in the tribal worldview, it is the land through which god and humans are connected. Without land even god does not exist. God manifests himself in trees, stones, sand, water, and other natural resources. He concludes that this tribal understanding of land would enhance the Christian notion of biblical salvation, a holistic salvation. For him, the notion of Christian salvation has been reduced to personal enterprise. Incorporating a tribal worldview into Christian interpretation would foster liberation to land, which ultimately would bring liberation to the tribals.

Longchar should be lauded for taking the initiative in expounding a tribal theology because his motive of revitalizing Scripture for the indigenous tribal people is an appropriate way forward. The tribal theology movement is one of the products of the significant epistemological shift in recent times popularly known as postmodernism. Some offshoots of postmodern hermeneutics are feminism, post-colonialism, and post-structuralism. Postmodernism has set the platform for the voiceless to be proactive in recognizing the legitimacy of their own culture and perspectives. The obsession of modernism with rationalism and absolutism has largely inflicted prejudices against minority voices such as females and communities with traditions and
worldviews other than modernism. The postmodern criticisms in general and the postcolonial, feminist, and tribal studies in particular have to be considered. They have exposed some important aspects in doing theology that have been left unattended or taken lightly, namely, the importance of context. Theology has to be contextual and praxis-oriented. A right theology should be able to invigorate the community of God.

If one is not critically cognizant in tribal theology, there is a tendency to romanticize the past at the expense of sound biblical theology. Two points need mention here: first, any critical contextual hermeneutic should be realistic in its outlook. In other words, cultures do evolve and many cultures, moreover, have evolved and are evolving toward hybrid cultures. In such hybrid cultures idealizing past traditions or worldview is anachronistic. This does not mean that past traditions have to be dispelled but that the hybrid cultures have to be acknowledged. Second, one has to be mindful that there is a strong tendenz in postmodern hermeneutics to treat the context as the norma normans (the norming norm) and the Scripture as the norma normata (the normed norm). This is a grievous danger. Scripture ought to be the starting context for any theology; moreover, contextualization happens only when both the biblical horizon and one's own contextual horizon interact with each other. In other words, tribal theology cannot be right theology by only emphasizing the indigenous context.

Bible Colleges in North East India

Another related issue is the state of seminaries in this region of India. This concern is specifically related to a fairly small town in Nagaland, Dimapur, where seminaries are rapidly mushrooming. For instance Dimapur is home to more than 30 Bible colleges. Yet, the impact of these colleges in the churches is rather disheartening. This is indicated by the tendency among common believers to treat the Bible as if it has fallen straight from heaven or to treat the Bible in a superstitious manner. Indeed, a dichotomy exists between the Bible colleges and the common believers there. This bifurcation is due to an inadequate knowledge and skill on the part of the students to interpret the Bible properly, which in turn reflects on the status of the colleges.

K. Lama in his brief study on the seminaries of Northeast India asked seminarians, “What subjects did you really miss in your seminary training?” The response he received from the seminarians was unanimous—a lack of comprehensive knowledge of the Bible. Another question that Lama directed to the lay people was, “What do they expect the seminary teachers to train future pastors?” To this question he received two dominant answers—“teach them to be relevant in preaching, and teach them how to expound the Word of God.” Lama comments,
Being relevant to the contemporary issue is important. However, unlike any secular school of fine arts, Seminaries are primarily a Bible school where the importance of Biblical studies gives the reason for its existence. Our response to the contemporary issues must emerge from our strong foundation in the scripture. The Seminary must find a way to keep this emphasis without any compromise.

Lama’s brief survey on theological studies in Northeast India clearly suggests the lack of proper biblical studies. It is imperative to shift the focus of theological studies to its primary source—the Bible.

If the hermeneutic of the scholarly debate is in danger of falling into extreme postmodern relativism and un-critical prejudices against anything Western, the danger amongst common believers is to fall into syncretism and pseudo-prophetism. S. Iralu avers, “The church [today] not only counters heretical teachings, but also fights against falsehood manifesting itself through wrong ideologies and damaging teachings that distort the true gospel. Like never before, the church in North East India is under attack from different quarters; these forces are from without and within the church.” These problems stem from an improper or misguided handling of the Bible.

The imperative need among Christians from Northeast India is a contextual theology that is biblically centered, one that will also enable them to weave their own cultural identity in light of the Scriptures.

**Inductive Bible Study**

Before embarking on the appropriation of IBS in Northeast India, I would like to highlight briefly some of the features of the method. Initially, IBS was termed “English Bible” because of its emphasis on the study of the Bible in the vernacular. IBS began its movement in the late 19th century. The reason for its birth was the frustration of its founders—William Rainey Harper and Wilbert Webster White—with higher critical issues in which the biblical scholars were involved. Since then IBS has evolved as a Bible study tool. The first mark of the evolution of IBS was seen in the publication of Traina’s *Methodical Bible Study* (1952). Traina related IBS to mainstream exegesis and to biblical theology. The current book by Bauer and Traina provides further explanations and clarifications of IBS in the light of the present climate of the study of biblical hermeneutics. For instance, the present book considers the authorial intention as not necessarily the only intention of the biblical text. Furthermore, the theoretical foundation of the book, as found in pages 13-71, is timely and compelling. In fact, the articulation of the framework of the philosophy of induction sets this book apart from the renowned books on Old and New Testament exegesis by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.
For Bauer and Traina, the term “inductive” is synonymous with evidence.\(^{26}\) Thus, as an interpreter of the biblical text, one must pursue the hard factual evidences of the text. However, the philosophy of induction is best embodied in the concept of critical realism.\(^{27}\) Critical realism means both the subjective experiences of the interpreter as well as the objective evidences are considered important in interpreting the biblical text.\(^{28}\) The inductive spirit as opposed to the deductive method is open-ended, un-dogmatic, provisional, and tentative in the understanding of the meaning of the text. It is open to any method that would enable one to provide evidences that illuminate the text.\(^{29}\) It emphasizes the dialogical method of Bible study.\(^{30}\) Another feature of IBS is its direct study of the Bible.\(^{31}\) That is, in IBS, one is required to study the text firsthand before referring to secondary resources.

With its aim to interpret the text for the congregation, IBS focuses on the final form of the text.\(^{32}\) It also holds that in order to have sound Bible interpretation one needs to have right methodology. In addition, the method of IBS begins with observation, followed by interpretation, evaluation, appropriation, and correlation.

Observation is the first and critical phase of IBS. Observation can be done in a book or even at the level of short paragraphs. The observation level of the interpreter may vary according to the level of education of the observer and also the context. It should also be noted that IBS began in a Western context. Thus, IBS engages literary analysis such as genre, structure, and other literary techniques when observing the content of the text.\(^{33}\) The interpretation phase is also known as the answering stage. In other words, in this phase, the interpreters are involved in “answering questions they have raised in the observation phase.”\(^{34}\) By engaging in answers to the questions that stem from the observation of the text, an interpreter can actually protect himself or herself from eisegesis. One concludes the interpretation phase by drawing inferences from the evidence. This leads to the evaluation and appropriation phases. Once the inferences are drawn from the evidence, the interpreter enters into the evaluation phase. In the evaluation phase, an interpreter is concerned with the general questions of how the Bible as an ancient source can still be instructive to the present situation. It also deals with the issue of ethics. For instance, it touches on the understanding of “situation-bound teaching” and “principle-based character of biblical ethics.”\(^{35}\) In this section, Bauer and Traina provide excellent and sound principles of doing biblical ethics and theology. Only after this evaluation is one to work on the application of the biblical message to the contemporary situation. Finally, correlation deals with the broader issue of biblical theology.

Bauer and Traina have explicitly mentioned that the method they explained in the book is presented in its ideal form.\(^{36}\) By this, they mean that one can adapt these principles and procedures according to one’s own ability or the
ability of the congregation. This suggests that the dynamic of the relationship between the facilitator and the congregation is “top-down.” Thus, much is dependent upon the effectiveness of the facilitator to improvise and make this method efficient. The facilitator must be thoroughly familiar with the method, as well as genuinely converted to an inductive attitude or spirit, which is essentially reflected in the biblical Jesus’ model of servant leadership.

This book is comprehensive and can be used as an exegetical handbook for seminarians and anyone who aspires to authentic Bible study.

**Appropriation of IBS in Northeast India**

With its emphasis on the concept of induction, IBS has struck a middle ground between the worldviews of modernism and post-modernism. This middle ground approach is embodied in the hermeneutic of critical realism—a hermeneutic that acknowledges the evidential and objective study of the text, which also provides space for the subjective experience of its readers. This hermeneutic must be the larger framework within which any kind of contextual biblical theology should maneuver. As noted above, the intention of tribal theology to construct a contextual theology is a correct one. However, one who utilizes a tribal hermeneutic (or any postmodern hermeneutic) should be mindful that not all Western hermeneutics are guided by a modernistic philosophy and are thus oppressive and chauvinistic. A hermeneutic that stems from the West can be liberating in character. The inductive approach at its core is Bible-centered and yet it is at once accommodative, empathetic, and objective in its hermeneutical outlook.

I believe strongly that this book, *Inductive Bible Study*, has the potential to guide and nurture Northeast India’s theological seminaries in particular and the churches in general. In fact, this book can be utilized in creating a curriculum for biblical courses. Examining for instance, how one does biblical theology or biblical ethics and, of course, how one conducts a proper Bible study. This book will also help one to determine the importance and the limitations of the critical study of Scripture. There is no doubt that the technique of literary analysis of the Scriptures as employed by IBS is Western in nature. However, the reality is that in most of these tribal regions in Northeast India education is done in an English medium, studying modern science, arts, and literature. Of course, the quality of education is worrisome. Nonetheless, for students of this region, such literary analysis is not a foreign concept at all. My point is that if literary techniques can be utilized in understanding the Bible, why not exploit them? This book can provide the impetus in keeping the Bible as the focus and the source of any theological enterprise. All these benefits will in turn produce capable and effective pastors to nurture tribal believers.

It is said that theology was created in Germany, was popularized in America, and was executed in Asia. However, with IBS’s emphasis on a firsthand
approach to the Bible (p. 50-52), it will enable Christians in Northeast India to develop authentic, indigenous, and biblically centered theologies of their own. However, the question arises how interpreters can interpret the Bible without having knowledge about the Bible? Or, would it not be more dangerous to let someone interpret the Bible without any prior or proper knowledge of Scripture? Although a valid concern, I think the direct approach is very much in line with inductive thinking, which promotes dialogue and curiosity. Moreover, the provisional nature of interpretation is the hallmark of IBS. In other words, one's initial observation is open to further investigation. Everybody has presuppositions and the ability to make inferential conclusions and it is right to let these features interact with the text with openness rather than in a deductive—dogmatic—sense. In the Northeast region of India the success of the implementation of IBS will depend, to a certain degree, on the facilitator. In other words, the facilitator must use common sense. For instance, one begins with reading the text, followed by observation and perhaps providing some historical background of the text when necessary. At the end, the significant aspect of the process is whether the inductive spirit is nurtured or not.

The inductive spirit encapsulated in words such as “undogmatic,” “radical openness,” “dialogue,” is liberating (p. 18-19). The fact that the inductive process invites any effective method to determine the meaning of a text opens avenues for the tribals to utilize some of their existing positive cultural traits such as their oral traditions, narrative style of communication, shame-honor society, kinship relationships, and their agricultural rural life settings—traits similar to those of the Israelites in Scripture—to inform them in their observations of the Bible. In doing this, a vista is opened for Christians in Northeast India to nurture and revitalize their traditional culture and, thus, shape their identity in light of the gospel. IBS can then be termed a “liberating hermeneutic.”

Conclusion

The purpose of this essay was to analyze whether IBS can contextually be appropriated in Northeast India. In the process, I highlighted some features of Northeast Indian Christianity namely, tribal theology and the mushrooming of seminaries in this region. I argued that IBS could invigorate the seminaries and their theological construction in particular, the church, and its congregation in general.
Endnotes


2. Sikkim was inducted into the states of Northeast India in 2002. The names of the states of northeast India are as follows: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura.

3. According to the 2001 census, Northeast India constitutes 39 million people, which is about 3.8 percent of the total population of the country. Except for Assam, the rest of the area is hilly. This hilly terrain is overwhelmingly populated with tribals. For instance, Mizoram is 94.5 percent tribal. Northeast India has about four hundred tribes with diverse socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds and speaks hundreds of different languages and dialects. It should be mentioned that the word “tribe” is a rather derogatory word in India, which is ironic because it is upheld by the Indian constitution. See also Limatula Longkumer, “Keynote Address: Folk Stories and Traditions: Sources for Doing Indigenous Theology” in *Christ and Culture: Christ through Culture* (Ballina: National Council of Churches in Australia, 2009), 63-72.

4. According to the 1991 census in Northeast India, Christians comprise 13.64% of the total population.

5. Paul G. Hiebert calls this period from 1800-1950 a period of “non-contextualization.” The Western missionaries did not find any reason to contextualize the gospel. Instead, they expected the native converts to evolve into the Western culture, which was the highest existing culture. See Hiebert, “Critical Contextualization,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11 (July 1987): 104-12.


7. Hiebert and his daughter Meneses have pointed out accurately that the result of noncontextual proselytization is that the native culture goes underground. As such, it provides a healthy platform where syncretism can flourish seamlessly and produce split-level Christians. Hiebert and Meneses, *Incarnational Ministry: Planting Churches in Band, Tribal, Peasant, and Urban Societies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1995), 167. The reason for such an impact is because the missionaries’ Christian message does not simply touch the deepest level of the tribal culture. T. K. Oommen avers that culture can be divided into three dimensions—cognitive, conative, and normative. Cognitive and normative aspects deal with thinking and judgment respectively, whereas conative is associated with outward expressions such as eating, dressing, worshipping, etc. In line with Oommen’s analysis of culture, it is fair to say that the missionaries’ message touched the conative aspect of culture but not necessarily the cognitive and the normative aspects. T. K. Oommen, “Culture Change among the tribes of Northeast India” in *Christianity and Change in Northeast India* (ed., T.B. Subba, Joseph Puthenpurakal, and Shaji Joseph Puykunnel; New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2006), 3-14.

8. K. Thanzauva, “Tribal Theological Trends in North East India,” in *Tribal Theology: A Reader* (ed., Shimreingam Shimray; Tribal Study Series No. 12; Tribal Study Center: Eastern Theological College, 2003), 40-51. See also L. Pohsningap’s response to S. Karotemprel, who argues that the tribal’s worldview and identity
were affected for better or worse. Pohsngap, “A Response to Sebastian Karotemprel: The Impact of Christianity on the Tribes of Northeast India,” in Impact of Christianity on North East India (ed., J. Puthenpurakal; Shillong: Vendrame Institute Publications, 1996), 49-60.

9 The agenda of these armed conflicts varies from demand of complete self-determination (as in the case of the Nagas) to separate statehood within India. Some of the prominent militant organizations include NSCN-IM and K (National Socialist Council of Nagalim—Isak-Muivhah and Khaplang factions), ULFA (United Liberation Front of Asom), BLT (Bodo Liberation Tigers), NDFB (National Democratic Front of Bodoland), HNLCC (Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council), ANVC (A-chik National Volunteers Council), NLFT (National Liberation Front of Tripura), ATTF (All Tripura Tiger Force), BNCT (Borok National Council of Tripura), KNF (Kuki National Front), KNA (Kuki National Army), PULF (People's United Liberation Front), MPLF (Manipur People's Liberation Front), and IPRA (Indigenous People's Revolutionary Alliance).


11 Besides Longchar, some of the other contributors include K. Thanzauva, Renthy Keitzer, and most of the professors of Eastern Theological College. Here are a few resources on tribal theology: Wati Longchar and Larry E. Davis eds., Doing Theology with Tribal Resources: Context and Perspective (Jorhat, India: Tribal Study Centre, Eastern Theological College, 1999); A Wati Longchar, An Emerging Asian Theology: Tribal Theology, Issue, Method and Perspective (Tribal Study Series no. 8; Jorhat: Barkataki & Company, 2000); Shimreingam Shimray ed., Tribal Theology: A Reader (Tribal Study Series no. 12; Jorhat: ETC, 2003).

12 Longchar, An Emerging Asian Theology.


15 For instance, the postcolonial interpretation is shaped by the prejudices inflicted by the colonizers. These prejudices are translated into an ideological lens through which Scripture is analyzed. Thus, postcolonial criticism becomes an ideological criticism. For basic understanding of post colonial hermeneutics, see R.S. Sugirtharajah, Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).


18 Lama is the General Secretary of the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India. He oversees about seven thousand Baptist churches in Northeast India.
He also has a Ph.D. in Old Testament from Trinity Divinity School. See Lama, “Re-Envisioning Seminary-Church Relationship: A Response from the Baptist Churches in NE India,” *BN* 61 vol.3 (2012): 18-28. Takatemjen also voices the need for Bible-centered seminaries in Northeast India in his book *Studies on Theology and Naga Culture* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1998), 139.

19 Lama, “Re-Envisioning Seminary-Church Relationship,” 25.

20 Ibid., 25.


27 Ibid., 32-34.

28 Bauer and Traina call this a transjective study. Ibid., 28-37.

29 Ibid., 20.

30 See the video of Traina’s lecture on IBS posted in the website: www.inductivebiblicalstudy.com.


32 Inductive Bible Study’s emphasis on the final form parallels Brevard Childs’ canonical approach. However, one needs to be cautious while emphasizing the final form, especially for Old Testament books. Childs has the inclination to neglect the significance of the diachronic study of the Old Testament books. Old Testament books such as those that make up the Pentateuch are an amalgamation of important documents or traditions. The crucial point is that before the final form took shape such individual documents or traditions might have significance for a given community and, moreover, such documents or traditions do reflect the historical situation of the ancient community prior to the community addressed by the final form of the Old Testament. Childs does not take this aspect seriously in his understanding of the canonical approach. For more discussion on synchronic approach and diachronic approach, see Ernest Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 268. However, to be fair, IBS does provide scope to utilize insights from higher critical analysis.

33 Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study*, 75-176.

34 Ibid., 177.

35 Ibid., 315-16.

36 Ibid., 7.

38 The literacy rate of Northeast India (68.5%) is, in fact, higher than the national literacy rate (64.8%) according to the 2001 census.

39 I did my B.A. in English literature from Nagaland University. I remember vividly dealing with the literary criticism of Matthew Arnold and T. S. Elliot.

40 This point also has an implication for tribal theology. Western education has made inroads into the minds of many tribal Christians both young and old. In other words, culture is evolving and taking on a hybrid form. This factor has to be considered and monitored while articulating tribal theology.

Works Cited

Baral, Kailash C., ed.

Bauer, David

Bauer, David R. and Robert A. Traina

Castillo, M.Q.

Fee, Gordon D.

Hiebert, Paul

Hiebert, Paul and Meneses

Iralu, Sanyu
Jenkins, Philip  

Lama, A.K.  

Longchar, A Wati  
2000  *An Emerging Asian Theology: Tribal Theology, Issue, Method and Perspective.* Tribal Study Series no. 8; Jorhat: Barkataki & Company.


Longchar, A. Wati and Larry E. Davis eds.  
1999  *Doing Theology with Tribal Resources: Context and Perspective.* Jorhat, India: Tribal Study Centre, Eastern Theological College.

Longkumer, Limatula  

Nicholson, Ernest  

Oommen, T.K.  

Oswalt, John N.  
2009  *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or just Ancient Literature?* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Pohsngap, L.  

Shimray Shimreingam, ed.  
2003  *Tribal Theology: A Reader.* Tribal Study Series no. 12; Jorhat, India: Tribal Study Centre, Eastern Theological College.
Stuart, Douglas  
Louisville, KY: Westminster.

Sugirtharajah, R.S.  
Takatemjen 1998 *Studies on Theology and Naga Culture.*  
Delhi, India: ISPCK.

Thanzauva, K.  

Traina, Robert  

Vashum, Yangkahoma  
Pride and Prejudice
Colonialism and Post-Colonialism in the Philippine Chinese Context: How IBS Can be a Liberating Methodology to Find the Truth to be Set Free

Abstract
This paper aims to present the importance of disentangling the Philippine Chinese from a colonial mindset before they can truly be disentangled from their wrong beliefs and practices. It is crucial to first trace back the relationship of colonialism and the colonial mindset among the Philippine Chinese to understand how this affects their present attitude toward Scripture and Christian mission before we can introduce the Inductive Bible Study method and its benefits to Christian churches.

Keywords: Inductive Bible Study, Philippines, colonialism, post-colonialism, overseas Chinese

Juliet Uytanlet is a Ph.D. student in intercultural studies with a concentration in contextualization studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.
The Chinese in the Philippines Past (Colonialism) and Present (Post-Colonialism)

Our world’s population has recently reached seven billion. In China alone, there are 1.3 billion Chinese; Taiwan has 23 million; and Hong Kong has seven million. There are also 50 million overseas Chinese scattered in countries worldwide. With an approximate number of 1.4 billion Chinese and overseas Chinese out of the seven billion, there is one Chinese person for every seven people in the world. No wonder that National Geographic presents the world’s most typical face as a 28-year old Han Chinese male. For centuries past, China had been conducting trade with Arab and Malay nations via the Silk Road—an ancient passage for trade and communications. The people from the southern coast of China conducted trade with nations in Southeast Asia as early as the 10th century CE. There were exchanges of goods, ideas, and even religions. Migration becomes a novel idea as ships sail from place to place and establish trade centers.

Trade, famine, poverty, and political instability in China resulted in the migration of many Chinese to different parts of the world. Hence, these factors also led to the large population of Chinese in “Diaspora.” Ka-Che Yip points out that following the end of Qing Dynasty and the start of the Republic of China, the unequal treaties, Western exploitations, and ambitious local warlords led the nation into chaos. These socio-economic and political issues are the “push factors” that led the Chinese people to look for greener pastures. The attraction of finding a better life and future for themselves and their families are the “pull factors” to America and other Southeast Asian nations. Nevertheless, most of the Chinese consider themselves as sojourners, still looking back at China as their motherland. They only hope to earn money to bring home and help their families. During the Qing Dynasty, the queue is a sign of loyalty to China. As long as it is not cut off, a sojourner is welcomed to return to one’s homeland. After the Communists took over China, many Chinese settled in their host countries and returning to China became simply a dream.

In the Philippines, the ethnic Chinese are a minority with a population of 1.24 million out of 92 million people. Based on Ang-See’s report, 52% of Chinese-Filipinos live in Metro Manila. 90% no longer read a Chinese newspaper, 10% are over 51 years old, and 85% are Roman Catholics since they are born and raised in the Philippines. Only 2%, according to Enoch Wan, are evangelical Protestants.

For centuries, their population and location have been controlled and contained by the Spaniards within the Parían (Extramuros) outside Intramuros or Walled City of the Spaniards. The Americans did the same with policies that contained them within Binondo and controlled their numbers with the Chinese Exclusion Act. In spite of this, they somehow managed to spread
out all over the archipelago, though most of them live in Manila Chinatown even today. For centuries, dating back to the pre-Spanish period, the Chinese people have been trading with the early Filipinos. They bartered and exchanged goods with them. When the Spaniards arrived, they called the Chinese Sangley for they are chiefly merchants and traders. Their presence and valuable contribution to the Philippine economy continued during the American period, and even up to the present.

In an attempt to understand the etymology of the term Sangley, Benedict Anderson “imagined” the first contact between the Iberian colonizer and the slant-eyed trader. The colonizer asks the non-islander trader, “Who are you?” to which the trader replies, “We are sengli” (u/a) meaning merchants. But if based on Kaisa Para Sa Kaunlaran’s position, the word Sangley derives from the Hokkien term xionglai meaning “often come.” The reenactment will then go like this. “Who are you?” Ask the Spaniards. The irate Chinese who have been trading around the area for centuries long before the coming of these white sailors answered, “We often come.” I can imagine how these Hokkien speakers answered in their dialect, “Gun (we) xionglai (often come).”

Vinoth Ramachandra raises two important issues in his books Church and Mission in the New Asia and Subverting Global Myths. First, he challenges the Eurocentric historical narrative on globalization and industrialization as his way of recovering “the other.” He contends that trade is taken away from the Arabs, Malays, and Chinese by the Portuguese and Dutch. Today, historians are challenging the Anglo-centric view that Britain was the first industrialized nation. He debunks the myth that globalization starts in the late-20th century through capitalism. He agrees that globalization has intensified in the past decades; however, a careful study of history will reveal that China has long been an industrialized country and had been engaging in globalization even before the European maritime exploration. He quotes that A. G. Hopkins observes Lipton tea has been around long before Starbucks and Coca-cola. Ramachandra lays out the contributions of China to the Western world and how these “great debts” have been rarely acknowledged by modern scholarship. Through the Jesuit missions, knowledge on science, agriculture, models, and machines have been transported to Europe that paved the way to Europe’s agricultural and industrial revolution. He reminds the readers how Europe accuses Japan of copying and improving the technology they have acquired from the West when they themselves fail to acknowledge the technology they have acquired from China. As to trade, Britain’s shameful opium trade is clear evidence that China needed nothing from the West. When silver ran out, the British resorted to using opium from India to trade for silk and tea with China. What’s even sadder is the fact that Africans and American Indians extracted that silver from countries in Africa and Americas.
Secondly, Ramachandra notes the missionary enterprise and its role in colonialism. He starts by praising Irvin and Sunquist’s retelling of the history of Christianity and mission. He moves to Walls’ modern missionary movement and its transformation by contact with the “other.” Ramachandra criticizes the Asian Christians living in the West who are too busy pursuing the “American Dream” to bother with critiquing their own culture and gospel. They simply are good at fund raising and copying American canned Christian programs. Incidentally, many non-Western churches have also fallen into the trap of adopting the American way of doing church. The Asian theologians persist in the colonial narrative of mission. This “Orientalist” view on Asian theology is part of our colonial legacy. The problem is not adopting but failure to critically engage with the materials to aptly adapt them in different cultures and settings. In the Philippines, we call this the “colonial mentality.” The colonizers may have left the country but the people’s mindset is still holding on and living in the colonial past. The West is always the best, from goods, politics, entertainment, education, medicine, and mission. The colonizers have ingrained in the minds of the people that there is no good that can come out of them. Edward Said has defined Orientalism as a way of perceiving the other that is prejudiced and thereby justifies their domination over them. Has not colonialism placed Christianizing and civilizing as the two primary goals? Hence, it is crucial that “the other” must be portrayed as barbaric, primitive, backward, uncivilized, pagan, foolish, and heathen to justify their domination. In postcolonial Philippines, the “colonial mentality” continues to influence many Filipinos and Chinese in thinking that the West has the best to offer, and they fail to appreciate what the locals can create and produce whether in areas of fashion, business, media, technology, and sadly, even in doing church and mission. Many of the products in Christian bookstores are from the United States which provides evidence for the evangelical churches’ continued “colonial mentality,” patronage and dependence.

During the Spanish colonization of the Philippines (1521-1889), the people were deprived of the opportunity to read and study the Bible for themselves. They did not even have it translated in their own languages. Only the catechisms and prayers were translated in vernacular languages. During mass, the priests preached in Latin or Spanish. Possessing copies of Bibles was considered seditious; this resulted in persecution, or even execution. During the American Period (1898-1946, with an interim period of Japanese Occupation from 1941-1945), reading and translation of the Bible in the local languages were allowed. This “new freedom” did not change the outlook and practice of the people regarding Bible reading and study. The 377-year influence of Spanish Catholicism remained stronger than the half-century influence of the Protestant Americans. Thus, the people did not see the need and importance of reading
the Scriptures for themselves, and they remained unequipped to interpret the Bible. This gives birth to what Jesuit priest Jaime Bulatao called “split-level Christianity” to describe the folk Roman Catholicism of the Filipinos, the Philippine Chinese included. 14 They go to church on Sundays for mass but on regular days they seek fortunetellers, witch doctors, and rely on amulets to solve their problems. Ang-See recognizes that the Chinese-Filipinos have the tendency to be syncretistic by accepting all religions and practicing all beliefs to avoid bad luck. Moreover, she observes that during death and funerals, the Chinese-Filipinos will employ rituals in ancestral worship to ensure that the deceased will have a good afterlife. 15 Dr. Jean Uayan calls this chap chay lomi, a mixture of many religions. She challenges the need to help these people disentangle themselves from unbiblical beliefs and practices in order to be able to be “authentic and effective evangelical Christians and Roman Catholics.” 16

Despite the fact that Roman Catholics and evangelical Christians in the country acknowledge the Bible as the word of God does not necessarily mean they acknowledge its authority over them. Therefore, it is important to help them know how to study the Scriptures themselves. They need to cultivate and experience the joy of reading, interpreting, and appropriating the Scriptures in their lives and faith. This is where IBS can be a useful tool for it is liberating. Uayan correctly notes that the Filipinos and Chinese in the Philippines must be disentangled from their unbiblical beliefs and practices to become authentic and dynamic evangelical Christians and Roman Catholics. However, I believe that it is necessary to first disentangle the common people from a colonial mindset that has plagued them and paralyzed them from the greatest adventure of discovering the truths in the Scriptures for themselves. Moreover, we must recognize the role of the Holy Spirit in the process.

Presuppositions acknowledged and Openness attuned

How can one be disentangled from a colonial mindset? First, one must acknowledge the problem. Admit your own prejudices. The very thing that stands out in the book Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics as I read it is its honesty and transparency in acknowledging the very nature of human beings to have his/her own presuppositions even in approaching the reading of the Word. David Bauer acknowledges, “All of us have presuppositions” that affect the way we read the Bible. This reminds me of Eugene Nida’s words: “Prejudice is universal.” 17 Nida points out that the very word prejudice may not necessarily mean or have the same weight of understanding as the racial prejudice we know and understand today. The term racial prejudice is an invention of the past two hundred years to affirm one’s racial superiority over the other. 18 The word prejudice is at present often associated with racism when it simply means
prejudgments. Jane Austen’s prejudice in her novel *Pride and Prejudice* pertains to prejudgment or “first impressions”—which is the original title of the book.

Second, it is important to disseminate information concerning the present socio-cultural, political, and economic realities. Knowledge is Power. The people need to be empowered with the knowledge of history and the present reality. Wrong information must be corrected. For instance, Stephen Neill writes: “[T]he Americans drove the Spaniards out of the Philippine islands and occupied the country.” The truth is, the Spaniards were already losing their grip when the Americans arrived to the Philippines following the uprising of many Filipino leaders such as Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Aguinaldo in 1892. On June 12, 1898, the Filipinos had already declared their independence at Kawit, Cavite. Yet Spain sold the Philippines along with Guam and Puerto Rico to the United States for $20 million. This is known as the Treaty of Paris, which was signed in December that same year. Renato Constantino believes there is no question that the Americans acted with duplicity. They were using the Filipinos to fight the Spaniards until the American troops arrived. It was therefore expedient to appear to favor their ally’s aspirations… The U.S. Army was now equipped to implement the developing plans of Washington. Now ready to show their hand, the American generals began to treat their supposed allies arrogantly, demanding that Filipino troops vacate certain areas. Although Aguinaldo and other Filipino officers had become apprehensive over the great influx of U.S. troops and resented the generals’ orders, they accommodated the Americans. Subsequent events would demonstrate that their good will would not count for much.

The “subsequent events” refers to the Philippine-American War. The National Historic Institute Chairman Ambeth Ocampo considers the Philippine-American War as a historic event that should be imparted to young Filipinos. He adds, “It had been glossed over in our textbooks but school children should know that the Spaniards and the Japanese were not only our aggressors but the Americans as well.” Many Filipinos and Americans were not informed of such events. In most history books, Ocampo notes, the Filipinos’ fight for freedom against the Spaniards and the Japanese is very clear, but the war against the Americans is disregarded. When the US Library of Congress changed the subject heading “Philippine Insurrection” on its catalogues to “Philippine-American War” in 1998, it indicated that the American government recognized the sovereignty of the Philippines prior to the start of the conflict between the US troops and that of Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo. Aguinaldo tried to stop the revolution by sending emissaries to the American forces. He was allegedly snubbed by Gen. Elwell Otis, who replied: “Fighting having begun, must go on to the grim end.” US President William McKinley later told reporters “that the insurgents had attacked Manila” to justify the war. The McKinley administration subsequently declared Aguinaldo a bandit,
although no formal declaration of war was issued. The war lasted for three years, but clashes went on until 1913.\textsuperscript{21} There were brutal atrocities committed on both camps during the war. Arthur Tuggy reasons that the war could have been prevented had the US government took the Filipino leaders more seriously and treated them with respect. After the capture of Aguinaldo on March 23, 1901 by US General Frederick Funston the First Republic ended and the American colonization began.\textsuperscript{22} Historians need to revisit the past and consider the present implications as they write histories. Half-truth is not truth. History is not simply a record of events and dates. History is a lesson for us to learn so as to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

Third, provide reflections with objectivity and caution. One must be honest with the fact that there is a tendency for people to react from one extreme to the other extreme. Therefore, we must be cautious in disseminating truth without causing possible and unintentional consequences like ethnocentrism, racism, and atrocities. Proper guidance is crucial to avoid the reverse oppression. E.J.R. David shares his ultimate purpose for his book \textit{Filipino/American Postcolonial Psychology: Oppression, Colonial Mentality, and Decolonization}. He writes:

\begin{quote}
The change I want to see happen is not a complete rejection of anything American or Western. I believe it will not be practical nor adaptive for Filipinos or any colonized peoples to make such a change. In our highly globalized and diverse world, I believe it is necessary for us to understand that there both good and bad things about our heritage culture and those cultures that may be having influence on us. We need to integrate them. Besides, for many of us (especially Filipino Americans and those who are of mixed race), the new or other culture (most times, it is the Western or American culture) is an important part of our identity, an essential part of who we are. Thus, the change I want to see is not the kind where we only love our heritage culture — we cannot be ethnocentric or in the case of Filipinos, \textit{Filcentric}. This is because we will still be hating or ignoring the other important part of our selves. Instead, what I want to see happen is for us to be \textit{Bicultural} (or perhaps to be \textit{multicultural}) — love both cultures, appreciate both cultures, respect both cultures, know both cultures, be competent in both cultures… \textit{Equally}.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

In reading or studying the Word of God, similarly, we all come with our own presuppositions. We come with our own contexts, theological frameworks, problems, situations, questions, and sadly, we also come with our pride and prejudices. We may insist our interpretation is the best or our methodology is the only way. Thankfully, this book did not claim to be the only “right” way to do IBS. Further, the book proposes that the litmus test for a genuine Inductive Bible Study is “the willingness to gather evidence fully
and openly for and against the premises stated and to accept them as conditional, along with the acknowledgment that the inferences drawn are hypothetical and changeable.”

The book offers two critical principles of IBS that are crucial in helping the post-colonial Chinese in the Philippines be liberated from the fear of doing their own local theologies and studying the Word for themselves. The first is the principle of probability over against the principle of absolute certainty. We need to be open to new insights, yet this does not necessarily mean to fall into a sense of interpretive agnosticism, which is not being able to talk confidently about the meaning of any biblical passage. “Indeed, in some passages the evidence is inconclusive, with the result that the students must suspend judgment regarding their meaning.” The book reminds us again and again to suspend judgment as one studies the Word to avoid imposing our views onto the meaning of the text. This leads us to the second principle, the principle of reality. This principle acknowledges that there is no “pure or absolute inductive study.” We all have our presuppositions. Bauer quotes Schlatter as saying that we can be free from our presuppositions only when we are “keenly conscious of them.” The inductive spirit is to have a radical openness to the evidence wherever it leads. Subjective presuppositions or pre-understandings are realities that need to be acknowledged since they are inevitable yet they are not necessarily correct. To be able to critically engage in the interpretation, one has to be constantly aware of one’s presuppositions.

IBS and the Philippines

In retrospect, the evangelical churches in the Philippines have been bombarded for decades with many canned American Christian materials such as books, music, movies, Bible study methods, seminars, evangelism and discipleship tools, church growth programs, materials for cell groups, care groups, and counseling. We even patronize American Christian personalities and celebrities. It seems that the Philippines has turned into a laboratory to test the “feasibility” and effectiveness of many American Christian materials. The Philippines has been a solid market for these products and theologies. For instance, we have the Campus Crusade for Christ, IVCF and the Navigators operating and serving in colleges and universities throughout the country. The Four Spiritual Laws, the Jesus Film, and the transferable concepts Bible study materials are used extensively to evangelize and disciple not only in school settings but also in churches. Some of the trainings and seminars that are widely accepted by evangelical churches are the Child Evangelism Fellowship’s Wordless Book and Sunday school trainings, Gospel Light VBS, James Kennedy’s Evangelism Explosion, Bruce Wilkinson’s Walk Thru the Bible, Kay Arthur’s Precepts Upon Precepts, Rick Warren’s Purpose Driven Church, and Willow Creek’s Global Leadership Summit. I am truly grateful for all these
wonderful and enriching materials for the evangelical churches have benefited much from them. Nevertheless, there is a need to critically engage with the materials to properly apply them in the Philippine context or the Philippine Chinese context.

Metosalem Castillo believes that IBS can have valuable contributions for the Philippine Bible schools. He gives seven values, but for our purposes I will note only three.

1. **The development of skills in Bible study.** Writing in the early 70s, Castillo points out the limitation of the personal library of many pastors in the Philippines at that time, which led to an exhaustion of whatever materials, tools, and knowledge he/she has available. Today, many pastors still have limitations in terms of acquiring books or even gaining access to big libraries, especially in rural areas. With globalization and the Internet, there are also too many materials and tools available so that many pastors or seminary students may find it hard to choose what is appropriate for their context. Hence, this book can be a good tool and can be recommended for study and application. However, the technical terms and nature of the book limit its usefulness to seminary students and pastors. Lay people will have to resort to other IBS books that can help them learn the principles of hermeneutics without the complex and comprehensive terminologies and concepts.

2. **A scientific approach to truth.** Castillo acknowledges the importance of approaching the Word of God with objectivity. He finds IBS as both objective and impartial and therefore if students will use the IBS method, they will less likely become dogmatic. They will instead be flexible. I agree with Castillo that developing a scientific approach with objectivity and flexibility is very important in training students of the Bible. I will add that the community of faith is responsible to set out or lay down principles as boundaries to keep interpretation in check and to avoid heresies.

3. **The exaltation of the Scriptures.** IBS “seeks to exalt the Scriptures as the primary source of Christian beliefs.” As students come “face to face” in studying the Word for themselves, Castillo believes that they will acquire reverence and an appreciation for it. They will “regard the Bible as (their) authority in matters of faith and conduct.” They will construct “strong and authentic personal convictions because they are rooted in objective evidence which he himself has observed and discovered.” Chinese evangelical Christians often give more weight and importance to interpretations and theologies from the West. This is largely due to their high regard for Western missionaries. It is high time for them to construct their own local theologies and appropriate
Scriptures in their own contexts and situations. In the post-colonial Philippine Chinese context, the children are now all grown up. I hope they will all soon wake up and realize that.

Endnotes


2 Thousands of Chinese porcelains were discovered in Sta. Ana cemetery in Manila during the 1960s. These porcelains can be dated back the Sung Dynasty (960-1278C.E.). Chinese records show that there was extensive trade of Chinese porcelains throughout Southeast Asia during the Sung Dynasty (William Henry Scott, Prehispanic Source Materials for the Study of Philippine History [Manila: University of Santo Tomas Press, 1968], 13-14, 58, 66).


7 Sangley is said to derive from song di in Hokkien meaning business. Abinales and Amoroso recorded Sangley as “travelling merchant” or xang lai. See State and Society in the Philippines (New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2005), 65.


16 Jean Uayan, “Chap Chay Lo Mi: Disentangling the Chinese-Filipino Worldview,” in *Doing Theology in the Philippines* (E. Acoba et al; Manila, Philippines: OMF Literature Inc., 2005), 77. *Chap chay lomi* is a popular Chinese dish made of *chop chay* or mixed vegetables and *lomi* or thick round noodles. It usually has pork, chicken and other ingredients as well.


26 Metosalem Castillo was a student of Dr. Robert Traina, back in the early 1970s. As a M.Th. graduate of Ashbury Theological Seminary in 1972, his master thesis is all about IBS and Ebenezer Bible College curriculum. Metosalem Quillupras Castillo, 1972, “Inductive Bible study and its place in the curriculum of Ebenezer Bible College” (M.Th Thesis, Ashbury Theological Seminary), 113-121.
Works Cited
Abinales, Patricio N. and Donna J. Amoroso

Anderson, Benedict

Ang-See, Teresita

Anonymous

Bauer, David R. and Robert A. Traina

Bulatao, Jaime C.

Carvajal, Nancy C.

Castillo, Metosalem Quillupras

Constantino, Renato

David, E.J.R.

Nida, Eugene

Osias, Camilo and Avelina Lorenzana
Ramachandra, Vinoth

Said, Edward

Scott, William Henry

Tuggy, Arthur

Wickberg, Edgar

Yip, Ka-Che
Curtis Elliott

Of Icons and IBS: Contextualizing the Inductive Bible Study Method Among Eastern Orthodox Background Believers

Abstract
Curtis Elliott explores the application of Inductive Bible Study to an Eastern Orthodox context, where the Bible is approached more from a position of mystery and tradition. He presents a number of problems a typical Protestant approach of this method can cause, and proposes a postmodern narrative-weave approach to Bible study that could potentially alleviate some of these problems.

Keywords: Inductive Bible Study, Eastern Orthodox, Georgia, tradition, narrative weave

Curtis Elliott is a Ph.D. student in intercultural studies with a concentration in historical-theological studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.
Introduction

This article seeks to address how Inductive Bible Study (IBS) was implemented within the country of Georgia among young adults who were primarily Eastern Orthodox in experience and orientation. My goal is to show how IBS functioned in ways that moved these young adults forward in their faith, but also left some challenges with regard to linking Scripture study meaningfully to their Orthodox background and experience. A proposal will be made to view the inductive approach to Bible study in a way that incorporates certain ‘envisioning’ features similar to the way icons are used in popular Orthodox worship.

Context: Faith Tradition and Nationality

The confessional context of Eastern Orthodoxy in Georgia revolves around two realities that impinge upon the lives of average young people: the practices of religious tradition and the fusion of faith and national identity. Tradition, according to Orthodox faith is living and reflects the soul of the nation. Practice is the response and guarantor of living tradition. But while the importance of religious practices may vary from person to person, the Orthodox tradition wedded with a strong sense of national identity incorporates even non-practicing believers into its fold. For example, many of my friends practice Orthodox teachings in regard to prayer, church attendance, observing fast days, and spiritual direction and many do not. Both however claim to be equally Orthodox because they are equally Georgian. The results of blurring the lines between faith and national identity often but not always result in a religiously disguised nominalism and/or a religiously motivated nationalism. The point however, is that within popular Georgian Orthodoxy, whether one is an active or passive Orthodox believer, the power of religious tradition and national faith holds strong gravitational pull especially in relation to Protestant traditions.

Inductive Bible Study (IBS) Among Orthodox Adherents

It is well known in Orthodox circles, especially in Georgia, that the Holy Scriptures and their interpretation are the privilege and calling of the priests and serve as the framework and inspiration of the liturgy.1

Thus, Bible study in and of itself is neither expected nor required of the average layperson. Given that reality, I was surprised to be a part of a study in which those who attended ranged in the spectrum from nominal Orthodox to more devout. To my delight, I found that IBS was generally well received and demonstrated potential not only in renewing faith, but also in bridging confessional lines between Protestants and Orthodox.

This potential was linked primarily with the inductive process and its corresponding values of self-discovery and access to truth. To many, an
intentional reading of the Scriptures—IBS style—was a catalyst for deeper understanding and served to awaken interest in the biblical material. One example of this was when I took a young man named Alexander through a Mark manuscript study. It was amazing to see how his understanding of Jesus grew and his faith strengthened. But there was something missing that surfaced over the course of time. For Alexander and others who participated in IBS, the missing element was the sense of the transcendent mystery of faith that they encountered within Orthodox settings. Perhaps this was an ecclesiological problem and not a problem of IBS method per se. After all, the Orthodox churches were microcosms of heaven, prioritizing image and scent over text and interpretation, and our little Protestant church looked like a private non-decorated apartment and functioned like a club with office hours! But despite the ecclesiological discontinuity, there were other challenges that pointed to in my view, a fundamental need to appropriate IBS in ways that intentionally linked a person’s faith tradition and life trajectory to the process of biblical discovery and interpretation.

Linking Faith Tradition and the Biblical Story

Linking local stories with the biblical story must be valued if we as Christian workers desire young adults to engage deeply in the Word of God and adopt the inductive attitude. In a questionnaire that I sent out to experienced IBS teachers, all trained at Asbury Theological Seminary and all with significant cross-cultural experience, most respondents agreed that the difference between those who used IBS once and those who appropriated it as a method for continued use in their personal and ministry lives hinged on their experience of Christ through the study and their commitment to concrete application. To add to their observations, it is my contention that one’s experience of Christ in IBS is contingent not only upon correct understanding of the truth, but in the way the truth is seen to have penetrated one’s past, present and future i.e. one’s local faith tradition and indeed one’s whole life trajectory.

In the context of Georgia this implies that IBS facilitators must be intentional and committed to linking the IBS method with Orthodoxy’s religious traditions in meaningful ways and with a spirit of openness to learn. This means among other things, our willingness to acknowledge the power of tradition and the broad influence of Orthodox spirituality over the society as a whole. IBS, to be effective among even nominal Orthodox adherents, must be willing to touch upon these sacred social imaginations allowing Scripture interpretation and application to engage tradition, mystery and the visual to both confirm and critique, renew and rebuild.
Adapting IBS to a Postmodern Audience

Curtis Chang, a long time IBS practitioner with Intervarsity, developed one of the ways in which IBS has been adapted to honor a unique audience. In an unpublished paper entitled, “Narrative Weave: A Model of Group Bible Study for Postmoderns”, Chang addresses what he sees as some shortcomings of the IBS model. Two points are worthy of note about his critique: First, there is the problem of identification with the characters in the story. The challenge here is what typically happens in the application stage of the study. Chang’s main concern is that we uncritically assume that students automatically identify with a character in a Biblical story, say for example the leper that Jesus heals. He says we “suddenly end our study with questions like “Where is Jesus touching you?” “What do you mean ‘Where is Jesus touching me?’” they question inside, “Jesus isn’t touching me, all we’ve been talking about is how he is touching the leper.” Chang claims this is neither natural nor automatic to a postmodern generation. He says we end up “assuming what we actually need to be cultivating: the realization that their stories are inextricably wound up with the story attested to on the pages.”

Chang points to another challenge with the OIA method, this time having to do with the linear procedure of the study itself. For Chang, a disjunctive move happens when the application stage is thrust on the audience or tagged on at the end. He says, “we ask them to spend much of the study observing the Gospel story, and then suddenly ask them at the end in the application stage, “So, how are you like the leper?” In effect says Chang, we are asking students to “go backward in narrative flow” and asks, “Who wants to participate in a story that is essentially over already?”

These challenges as I understand them are essentially a problem with envisioning; that is, envisioning a connection to a biblical character, and envisioning a connection to all the past and present ways God deals with people where they are. Chang then advocates for what he calls a narrative weave, an attempt to allow students to participate in the text organically and dialectically. He seeks to allow them to enter an envisioning process early on in the narrative by establishing an identification and personal association with the event, setting, character or response, all the while allowing the “gravitational pull” of the story to provide boundaries in the associations. He seems to honor what Bauer and Traina refer to as the “transjective” relationship between the reader and the text when he states, “Since we don’t want to take students all the way through the story before they participate in it, we must exercise leadership. We guide the identification so that it moves towards the reader’s own pre-condition, but is also influenced by the gravitational pull of how the story will unfold — both in terms of the characters’ encounter with Jesus and how we hope the reader will [unfold] as well.”
Returning to the Georgian context, the Eastern Orthodox tradition provides its own gravitational pull within which inductive bible study takes place. The power of this tradition (story) that fuses nationalism and faith, word and symbol, and historical tradition and present experience should not be underestimated. Linking both IBS method and the Orthodox tradition in an organic way—similar to Chang’s approach above—acknowledges both the powerful influence of an existing tradition or community as well as the ability of the Scripture to create an alternative vision of that community and tradition.

**A Mutually Beneficial Relationship? IBS and Eastern Orthodoxy (from a Protestant’s point of view)**

So how are we to best utilize and understand IBS in an Orthodox setting? It seems to me that there can exist the potential of a mutually enriching relationship. Orthodox spirituality, with its emphasis on mystery, spiritual direction and tradition may end up inspiring the process of IBS toward a more personal and corporate spiritual encounter with Jesus Christ. For students like Alexander and others who long for the mystery of transcendence, IBS does not have to be a rigid linear system that tags the application stage on at the end after much time and energy in observation. Rather, through adapting IBS methodology in creative ways such as the narrative weave approach above, IBS becomes a strategy for a transformational encounter—where personal histories, living traditions, and transcendent mystery are both honored and altered.

Inductive Bible Study also has the potential of offering a critique to established ways of thinking in an Orthodox context by addressing the powers that are at work in all human visions of life and experience. In the Orthodox East, the blurring and blending of faith and national identity and the corresponding church and state relationship, has often meant that the church is too close to the state to be of significant critique in the case of abuses of power or morality. The inductive approach to bible study it seems to me, seeks to develop within the reader a “hermeneutic of submission” to the biblical vision of an alternative reality. Submitting to this alternative vision will inevitably critique the ways in which any believer or church body, may have capitulated to earthly concerns and values and simultaneously brings fresh renewal, obedience, and faithfulness to the Gospel.

**Of Icons and IBS**

The icon in popular Orthodoxy pulls together many of the main concerns of Orthodox theology in that it points to an ontological bridge between the material and the spiritual. The icon also happens to be one of the major ways in which Orthodox believers seek to encounter the transcendence of God in worship. Given this reality, how can IBS, with at times an exclusive interest in technique toward the written Word, meaningfully engage these
realities? Or alternatively, how can more mechanical versions of IBS implementation engage the mystery of faith and the transcendence of God?

I have found Kevin Vanhoozer’s comparison of the biblical text with a verbal icon to be a helpful way to discuss IBS within an Eastern Orthodox context.\(^9\)

St. John of Damascus is well known to have distinguished between worship that one directs to God alone, and reverence, which one may give to persons or objects. This reverence is directed not to the icon as an object, but rather to that which the icon represents or attests. Vanhoozer says, “The icon is a witness to transcendence from transcendence.”\(^10\) Vanhoozer believes that this is precisely the same process we go through when we interpret scripture. He says,

\[\text{(T)he task of interpretation is to get beyond oneself by attending to the form of a literary act in order to encounter an embodied intention. Interpretation is the attempt to bear true witness to what another has said or done. Similarly, the posture demanded by the icon (and the text) is that of “watchful calm”. One cannot wrest its meaning from it; one does not master an icon or a text so much as attend, and pay attention to it.}\]\(^11\)

I believe that IBS, with its emphasis upon ‘submission’ to the text can pave the way to see the interpretive process as a “window” to the face of Christ. To quote Jean Luc Marion, “the body of the text does not belong to the text, but to the One who is embodied in it.”\(^12\)

In the same way that the inductive method is not an end in itself, the icon points beyond the facial lines, paint, wood and glass, to the mystery of transcendence and the meaning embedded in the picture. The iconic gaze, like the inductive approach is a “method” used in worship that serves to point beyond itself. Let us then treat these methods not as objects of worship, but objects of reverence for the ways in which they elicit an encounter with the living God.

**Endnotes**

2. Chang critiques what he calls the OIA model—Observation, Interpretation, Application—in many respects a simplified version of the IBS model) Found at http://www.intervarsity.org/mx/item/4015/.
4. Ibid. p.2
For a good discussion on how local tradition, Christian missionary presence, and Bible Study interact to produce interesting dynamics see Leslie Newbigin's *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids (Mich.): W. B. Eerdmans, 1995), 146-150.

Bauer and Traina state that the Bible presents an “alternative interpretation of one’s experience of the world and one’s life within the world.” This alternative vision of the Bible is one that “in profound ways finally challenges generally accepted human ideologies and values.” In *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids (Mich.): Baker Academic, 2011), 285, FN #9.


Ibid. p. 460.

Ibid. p. 460.

Cited in Vanhoozer *Is There a Meaning* p. 461.

Works Cited

Bauer, David R., and Robert A. Traina


Chang, Curtis


Hann, Chris, and Hermann Goltz


Newbigin, Lesslie


Shmeman, Aleksandr


Vanhoozer, Kevin J.

1998 *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
Contextualizing Inductive Bible Study (IBS) in a Postcolonial Filipino American Setting

Abstract
This article seeks to contextualize the application of Inductive Bible Study (IBS) to a postcolonial setting: the Filipino American Church in Los Angeles.¹ As part of the process of doing so, this essay narrates a short history of colonization and Christianity in the Philippines, the migration of Filipinos to the United States and the challenges Filipino Americans encountered as a people living in a foreign land. Included in this story is the importance of Filipino American churches and some contemporary challenges and postcolonial issues (such as “colonial mentality” or internalized oppression) that affect a particular segment of Filipino Americans in its quest to grow spiritually through the Bible. IBS is examined as a liberating and empowering hermeneutic for Filipino Americans and proposals are spelled out as to how IBS can be appropriated in this particular ecclesial setting.

Keywords: Inductive Bible Study, Filipino American Church, Los Angeles, postcolonial, hermeneutics

Peter Tan-Gatue is a Ph.D. student in Biblical Studies (New Testament) at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.
The prospective locale I am reporting on for the purpose of contextualizing IBS is the Post-Colonial Context of the Filipino-American Christian Diaspora in Los Angeles.¹

The Filipino American community, also known as the Filipino American Diaspora, is the second largest Asian American group after the Chinese-Americans with a population of 3.4 million as reported in the 2010 census. Overall, in terms of growth rate, the Asian American population is the fastest growing race group in the United States. Asians already passed Hispanics as the largest group of new immigrants in the country. In terms of concentration, the Filipino American Diaspora communities in Los Angeles County, California contain the highest number of Filipinos in America.²

The people of the Philippines have a long history of immigration and settlement in the United States. The earliest recorded arrival was in the 16th century in Moro Bay, California, when Filipino sailors arrived from Spanish trade ships.³ Filipino migration increased exponentially in the 20th century, especially in Hawaii and California, during the period when the Philippines was a colony of the United States for almost 50 years (from 1898-1946) and also after more liberal U.S. immigration laws took effect in 1965.⁴

Likewise, Filipinos have a long history with Christianity. The Philippines is a country that was colonized twice by western nations. Before the United States colonized the Philippines, the country was under Spanish rule for more than three hundred years (377 years to be exact). Spanish missionaries introduced Roman Catholic Christianity way back in the 16th Century. In the early 1900’s American missionaries from various denominations arrived in the Philippines and introduced American Protestant Christianity.⁵ Today, a big majority of the Filipinos both in America and in the Philippines are Roman Catholics, with Christians from numerous denominations (mainline, Pentecostal, evangelical, and independent churches) forming a small but growing minority.⁶

As Filipinos migrated to the United States, Filipino Churches (and Filipino Catholics in Catholic churches) also started appearing where they lived.⁷ For Filipino Americans, church gatherings are more than just events for worshipping collectively as a spiritual body. Church is the obvious place to meet other Filipino Americans. There are not many places called Filipino Town, nor are there many Filipino restaurants compared to other Asian Americans. The church context provides a place for the Diaspora community to give mutual support for issues related to living in the homeland of the former American colonial “masters.” These immigrant issues include: acclimation to living in the new community, continuation of Filipino practices and traditions, the economic struggle to make it in America while at the same time working hard so they can send money to loved ones in the Philippines,
generational tension between parents and children who were raised in America, feelings of alienation, liminality, feelings of dislocation, and identity issues. Before I came to Lexington, I served for eight years in various teaching and pastoral positions at four Filipino American Christian churches in Los Angeles and Orange County. Before that time, my formative years as a Christian were spent at a predominantly Anglo church in a suburb of St. Paul, Minnesota. In my observation, the type of Christianity in the Filipino-American churches where I served was not the Western Christianity introduced by Spain and America. The Christianity that arrived from the Philippines and planted itself in U.S. soil is a hybrid form that is uniquely Filipino American – a Western Christianity infused with Filipino cultural and spiritual beliefs, and practices. Some people consider this a form of “Folk Christianity.” For me, it is simply “Filipino American Christianity.” It is a unique community with its own spirituality and ethos that makes it different from Western Christianity and Christianity in the Philippines. Ministering at these Filipino American churches was for me, in some ways, a cross-cultural experience and in other ways, it was like coming home.

The Filipino-American churches where I served provided much social, emotional, cultural, immigration and community support for Filipino-Americans in their own locale. All of them were small Evangelical churches of Reformed and Baptist persuasions, with families and people from all age groups coming from various socio-economic standings and originally coming from different regions in the Philippines. They each had their own distinctive major issues including members with immigration difficulties, complications with other congregations due to the sharing of worship spaces, and pastoral search issues as qualified and available Filipino American pastors were not that common. One frequent issue, that all of these churches recognized, was the need for more depth in Biblical knowledge and hermeneutics. Some members from each of these congregations claimed that they were in these churches primarily because of the community fellowship but they were not, unfortunately, growing spiritually as much as they could through the Bible. But since they did not find it feasible to leave the churches, they turned to a plethora of TV and online evangelists and preachers to supplement the teaching they got from their pastors and Bible studies.

Some college-age members of one of the churches even took the initiative of attending a small local seminary to supplement this need. In another church I was specifically brought in to teach the church leaders the basics of interpreting scripture and surveys of the Old and New Testaments. For that purpose, I used a specific curriculum designed by an organization based in Florida called Crossing Cultures International. This organization currently employs this curriculum in eleven Asian countries including churches in the southern Philippines. The methods used resemble IBS in some aspects,
especially the procedural steps of Observation, Interpretation, and Application/Evaluation.\(^{13}\)

While I can appreciate the zeal of the members and their desire to know the Bible in a deeper way, much can be said about possible reasons why a lack of Bible knowledge and interpretation exist in this context. Some seemed to rely excessively on authority figures to interpret their Bibles. Filipinos have a very high view of authority figures for cultural reasons and as a result of colonization.\(^{14}\) This manifested itself whenever they sought first and upheld the opinions of Bible teachers, pastors, missionaries and other experts over their own. While nothing is wrong with consulting experts, their over-reliance on these other sources deprived them of making even a rudimentary effort at first-hand engagement of the scriptures. Also, the so-called Filipino “Colonial mentality” could be at work.\(^{15}\) (I would rather call it “Neo-colonial” mentality since the Americans left the Philippines a long time ago.) This is an outlook that considers anything “American” as better than anything Filipino and is a by-product of the colonial years.\(^{16}\) They possibly perceived the “American” evangelists and preachers on TV as being better in interpreting the Bible than their local Filipino American pastors and leaders. Unfortunately for them, these media preachers do not necessarily demonstrate appropriate interpretation and some rely mostly on proof-texting. There were also some who desired to dwell on texts that seemed to speak more of the immigrant situation and context instead of others that seemingly did not. They deemed other texts as less significant, which robbed them of getting the full counsel of the scriptures. Finally, there was the issue of life in a fast-paced and high-cost environment like Los Angeles. There were some people who worked two jobs during ungodly hours to make ends meet plus send money to the extended family in the Philippines. For people in this camp, finding time to attend Bible studies was a major issue. Indeed, the reasons may be more than these, or a combination of these and others. Regardless of what they were, the result was the same: they only had limited knowledge of the scriptures and a shallow, deductive procedure of engaging the text, relying mostly on proof-texts, and favorite passages.

I believe that IBS can do much to help if it is properly appropriated in this setting. Assuming that this book on IBS will be in the hands of Filipino-American seminary-trained pastors and trained teaching elders, and assuming that these leaders diligently teach and embody the principles of IBS in their own ministries, I believe that IBS can possibly help increase the spiritual and community vitality of these congregations.

The inductive approach as delineated in IBS will be an empowering and liberating hermeneutical tool and mindset for these churches. First, IBS’s evidential approach and philosophy of radical openness allows for the text to speak on its own terms.\(^{17}\) Its encouragement of open discussion makes it
more possible that interpretation does not remain mainly in the hands of
dogmatic authority figures. In my experience, a lack of candid and open
discussion seemed to be the norm in the Filipino American churches. Through
IBS, more Filipino Americans would be able to have a voice in interpreting
scriptures and this could open up the community to deeper and more diverse
and useful meanings. Second, IBS’s method of critical realist hermeneutics,
which encourages a careful approach of knowing scripture, discourages shallow
interpretation coming from proof-texting and reduces belief in interpretation
fallacies.\(^{18}\)

Learning this approach would equip people to examine critically
interpretations they hear on TV and read in books from experts. Third, IBS’s
principle of critical realism acknowledges the objective reality of the text.\(^{19}\)
This serves as a constructive critique for those who read the scriptures while
giving more weight to their subjective presuppositions and more dogmatic
views as a community. The IBS method will hopefully allow them to be
aware of their presuppositions and enable the text to speak more authentically
as an “other” instead of a text that they merely manipulate to hear their
favorite passages. Finally, IBS is also flexible with regards to what readers can
do. It can be adapted to various abilities and interest levels.\(^{20}\) Therefore, I can
see IBS done in family Bible studies so that the family (an important unit for
Filipino Americans) can do this spiritual task together.\(^{21}\) Also, since it can be
simplified and adapted for those pressed for time, it will lower the barriers of
participation for individuals who are heavily committed with other
responsibilities.

Assuming it is implemented properly, IBS would definitely be a good fit
for the Filipino American churches in Los Angeles. It would be of much
support in helping congregations grow deeper spiritually through the Bible.
The basis of this assertion comes from being able to witness one of the
congregations I worked with grow spiritually when leaders were specifically
trained with Bible interpretation skills through the curriculum I mentioned
earlier that resembled the inductive approach.

For IBS to work in this context, a big key would be to give the local
Filipino-American pastor the right training and support. Since the book’s
intended audience is seminary trained or scholarly individuals, church members
need not read the book unless they choose to do so. The pastor would need
to embody and model the IBS approach. The pastor could do this by
demonstrating the method in Bible studies and showing it explicitly in
sermons. Since Filipino-Americans look up to authority, they would follow
the pastor’s lead and they would try IBS initially as a response to their
relationship with the pastor. Even in instances where some people will insist
on finding IBS too difficult or intimidating, the pastor’s role would be crucial
in providing the support that would be needed. In a way, this approach of
using pastoral authority and relationship is very appropriate. The pastor would need to re-assert spiritual authority in the midst of the influential presence of other spiritual authorities such as TV evangelists and on-line preachers. The pastor, together with the leadership of the church, could then determine the way IBS could be delivered – whether it be through family home bible studies, seminars, or individually.

For the specific church where I taught the Bible curriculum of Crossing Cultures International, I discovered that church leaders and members were willing to stay for three hours after church service every Sunday for a couple of years to learn more about the Bible and grow spiritually together as a community. They even brought their teenagers with them and made the occasion of learning Biblical hermeneutics a family afternoon affair complete with Filipino food. We encouraged everyone to have a voice in the discussions, regardless of their skills and knowledge. It was good to see individuals gain exegetical skills and have their own individual voice in first-hand study of the text, while at the same time, working under the guidance of the church community. In the end, some gained more technical skills than others, but that was expected as people were from different education levels, ages and backgrounds. The result overall during the two years was richer community and spiritual interaction and greater insights into the text.

In conclusion, the Filipino Americans I encountered in Los Angeles sincerely desired to grow in their faith through the Bible. I believe that properly implementing and contextualizing IBS would involve leveraging the following elements in the Filipino American Diaspora post-colonial context: the authority of the pastor (in a way as an embodiment of a less dogmatic and more benevolent figure, like Christ), the respect of the congregation to authority (as a reflection of the Filipino Americans’ respect for the transcendent God), and the cohesiveness of the church (which in a way is a reflection of the activity of the Holy Spirit) as an immigrant community in a foreign land. I believe that IBS would be able to facilitate that growth task.

Endnotes


3 The year was 1587 to be exact. Spanish ships of the galleon trade were partly manned by undisclosed numbers of Filipino natives who participated in voyages of discovery along the Pacific coast. The ships travelled back and forth between Acapulco and Manila between 1565 and 1815, which resulted in Filipino
settlers in what is now known as California and Mexico. In the year 1883, a Filipino settlement (called “Manila Village”) was reported in Louisiana. These Filipino settlers were fishermen who brought their shrimp-drying techniques to the New Orleans area (Posadas, Filipino Americans, 13-14).

4 In 1906, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association started recruiting Filipino agricultural workers. The number of Filipino workers hired increased dramatically as the Association relied less on the Japanese, which was the population group who did most of the work before the 1900’s. By 1932, seventy percent (69.9) of all sugar plantation employees were Filipinos. A number of those laborers eventually went to the mainland where they served as a good source of labor for Pacific coast and Alaskan employers in the arena of agriculture, salmon canning, and other service industries. Of course, some workers came directly from the Philippines as well. The mobility in immigration enjoyed by Filipinos was initially a result of the country’s status as an American colony, which gave Filipinos a distinct advantage over the Chinese and Japanese nationals. In addition to workers, Filipino students also came from more elite Filipino families in the early 1900’s to get their education in the U.S. as part of the American colonial administration policy. Similar to current times, during the 1920’s and the 1930’s most Filipinos lived in the West Coast. U.S. military (all branches) also actively recruited Filipinos to serve as messmen and musicians. They were considered as “good servants” and eventually displaced African-American messmen (Posadas, Filipino Americans, 15-42).

5 The missionaries were sent as part of the mandate of U.S. President William McKinley’s benevolent assimilation policy to carry out the “civilization and Christianization of those savage Filipinos.” The United States annexed (actually “purchased”) the Philippines from Spain in 1898 and fought a war with Philippine revolutionaries and freedom fighters (the Philippine American War), which cost the lives of more than 600,000 Filipinos. Formal fighting ended on July 4, 1902 but actual fighting stopped in 1913 (Gonzalez III, Faith in Action, 20-23).

6 For a more detailed write-up of Filipino-American Christianity in the early 1900’s, see Steffi San Buenaventura, “Filipino Religion at Home and Abroad: Historical Roots and Immigrant Transformations,” in Religions in Asian America: Building Faith Communities (ed. Pyong Gap Min and Jung Ha Kim; Walnut Creek, Calif.: Altamira, 2002), 143-183. In addition to Roman Catholicism and the various Protestant denominations, a Filipino Christian Independent Church also emerged in 1902 as a breakaway group from the Roman Catholic Church. The Iglesia Filipina Independiente was popularly referred to as the Aglipayan religion (named after the head of the denomination Gregorio Aglipay) and was considered a heretical group by the Roman Catholic Church. By 1948, the Church received its validity from the consecration of its Orders by the Episcopal Church and by 1961 a full communion was established between these denominations.

7 In addition to churches, Filipino evangelists were initially recruited to minister to the Filipino populations. American Protestants who were formerly missionaries in the Philippines or had connections with the colonial government also conducted Filipino evangelization in the early days in the mainland. One reason that these churches and other Filipino fellowships emerged was that the Filipinos experienced feelings of discomfort and lack of acceptance when they worshipped in the more predominantly Anglo American churches (San Buenaventura, “Filipino Religion,” in Religions in Asian (ed. Min and Kim), 156-169).
See Posadas, Filipino Americans, 99-124, for more elaboration on Filipino American contemporary issues.

San Buenaventura explained that a dual process of conversion took place during the “Christianization” of the Philippines. The Filipinos embraced the Christian faith but also took an active role in reinterpreting this new spirituality and reformulating and integrating it in their own cultural and religious context (San Buenaventura, “Filipino Religion,” in Religions in Asian (ed. Min and Kim), 148-150).

This feeling reminded me of Perez Firmat’s comment when he said that to be a Cuban-American in the United States is to live ‘on the hyphen’ meaning, in two worlds at once and as ‘other’ in both (Gustavo Perez Firmat, Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 16).

A popular figure is Joel Osteen of Lakewood Church in Houston.

This move created other issues as the seminary they chose to attend promoted a specific theological agenda and doctrine that has some distinctive differences from the church tradition of their home church.

The specific curriculum is called Bible Training Centre for Pastors and Church Leaders (BTCP). It is actually a ten-course curriculum that deals not just with Bible Interpretation but also Bible Surveys, Systematic Theology and other ministry courses. The method is not purely inductive or evidential since it uses deductive elements through the adherence to a specific theology or doctrine that served as a lens to view the Bible. For more information, see: www.bibletraining.com. For more information on Crossing Cultures International, see www.e-ccionline.org.

Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede developed the “Power Distance Index” which is a way to gauge the extent in which less powerful members of society accept inequalities of power that could be an indicator of how they accept authority. In his Index, which was derived from a study of IBM employees in more than fifty (50) countries, the Philippines ranked near the top of this cultural dimension scale with an Index of 94 compared with the United States with an Index of 40. This meant that authority figures are more accepted and expected by Filipinos as compared to Americans (Geert Hofstede, Cultural Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations (2d ed.; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: 2001), 79-143). In terms of the impact of colonialism, Eva-Lotta Hedman and John Sidel cite the practice and characteristic of “Bossism” as a colonial legacy. “Bossism” refers to the presence of “bosses” in Philippine political spheres of influence who aspire and make themselves perpetually entrenched through systemic and other various methods that essentially create a corresponding attitude of perpetual dependence by its citizens. I bring this up here to relate this to a possible “dependence mindset” this system may have created among Filipinos for authority figures. Hedman and Sidel traced the origins of Bossism to systemic political infrastructures established by the American colonizers (Eva-Lotta E. Hedman and John T. Sidel, Philippine Politics and Society in the Twentieth Century: Colonial Legacies, post-colonial trajectories (New York: Routledge, 2000), 6-8, 88-117).

Colonial Mentality is also known as “Internalized Oppression.” Dr. E.J.R. David did an extensive study of this psychological / cultural phenomenon in cooperation with various Filipino-American communities. It is a condition arising
from the product of colonization which instills in Filipinos a mindset that anything American (most especially “white” America) is superior and better than anything distinctively Filipino. That means Americans have superior skin color, media, products, education, people, etc. Anything Filipino is inferior and substandard. The result is that Filipino and Filipino Americans, who have this condition in varying degrees, suffer from lack of confidence, inferiority, self-hate and extreme dislike of other Filipinos and anything related to the Philippines. Dr. David traced the origins of this mentality during the Spanish colonial times. Although the Philippines is no longer a colony of either Spain or the United States, the presence of the global mass media in the Philippines (that promotes American shows and movies), the continued perception of English as the language of the educated which started during the American colonial years, and the continued immigration of Filipinos (the yearly immigration rate of Filipinos is second only to Mexicans) to the United States are some factors that continue to perpetuate a neo-colonial mindset. Dr. David believes that the biggest damage this causes to the Filipino / Filipino American psyche is the loss of Filipino self-identity. As a result, he also hypothesizes that Colonial Mentality may bear some responsibility for the high depression and suicide rates among young Filipino Americans. In my opinion, if you add an ongoing crisis of identity with feelings of dislocation and disorientation arising from being an immigrant or belonging to a family of immigrants in a foreign land, high rates of depression and other mental health issues are understandable (E.J.R. David, Filipino / American Postcolonial Psychology: Oppression, Colonial Mentality, and Decolonization (Bloomington, Ind.: AuthorHouse, 2011).

16 See Eleazar S. Fernandez, “Exodus-toward-Egypt: Filipino-Americans’ Struggle to Realize the Promised Land in America,” in Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World (ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2006), 249-250. Not only did Fernandez mention colonial mentality, but he described it as an attitude that made America a ‘huge god’ from Filipinos who want to be ‘white.’

17 Bauer and Traina, Inductive, 17-19.
18 Bauer and Traina, Inductive, 32-34.
19 Bauer and Traina, Inductive, 32-34.
20 Bauer and Traina, Inductive, 6-8.
21 Posadas speaks of the value of the family in the Filipino kinship system. See Posadas, Filipino Americans, 45-48.
Works Cited
Bauer, David R. and Robert A. Traina

David, E.J.R.

Fernandez, Eleazar S.

Gonzalez III, Joaquin Jay

Hedman, Eva-Lotta E. and John T. Sidel

Hofstede Geert

Perez Firmat, Gustavo

Posadas, Barbara M.

San Buenaventura, Steffi

United States Census Bureau
ART MCPHEE


In honor of Bishop Sundo Kim

Abstract

This paper was presented in Asbury Theological Seminary, on November 14, 2012, at Dr. Art McPhee’s installation in the Sundo Kim Chair for Evangelism and Practical Theology Expertise: Evangelization Studies. In this essay, he explores the role of the Holy Spirit in mission and evangelism as an often-overlooked subject in the Church today.

Keywords: Mission, Holy Spirit, evangelism, Church, missionaries

Art McPhee is the Sundo Kim Professor of Evangelism and Practical Theology Expertise: Evangelization Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.
The church is God’s fleet. In it are barques and brigs, cutters and clippers, and dhows and dinghies—not to mention East Indiamen, frigates, galleons, hulks, ironclads, junk, ketches, lugers, and masulas. From argosies to schooners, sloops to windjammers, xebecs to yachts, this alphabet of sailing ships, propelled by the wind of the Spirit, plies the waters of the world on God’s errand. Of course, the ships all have their own ports, and waters, and tasks; yet their roles are marvelously in synch. Their individual missions are, in fact, one mission—the mission of the Master and Commander, which is the redemption of lost humanity and, indeed, the whole created order.

I spent a little time one summer on the island of Masig in the Torres Strait. Many of the 300 people there retrace their ancestry to an American whose name was Edward Mosby. As a young man, “Yankee Ned,” as they called him, jumped ship in Sydney. He found his way north to Masig, helped the natives fight invading cannibals, hid a stash of pearls no one has ever found, and, fathered a large brood of children. He became a legend.

However, one day, along a sandy path, I discovered a bronze plaque that pointed to some other foreigners who gave the islanders an even greater source of protection and whose spiritual progeny far outnumbered Yankee Ned’s biological progeny. The plaque read:

THANK GOD FOR THE FIRST MISSIONARIES, WHO ON 1ST. JULY 1871 AT DARNLEY ISLAND BROUGHT THE LIGHT OF CHRIST TO THE TORRES STRAITS.

Those missionaries came on a ship of course—an image I find engaging. In fact, I can’t think of a more fitting way of visualizing a local church than as a ship filled with missionaries.

It may not surprise you that early Christians used the image of a ship for the church. You see it in the catacombs. But the metaphor had a different meaning. Harkening back to Noah’s ark, Peter’s boat, and the ship in Acts that gave protection to Paul and everyone else on board, the early Christians’ used the image of a ship to symbolize safety for God’s people in the storms of life. I find that image attractive too. However, the image of a ship of God’s emissaries looking for modern Darnley islanders to offer them Christ rivets me.

What kinds of crews occupy those ships? What makes them missionary sailors? First and foremost, they have the wind in their veins. “Listen to the wind,” said Jesus to a prospective crewmember—Sailor Nick, we’ll call him. “You need that wind! Breathe it in and you will be reborn, changed forever.” What was that wind? It was the wind of the Holy Spirit, who not only comes to us but remains beside us as counselor, comforter, and guide.

Soon afterwards, Jesus gave the same word to a woman from Sychar. “Drink the living water I can offer you,” he said, “and you will never thirst again.” What living water? John’s Gospel tells us: “By this he meant the
Spirit." Without allowing the Spirit to do his transforming work within, the best anyone can be is a passenger on a Sunday worship cruise or, perhaps, an actor, impersonating a crewmember.

Yet, it is never enough for the crew to have the Spirit. If it is to participate in God’s mission, the Spirit needs to have the crew. Sailing vessels are not made for self-propulsion; you can’t row them. They need wind. “You will be my witnesses,” Jesus told his disciples, “but first you need to wait.” Wait for what? For the Spirit! Only when they heard the wind of the Spirit at Pentecost could the disciples weigh anchor, set their sails, and join the mission of God.

That is why the sailors in God’s fleet give priority to prayer. Luke says that, in that room where Jesus’ disciples gathered to wait for the Spirit, they were “constantly devoting themselves to prayer.”

Bishop Kim, whose remarkable service to the church this essay celebrates, can tell you a lot about that: about the role prayer played in Kwanglim Methodist Church’s beginning; about the wonderful story of the Horeb prayer gathering and the 5,000 who prayed each morning for 40 days; and about the Kwanglim retreat center and its prayer garden. The church cannot do without prayer. In prayer, it gets its sailing orders. In prayer, it finds discernment. In prayer, it seeks the wind to fill its sails.

Because they are in God’s fleet—part of God’s task force—every church is required to weigh anchor and put to sea. Houseboats have no place in God’s fleet—skiffs and smacks and other small working vessels, yes, but not houseboats. God builds small ships but not stationary ones...big ones too, but not Queen Mary museum ships. God builds ships to commission them and deploy them. “As the Father sent me, so I am sending you,” said Jesus. “Set sail!”

People used to ask my friend Richard Halverson, “Where is your church?” He always responded with something like, “Let’s see, it is two o’clock on Monday, so several are at work in that factory over there. And quite a few are at home caring for their small children...” The questioners soon got the picture.

Jesus expects his church to be in the world as fishers, ambassadors, salt, light, letters, good seed, and stars in the night sky—all described in the indicative in the New Testament, not the imperative. Why? Because being salt and light is not just their duty but also their nature. The ships of the fleet are made for plying the waters of the world. They have a message to convey — the message of the kingdom. And they have a task to perform — the making of disciples. Both require being in the world.

Salt has no impact without contact. Light is only light as it illuminates the darkness. Ambassadors do not stay at home. They become emissaries. Therefore, the narrow road, of which Jesus spoke, is not some lonely woodland path. No, no. It goes right up the middle of the broad road, but in just the opposite direction. Following Jesus on that road, his disciples invite others to turn and follow him too.
That is why the one prayer Jesus would not pray was for the Father to take his disciples out of the world. Protect them, yes—Jesus did pray that—but strand them in port? Never! 14

The wind that fills a church’s sails is its power, the force that propels it. But the wind of the Spirit is not about power alone. It is also about authority. 15 One need only read of Philip’s Spirit-led encounter with the Ethiopian treasurer, or of Paul and his companions being kept by the Spirit from going to Asiana and Bithynia to know the Holy Spirit is the Master and Commander. 16 As Paul says, “the Spirit is the Lord.” Moreover, he is “the Spirit of the Lord.” That has not changed. It is he who gives the orders, charts the course, fills the churches’ sails, and directs them where he chooses. “The wind blows where it wills.” 18

It was the Spirit who compelled the apostles to preach at Pentecost—at that particular moment and to that particular gathering of Diaspora Jews. It was the Spirit who, through the apostles’ preaching, gathered the believers in Jerusalem, then scattered them throughout the Mediterranean Basin and beyond to Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the Orient. James is reputed to have gone to Spain, Mark to Egypt, and Thomas to India in 53 A.D., at the same time as Paul’s second missionary journey. What impelled them? Under whose influence were they emboldened to proclaim the gospel? The Book of Acts is clear. They did so in response to the impulse, and influence, and inspiration of the Spirit. Without the Spirit, none of it would have happened. Without the Spirit, there would be no church in America or Korea, or anywhere else. There would be no Asbury Theological Seminary, no modern missionary enterprise, no rising church in the global South, no fresh expressions of the church in the U.K., no diaspora missiology, no planting churches at sea among thousands of Filipino and Nepali cruise ship workers. At best, the people called Christians would, like the Essenes of old and hundreds of other religious sects scarcely be remembered—if remembered at all. Convictions and commitments to the mission of God are, of course, key to the spread of the gospel; however, it is the Spirit who brings it about through his church. That is why, in Luke, the Great Commission is not really a commission at all but a description, and why Acts begins, not with a charge but a promise. 19

It is, therefore, as dispiriting for us today—or ought to be—as it was for John Wesley leaving Oxford in the 1740s, or Roland Allen retiring to Kenya in the 1940s, to reflect on how oblivious the church can become to the primacy of the Spirit in fulfilling its call to evangelize and make disciples. One is reminded of Mark Twain’s account of his first crossing of the Pacific on a sailing ship and how, 2,000 miles from shore, the vessel was unable to move for 14 days through lack of wind. Twain recalled the nonchalant indifference of a group of young people:
They used to group themselves on the stern, in the starlight or the moonlight every evening, and sing sea-songs till after midnight in that hot, silent, motionless calm. They had no sense of humor, and they always sang “Homeward Bound,” without reflecting that that was pretty ridiculous, since they were standing still and not proceeding in any direction at all; and they often followed that song with “Are we almost there…”

That, to me, is a perfect parable of the many churches that, unaware of their limp sails, go through the motions week after week, singing, “Anywhere with Jesus.”

John Wesley preached his parting message at Oxford on an August Monday in 1744. It was based on Acts 4:31, which says: When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

On New Year’s morning, five years earlier, John Wesley had experienced Acts 4:31 himself. As he wrote in his journal:

About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exulting joy and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from the awe and amazement at the presence of His majesty, we broke out with one voice, ‘We praise Thee O God, we acknowledge Thee to be Lord.’

Thus, at St. Mary’s, Oxford, we are not surprised to hear a disheartened Wesley ask, “Is this a community filled with the Holy Spirit?” The question was rhetorical. On the contrary, he said, “Many of you are…triflers with God.” He suggested that if someone even brought up the Holy Spirit, they would be labeled frauds or fanatics.

It is still true. There is a book called, Who’s Afraid of the Holy Spirit? The answer is, “much of the church.” Just like Wesley’s Oxford community, many self-identified Christians are wary of an uncontrollable, unmanageable, and ungovernable Holy Spirit. Like Adam and Eve, they want to control their own destinies. As Henry Van Dusen wrote:

The Holy Spirit has always been troublesome, disturbing because it has seemed to be unruly, radical, and unpredictable… And so it has been carefully taken in hand by Church authorities, whether Catholic or Protestant, and securely tethered in impotence.

It is a fit analysis. Many Christian people are afraid that unfettering the Spirit is all but asking for things to get out of control and to be thrust into the hands of fanatics. So, to play it safe, they quench the Spirit.
But I wonder if you noticed something else in Van Dusen’s statement? He repeatedly speaks of the Holy Spirit as “it.” In the 1950s, Van Dusen was one of the best-known Protestant theologians in the world. He was the president of Union Theological Seminary in New York. He once made the cover of *Time*. Yet, to him, the Holy Spirit was an “it.” That, I find surprising. But this I find troubling: many modern Christians, including evangelicals and the spiritual descendants of John Wesley, think of the Holy Spirit in precisely that way—as an “it”—as a mere symbol of God’s presence. In a study done by the Barna Research Group three years ago, 60 percent of self-identified Christians said they did not believe the Holy Spirit is a living entity.

Let me give another example. Despite the strong emphasis in Acts on the Spirit as the leader of the church in mission, a recent book on the Spirit from a leading evangelical publisher gives that topic only three pages out of 275. In neither the table of contents nor the index is there a single reference to the Holy Spirit and mission, or anything close to it. There is only one page on the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. There is nothing about the Spirit’s redirecting Paul three times in Acts 16—not even a sentence. Of the Spirit’s sending Philip to the Ethiopian’s chariot, there is not a word. In modern books on the Spirit, that is more representative than unique.

These days, we hear a lot about missional ecclesiology and the *missio Dei*. The mission is not the church’s we are reminded: it is, instead, the mission of the Triune God. But does it make sense to speak of missional ecclesiology as Trinitarian if we are only ready to embrace two-thirds of the Trinity?

Or take the Wesleyan idea of the prevenient work of the Spirit. Does it make sense to restrict that conversation to seminary classrooms and forget about it on the ground?

Or take the reminders we hear on the synergism of word and deed in evangelism. Does it have any meaning at all if the witnesses are not animated by the Spirit?

When churches forget the Spirit, they unavoidably put themselves in the Spirit’s place. Roll up the sails, and you must get out the oars! So, ignoring what Jesus told Nicodemus (that there is no entering the kingdom without the Spirit), they embrace the ethos of an Oklahoma church whose sign I drove by that said, “BUILDING THE KINGDOM FOR 26 YEARS!” You know such churches too. Because they assume church and kingdom are coterminous, they conflate their own plans and purposes with God’s. It is a practice with a history, dating all the way back to 17th and 18th century Pietism. But it has no authority. It does not comport with the Scriptures, for it presumes to do what only the Spirit can do.

A number of ill winds can blow a church off course. For example, a church is struggling to maintain its membership roll. What does it do? It tries to remake itself after the image of some growing church. “If they can do
it, so can we,” they say. Then, they pour all their energies into cloning the best of what they find. Inevitably, though, preachers, programs, and promotions prevail. There is a lot of action on deck, but no wind in the sails.

Or a church sees that the gospel is broader than it has supposed—that God’s plan entails the reclamation of all that was affected by sin and the fall. So, with due respect to John Wesley, the church decides it has other things to do than save souls. It surmises that all that concerns God—from poverty, to political corruption, to the abuse of God’s creation—should be its concern too. However, that is not where it gets off course. The trouble comes when such churches go beyond that and presume they are responsible to fix all they find wrong. It is not the recovery of holistic mission that has blown them off course, but, instead, the presumption that their job is to right all the wrongs themselves, through various programs.

This view has a history too. In the 1920s, many churches merged the notions of social progress and Christianization—mainly through modernization and education. In that way, they thought they could themselves build the kingdom of God. At the 1938 World Missionary Conference at Tambaram, India, that line of thinking began to be challenged by the case made for the “otherness” of the kingdom of God. Yet, the notion of building God’s kingdom for him is still with us.

None of this, by the way, is to suggest the church has no work to do. The Spirit leads the church precisely because God chooses to use human means. Prayer, proclamation, ministries of compassion, healing the sick, capacity building—all these and more are vital responsibilities of the church. But, ultimately, setting things right is in the hands of God. Our work is but a joining in. It is trusting God to do the work he chooses through us. Therefore, we begin by discerning what the Spirit is doing. Then, we get on board.

Because he is the spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit never contravenes the ways and teaching of Jesus. So, our commitment to the Scriptures is firm. But every generation faces fresh scenarios. And every Christian faces situations the Scriptures don’t speak to. How, then, can we be sure in complex situations what Jesus would do? How can we know in foreign contexts, how to respond to various issues that present themselves? Where do we turn for help with those?

Well, we turn to the Lord who is alive through the Spirit. Unlike the followers of the religions, we are not restricted to the teaching of some dead person or series of dead persons. That is the difference the Resurrection makes. So, we don’t stop with, “What would Jesus do?” We go on to, “What is Jesus doing?” And, as Henry Blackaby famously asserted in his Experiencing God, when we find out, we get on board.29

Let me conclude with another sea story—a true one. Long ago, a small ship called the San Pablo (St. Paul) was caught in one of those fierce North Atlantic storms we have all read about—with forty-foot waves crashing over
the decks. It was said the San Pablo could roll 60 degrees without capsizing, and in this storm, one wave took it 53 degrees. The storm dragged on for days. None of the crew was allowed on the weather decks; they could easily be washed over board. But there came a day when the storm subsided and the seas calmed.

On that first evening of the calm, a San Pablo sailor, who had been reading a Bible during the tempest, climbed the ladder to the ship's boat deck. From there, he could see a full moon resting on the horizon—much larger than usual it seemed. As always happens when you are on the ocean or a lake in the moonlight, the moon's reflection made a silver path of light across the water directly to the sailor. And on that path, the sailor imagined he saw Jesus, beckoning to him as he had beckoned to the disciples of old, saying, “Follow me.” And the sailor did.

The sailor remained on the boat deck long into the night. There, on the Arctic Circle, the stars were exceptionally bright. But it was something other than the stars that caught the sailor's attention: a luminous arch that appeared in the sky… and then another … and another, and another—each of them sinking and soaring, swelling and surging, shimmering and glimmering—dancing through the night sky. Another sailor, Herman Melville, depicting the same Aurora dance, wrote of “retreatings and advancings… transitions and enhancings.”

But our sailor was struck by something Melville did not see, or at least did not describe—something in the foreground of that joyous sky. It was the ship's foremast, soaring over him like an immense cross—but an empty one. So, like the praises of the psalmist—up from the pit, or safe from some enemy—the dance had a context. The story in the sky was of the freedom of the Son—no longer bound to little Galilee or Judea, or to that cross, but at-large in the world: helping a Henry Martyn translate the Scriptures in a pagoda on the Hooghly River; redeeming the deaths of five missionaries on an Amazon beach with the salvation of a tribe; steering a little Albanian woman to the dying in Calcutta; and escorting San Pablo sailors everywhere on God’s errand of redemption to the world's Darnley Islands. “For the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”
Endnotes


2 The ship was the LMS Surprise. Cf. A.W. Murray, and Samuel MacFarlane, 1872. Cf. Journal of a Missionary Voyage to New Guinea. (London: J. Snow & Co.) for a firsthand account of the voyage and landing. There are many such journal accounts of LMS missionary ships as well as others.


6 John 7:39.


8 Acts 2:2.


12 This idea came through repeatedly in Dr. Halverson’s sermons and books. For example, in The Living Body, he wrote: “The true measure of the church’s influence is what is happening when the buildings are empty, the programs idle, and the people scattered throughout their communities, metropolitan areas, and the world.” Richard C. Halverson, 1994. The Living Body: the Church Christ Is Building (Gresham, Or: Vision House), 104. See, also, Richard C. Halverson, 1972. A Living Fellowship, a Dynamic Witness (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House).

13 1 Corinthians 11:1.

14 Cf. John 17:15.

15 Matthew 28:18; John 15:5.


17 2 Corinthians 3:17.

18 John 3:8.


21 John Wesley’s Journal, January 1, 1739.

22 John Wesley, Standard Sermon #4.


25 1 Thessalonians 5:19.


27 I have no desire to pan an otherwise good book. So, I will refrain from naming it. It was published in the mid-1990s and, as noted in the text of this essay, the omissions I highlighted are not uncommon in books on the Holy Spirit.

28 It’s surprising how common this idea is. Even the reformed scholar, R.C. Sproul wrote recently: “It is our task to build the city of God… He who will work to build the kingdom of God must be on guard.” Retrieved November 12, 2012 from http://www.ligonier.org/blog/building-kingdom-god/.


**Works Cited**

Blackaby, Henry T. and Claude V. King


Halverson, Richard C.


Layton, Christine Erin


Lovett, Richard


Melville, Herman, and Douglas Robillard


Murray, A.W., and Samuel MacFarlane


Sawyer, M. James and Daniel B. Wallace

Thurston, H.

Twain, Mark and Charles Neider

Van Dusen, Henry P.

Williamson, Stevan
Abstract
That African Christianity is growing in numbers has become a familiar fact; testimony to the commitment of African preachers and adherents to the gospel of Christ. However, a disturbing trend is sweeping over many parts of sub-Saharan Africa in places such as Uganda. It is the increased number of witchcraft accusations that are being leveled against Christians and Christian leaders. In this paper, Robert Magoola acknowledges this unfortunate predicament facing the African church as it maligns Christian gospel proclamation and enhances African traditional religion's self-advocacy. He evaluates the possible credibility of field-based evidence on the basis of a parable of the mole, giving possible responses to both true and false accusations. Magoola contends that it is the church's responsibility to resolve the accusations through truthful self-examination and responsible engagement with the subject of witchcraft within each cultural context, in order to invite backsliders back, and walking more as disciples of their Lord Jesus, so that such accusations cannot be made against the church in the future.

Keywords: Christianity, church, witchcraft, Uganda, accusations

Robert Magoola is a Ph.D. student in Intercultural Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.
Introduction

The effect of witchcraft accusations among Christians in African contexts are twofold: they are a vehicle propagating African Traditional Religion; and they demean Christian witness, as some Christians might become less committed to their Christian faith and instead reconsider traditional African faiths. Self-advocacy, which is “a religious tradition’s drive to maintain its membership by passing its tradition onto its children and by recommending its historical understanding, belief structures, and practices to non-members,” (Muck, 2011), is dual-directional. First, it works by closing the back door through which adherents might leave a religious affiliation, thus strongly discouraging any departures. This is the retention function. Second, it works to widen the opening at the front door through which new seekers may enter. This is the attraction function. Accusations of other religions, in this case, Traditional African Religion against Christianity, add a suction effect to the attraction aspect of its self-advocacy, which aims boost its attractiveness. Unlike Western contexts where stories of witches and wizardry are often not taken seriously, the effect of witchcraft accusations in African contexts has the great potential of effectively undermining Christianity and further boosting the local religion. For sub-Saharan Africa, Mbiti includes witchcraft among widespread fundamental religious concepts such as belief in God, existence of the spirits, and the continuation of human life after death and magic (Mbiti, 2002:103). Africans will not ask whether witchcraft is real. To them it is a given and so any accusations or hints thereof are taken seriously.

Self-advocacy works like a political campaign: the one candidate praises him/ herself while undermining his/ her opponent. The opponent does the same thing. The constituents are bombarded by the other’s negatives and the speaker’s positives ad nauseam. This type of fight in the religious arena is unnecessary. While self-advocacy, or for Christians, evangelism (as the attraction aspect) and discipleship (as the retention aspect), are necessary for those in each faith, adherents are required to do much more for their respective faiths than bickering about the actions of the other. A religion that bases itself on another’s weaknesses is weaker than one which bases its self-advocacy on its own strengths. As Dr. Muck has said in class, “May the best religion win!”

In this paper, I illustrate the elusive yet effective influence of witchcraft accusations with a Ugandan parable of the mole. Reports from the field, messages from church leaders and newspapers all reveal an increase in witchcraft. Sadly, I found that even Christ’s Church sometimes stands accused of witchcraft. So I sought to learn the truthfulness and effect of these accusations and to recommend solutions.
Introducing Witchcraft

“Witchcraft continues to be a topic that stirs passions and fears in many places around the world,” (Stabell 2010: 460). Witchcraft is gaining a great revival in many parts of the world today. From Harry Potter's children's movies and freemasonry in the West to shrine-based, ancestor-appeasing carefree worshipers dancing by their ancestors' gravesides; from the seemingly clean television screen presentations and suit-adorned worshippers to the grass-thatched dusty shrines of poor peasants; from wealthy white middle class Americans with beach homes to the poor overcrowded huts of voodoo adherents, . . . witchcraft is on the rise all around the world. It is reported among preachers and lay people. Through witchcraft, African Traditional Religion is regaining ground particularly in Africa. One wonders whether witchcraft has been hiding underneath the surface of the usual hustle and bustle or has only resurged recently. Questions arise about why witchcraft is such an important matter today and why it has become so blatant in the Lord's church around the world.

I will contend here that witchcraft is swiftly becoming a matter of urgency for the Christian church worldwide because while Christians lay complacent in their theological contestations, the witchcraft mole is active in their gardens eating up their children's food. Accusation and stealth are two of the most effective self-advocacy tools at a tyrant's disposal. As Laurenti Magesa writes,

The most important service for religious personalities in day-to-day life is to counteract witchcraft [which] is perceived by African Religion to be the greatest wrong or destructiveness on earth of which all other wrongs are but variations, emanations or manifestations . . . if religious leaders have any influence on the people, then, it consists in counteracting acts, or even intentions, of witchcraft, for witchcraft constitutes the perversion of everything that is good and desired in human beings; it is the personification or incarnation of all that is anti-life, and therefore the ultimate enemy of life on earth, (1997:68).

Magesa's comments here reveal two main aspects of witchcraft. First witchcraft is undesirable because it is harmful to people, as “there is no other purpose to life but fostering life . . . All rites and rituals from birth to adulthood are meant to solidify this life” (Magesa, 1997:114). Although divorce is a rare occurrence and imposes great scars on the community in which it is experienced, one of the reasons for the dissolution of marriage is an accusation of witchcraft (Mbiti, 2002:145). But witchcraft accusation is the also the greatest holdup to marital commitment because impotence, sterility and barrenness might result from witchcraft (Magesa, 1997:120). What makes witchcraft so wrong is not that the Christian faith speaks ill of it or that foreigners disdain it, but that the craft itself is against the most central precept of African life – the preservation
of life. Fighting against witchcraft is therefore a moral imperative that all Africans should embrace.

Magesa’s second point is that the greatest response that religious leaders can make through their influence is the counteraction of witchcraft, a negation of life. Good people do not do witchcraft: they shun it. Without prompting, African church leaders are speaking out against witchcraft. In Kampala, Archbishop Henry Orombi of the Anglican Church of Uganda has appealed to Christians not to resort to witchcraft when they lose faith in God but to return to Christ in who hope is to be found. One way of understanding the way witchcraft works, is through a Ugandan parable.

A Parable of the Mole

Mama planted a garden of cassava roots. She cut up cassava seedlings from the previous crop’s bountiful harvest. She cut the stems per traditional standards to ensure maximum yield. She had help digging holes, ferrying, placing and covering the cuttings in the holes. Mama prayed for rain. The Lord God of heaven and earth sent sufficient rain to water the crop, invigorating the nutrients in the soil to nurture the crop to a healthy situation. Also the sun came in its right time, draining the earth of extra moisture that would choke the crops. The plants took root and grew strong. When she walked her gardens Mama smiled at the green luxuriant leaves and was sure to have a great bounty – she would be rich in food this harvest, she would share some of it with her neighbors, and with it nurture some relationships. Harvest arrived with great anticipation. She dug and behold! Unbeknownst to her, for months a mole had corrupted her roots. Only a few had survived. What Mama found beneath the surface demoralized her. What can she do? How will she deal with the underground mole’s effect on her crop? How can she prevent wasting her labor and thwarting her hope the next time?

Interpreting the Parable

Dealing with witch accusations in an African Christian context is similar to dealing with an underground mole that eats food before the harvest: the thief steals before the owner arrives at harvest. The problem does not reside with the cassava because it grew per Mama’s expectation, becoming a good and desirable crop. But the mole corrupted it. The problem therefore is the mole. The mole does its best work at night and underground, especially if undetected and unchallenged. But the people it opposes walk above ground and in the light of day, rejoicing in anticipation of a good harvest on the basis of outward evidence: lush greenery, strong stems; and so they rest thankfully at night. Here then is what Mama faces: an enemy she rarely sees, whose description she cannot articulate, whose ways are either new or unknown to her, and who changes with circumstances of whose triggers she is oblivious.
Among the Basoga of Uganda, mole hunting is one of the most frustrating accomplishments for boys, many of whom only have a vague notion of its description and ways. Hunters dig up large portions of the garden in order to follow the mole’s crisscrossed path. It leaves no clues to guide its captors. And so killing one mole could be a whole day’s affair. Much energy is expended, much sweat and dirt are evident on their bodies, and for a period food and drink are forsaken: but at the end of the day, the boys’ joy is in the satisfaction of having killed the mole. Even then they never know if it left any offspring that will be the next season’s menace.

We church leaders can easily rest oblivious of witchcraft’s effect on the people of God in our care. Accusations, however, act to wake us up to the stewardship of God’s flock and the evangelism of non-Christian people.

A Report from the Field

The present question concerning the role of witchcraft accusations among Christians in an African context assumes the reality of such accusations the Africa Christian context. I propose that accusations are a means of African Traditional Religion’s self-advocacy. In order to settle this matter in a contextual way, I asked friends in Uganda, Africans in Wilmore and read widely both newspaper articles and scholarly materials. My findings revealed numerous accusations of witchcraft in the African Christian context. Having settled that, I want to ascertain the credence of these accusations, if they are founded on trustworthy evidence and how the Church responds to these accusations.

As soon as accusations of witchcraft surface, the accused person’s life is ruined and one’s relationships are at risk. People are not treated as innocent until found guilty; they remain guilty until proved innocent. Witchcraft accusation is to the African comparable to an accusation of child molestation in the West, which is never taken lightly. Yet, per Magesa (1997:64-65), unity of an African community is that community’s “life in its fullest sense.” Relational breakdown is the start of death. Since unity is so important to life itself, witchcraft is the greatest sin for humans in society as it causes disunity and thus becomes a means of death as it spells the demise of relationships and persons, families, clans and entire societies. Churches disintegrate. But even though evidence might exonerate a person of all wrong doing, that he/she was once accused remains in the society’s consciousness: once accused of witchcraft often means always accused.

If witchcraft is present and prospering in the African church: then something is deeply wrong within the church itself. As the Church fails to deal with witchcraft internally, the resulting lack of credibility hampers the church’s witness and ensures greater challenges to Christ’s ministers in the field. Regardless of their truthfulness or foundation, the charge of witchcraft within the church is a serious one. It not only goes against the African cultural
norms of right living, it also stands against Christian doctrine and standards for living.

In response, the church should first address the accusations. If accusations are true, the church is mandated to call the culprits to discipline and to disciple its people into authentically waking with Christ. Second, regarding the current abundance of confusion concerning witchcraft, along with its activities and forms, a clear and concise definition of witchcraft and witches is vitally necessary for successfully dealing with accusations. While God is not limited by descriptions, the church can only plan and deal with what it can describe. Note though it is a starting point for the church’s bid to self-defend against its accusers, the definition does not necessarily promise control.

The Accusations

To state the obvious, there are two types of accusation. Some accusations are true and others are false. Some are founded on truth and others are founded on deception. While some accusations are based on circumstantial, spiritually misunderstood or imagined evidence, there are some cases with witnesses who cannot be easily dismissed. Some are weightier than others. Some encompass a greater scope of society than do others. Some accusations proceed from Satan ‘the accuser of the brethren’ and others from righteous consciences. Therefore, in response to these accusatory messages, the church must first discern the character of the accusation, its source and purpose with whatever evidence might be provided.

Reports in the field reveal that witchcraft is alive and healthy in the church. Ugandan Anglicans in Busoga have said that: “Reverends have shrines in their homes. Some reverends use fetishes in their homes, travel with them in their clothes, and some tie them around their arms, waists and legs. Some pastors make statements that reveal their belief in and possible involvement with witchcraft.” When pressed for evidence the parishioners state that, beyond the use of fetishes that are sometimes sighted in secluded corners of their offices, by the door, on the wall and sometimes concealed underground in close proximity to important buildings, pastors have been known to visit witch doctors’ shrines for consultation. Some send ‘go-betweens’ to seek counsel on their behalf. These shy ones may use their ministry assistants, often spouses, friends or parishioners. Some pastors have threatened their perceived enemies with evil retaliation through witchcraft. With deeper involvement pastors have been known to consult with local and regional spirits (ebiteega and amaghembe). In particular the prosperity-gospel-proclaiming independent church pastors are said to travel more often for consultations. Some clergy have been reported as having presented animal and even human sacrifices. Some pastors are said to go out at night in order to carry out
sorcery activities. If this is true among the pastors, one wonders how it is with their parishioners.

But I wanted to press the reporters on further evidence of these accusations. Why would a Christian leader engage in such activities, I asked? “They seek favor and a good name. They engage witchcraft in order to succeed in Christian mission. They want promotions in the church, or retention of their current favorable positions. They want to be popular in the mission field and thus claim greater positions from those who hold them.” If this is true, we can deduce that these church leaders’ self-focus leads them into spiritual danger.

Roy Musasiwa defines mission as “God’s activity through the church for the establishment of his kingdom and the total salvation of humanity,” (in Yamamori et al, 1996:195). Mission is God’s and does not proceed from humans. It serves to strengthen the kingdom of God, not a human one. It focuses on people who are yet in the world, and works for their sake, not for the missionary through whom it works as a ready vessel, who is sold out to the cause and on fire for Christ (see Acts 4:19). According to Christopher Wright mission is the church’s “participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation and command in God’s own mission within the history of God’s world for the redemption of God’s creation,” (2006:23). Mission proceeds from God: it does not start or end with people. Although God includes people in mission, mission ownership remains God’s preserve. Therefore, church leaders who seek favors and positions in mission engage the wrong trade. Their self-focus deters God’s mission. It is little wonder that their success rate is reported as generally much lower than their invested time and effort would warrant. The one kingdom cannot support its opponent: while Satan seeks to destroy, not build, Christ’s kingdom (John 10:9-10), Christ seeks and saves the lost, redeeming them from Satan. Contention is rife between the two kingdoms.

**Effect of Accusations**

Accusations undermine the power of the gospel and downplay the church’s effectiveness in society. The listener to these stories might wonder: if they have a powerful God, why Christians revert to witchcraft, and whether witchcraft is more powerful than Christ. Doubts flood the Christian adherents’ minds and seep into the general societies’ consciousness. Fear creeps into people’s hearts as a result of witchcraft that vindictively singles individuals out of their communities,. How safe are we, they wonder? Moreover, since it is a spiritual reality, people have to be on alert everywhere all the time.

Relatively younger Christians are forced to wonder at their own chances of Christian survival, or its effectiveness in dealing with life’s issues, particularly if their mentoring spiritual leaders fail to live holy lives. In addition, witchcraft accusations suggest there is real value in the witchcraft that beckons their
leaders. By sucking their leaders into its malevolent jurisdiction, witchcraft beckons the rest of the church. It seems to say: “come and see!” Witchcraft steals from Christ as it communicates itself by the actions, words and attitudes of Christians along with non-Christians.

If truly present, witchcraft undermines God’s work in the church. Families that practice witchcraft would normally scorn Christ’s power to heal, grant peace and joy under distress or transform dire circumstances as revealed in Scripture through prayer. Without faith in Christ they accomplish little in the spiritual realm. They are reduced to Satan’s reign of terror, social enmity and persistent suspicion. They suspect one another even without substantial evidence. And so Christians easily slip into mutual hatred, families separate, churches split on the basis of unresolved disagreements and lack of trust. But disunity is not Christ’s desire (John 17) and points to Christian immaturity (1 Corinthians 3). While Christ the Redeemer is able to retrieve his people from the gates of hell itself, their choices have the grave potential to spiritually harm them. Also, those who are perceived to be witches are under constant threat of retaliation, physical harm and social ostracism.

Toward a Solution

Problems require solutions. The problem of today’s African church is a stealthy, conniving enemy who seeks to steal, kill and destroy its people. Like a subcutaneous mole, African Traditional Religion uses witchcraft accusations in order to capture the priceless flock of Christ. Witches do not proclaim their activities out of an overflowing joy as do Christians. Witches are compelled. Madame Akatowaa said on camera that the spirits she serves would take her to task for any mistakes. They do not forgive her or other adherents, as does God (Ault, 2009). Therefore, leaving God’s people in this level of torment is unjustifiable. A solution is sorely needed. By way of resolving the present predicament, I present here two practical responses based in Christian faith and Scripture: self-examination and responsive engagement.

Self-examination

First, upon hearing an accusation of witchcraft, the church should examine itself by asking boldly to seek the truthfulness of this accusation. The most desirable scenario in light of any accusation is to uncover falsehoods. For this the church might be thankful: though worrisome, the statements are untrue. The church is more on the side of righteousness than the lies being presented by an agent of Satan. Knowing that Satan is a liar and the accuser of the brethren, the church can rejoice in its proximity to Christ, evidenced by such persecution. Jesus presents false accusation of Christians in a positive light (Matthew 5:11-12). However, if individual members of the church are accused falsely and are thus made vulnerable for public ridicule and punishment, the
church should be a place of refuge for the innocent (c.f. Hiebert et al., 1999:174).

But the inquisitive mind still claims fire when it sees smoke. When the Pharisees accused him of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, Jesus’ response stated, “a house divided against itself falls” (Mark 3:25). Jesus’ response applied the erroneous accusation to its implied end. If Beelzebub casts out Beelzebub, then he will surely fall by his own hand, fulfilling Jesus’ ministry. The public image of the church, especially in light of false accusations, is secondary to its real calling. Rather than witchcraft and its effect on individuals and their communities, the greatest fear of Christ’s Church might be that God’s people should fall into the sin of witchcraft.

Responsive Engaging

A cursory engagement with the subject of witchcraft quickly reveals its ambiguity. Most people groups have varying definitions of witchcraft and wizards (Hiebert, 1999:62-63). The worldwide plethora of definitions is more confusing than helpful. Each society should responsibly learn, create and/or mend its own definition of witchcraft. Mission visitors there should also learn that definition. Respective churches do well to heed the call to ‘crouch in the dirt with their people,’ in search of meaningful solutions to this overarching problem. Mother tongue definitions will likely bear more credence than translations of these same concepts, because engaging witchcraft through a translated tongue is only second best. Yet, even if the same English terms are used in various cultural settings, a unifying definition of those terms remains at a superficial level.

Conclusion

In response to numerous accusations of witchcraft among African Christians more self-examination and responsive engagement needs to be done. Through publicizing official statements on witchcraft, correcting falsehood, exonerating the innocent, and appropriately punishing culprits, the Church, being secure in Christ, can move from being on the defensive to taking the offensive side in dealing with witchcraft accusations. Evangelism and discipleship should return to the top of the Church’s list of commitments.

African Religion lies under threat. An focused spiritually mature church is a great threat to witchcraft and African Religion. A means by which witchcraft can defend itself from the onslaught of Christianity is by accusing its opponent of resembling it. Mole-like, witchcraft fights from a defensive position. The result, however, is dual-directional self-advocacy with the tandem purpose of its retaining and acquiring adherents back from Christianity. The same accusations have a dual negative impact on Christianity. While Christians are invited to witchcraft through curiosity, they become less assured of their own position in Christ. Although Christianity is stronger, it cannot afford a
complacent response to witchcraft’s tactics. Both true and false accusations are an invitation for Christians to engage witchcraft spiritually. Moreover, per their history, Christianity cannot survive associating with witchcraft in Africa.

Endnotes

2 http://artmatters.info/?p=192, accessed May 10, 2011 is a story by Ogova Ondego dated January 2, 2007. It reports high levels of witchcraft in Kenya. Movies from Nigeria reveal much witchcraft activity and are also featured in Ondego’s story. In Zimbabwe, many instances of witchcraft, including cases of incubus and succubus have been reported by word of mouth. A friend recently told me about a local political leader in Busoga, Uganda who was possessed while at a public funeral and was thereby suspected of witchcraft. In his documentary film, *African Christianity Rising: Stories from Ghana*, James Ault shows details of the spiritual ministry that Madame Akatowaa, a traditional Ghanaian shrine priest, offers her people. Mensa Otobil, a local Charismatic pastor, is skeptical of Akatowaa’s activities, seeking to protect his flock from this ‘idol worshipping . . . fetish witchcraft.’

3 Cf. Hiebert et al, 1999:62-63 which attempts to describe witches by what the various peoples think about them. They find some assertions are unlikely.

Works Cited

Ault, James

Hasahya, Alfred

Hiebert, Paul G., Daniel Shaw and Tite Tienou

Lewellen, Ted C.

Magesa, Laurenti

Mbiti, John S.
Muck, Terry  

Stabell, Tim  

Wright, Christopher  

Yamamori, Testunao, et al.  

Online Resources  
http://artmatters.info/?p=192  
http://jamesault.com/
John Wesley’s theology is noted for its soteriological emphasis. Most of his life was spent in England ministering among marginalized people. Much of his practical ministry, publications, prison reform, healthcare interest, education, etc., occurred while trekking through the island. Yet, Wesley’s thoughts and writings reflect the broader world. Although he was not as swift at putting Methodist missionaries abroad as Thomas Coke would have liked, Wesley had a plan in place that took in reaching those populations that claimed other religions as their faith. Thus, he wanted “Moslems,” “Hindoos,” “Hottentots,” “Native Americans,” or more inclusive of every part of the world, the “heathen,” to have an encounter with the vital gospel of Christ. This paper explores what John Wesley had to say about these groups and his approach to bringing the gospel of Christ within their reach.

**Keywords:** John Wesley, mission, world religions

**Jeff Hiatt, M.Th, D.Miss.**, is an Affiliate Professor at Asbury Theological Seminary, and serves the Center for the Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements as Consultation Administrative Coordinator, Finance Chair, and Secretary of the Coordinating Committee.
**Introduction**

John Wesley (1703-1791) spent his lifetime of loving pastoral care responding to the desperate conditions faced by the poor in whatever country, city, village, or open-air venue he found them. Wesley’s application of love integrated the elements of holy attitudes that motivated the words and the tangible works (healing, salvation, food, money, etc.) provided for the beneficiary. John Wesley believed that God’s broad love for individuals was for “the healing of the nations.” Wesley’s optimistic theology elucidated the bleak human condition without betraying Christian hope and grace as he discerned it:

> It is certain that “God made man upright;” perfectly holy and perfectly happy: But by rebelling against God, he destroyed himself, lost the favour and the image of God, and entailed sin, with its attendant, pain, on himself and all his posterity. Yet his merciful Creator did not leave him in this helpless, hopeless state: He immediately appointed his Son, his well-beloved Son, “who is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person,” to be the Saviour of men; “the propitiation for the sins of the whole world;” the great Physician who, by his almighty Spirit, should heal the sickness of their souls, and restore them not only to the favour, but to “the image of God wherein they were created.” ([WJW](#) Sermon 61, 2:452)

Wesley had to look no farther than London and the surrounding countryside to see life’s many jagged edges. The laws favored the elite and wealthy. The major English political, financial, and social systems labored for their own good, often with little or no regard for those who served them, and many people mistreated one another. When Wesley reasoned and drew conclusions about the brutal behaviors and attitudes conveyed by the system toward individuals, particularly the poor, he turned to the Bible and the Church to see what God had to say about the matter. Reflecting on the generally negative state of affairs that he observed, Wesley declared plainly in “The Mystery of Iniquity,”

> I would now refer it to every man of reflection, who believes the Scriptures to be of God, whether this general apostasy does not imply the necessity of a general reformation? Without allowing this, how can we possibly justify either the wisdom or goodness of God? According to Scripture, the Christian religion was designed for “the healing of the nations;” for the saving from sin by means of the Second Adam, all that were “constituted sinners” by the first . . . The time is coming, when not only “all Israel shall be saved,” but “the fullness of the Gentiles will come in.” The time cometh, when “violence shall
no more be heard in the earth, wasting or destruction within our borders;” but every city shall call her “walls Salvation, and her gates Praise;” when the people, saith the Lord, “shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.” (Isaiah lx. 18, 21) (WJW Sermon 61, 2:466).

Wesley deliberately chose a positive view of life as he exhorted in 1781, “Rest not till you enjoy the privilege of humanity—the knowledge and love of God. Lift up your heads, ye creatures capable of God. Lift up your hearts to the Source of your being! Let your ‘fellowship be with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ’ [1 John 1:3]!” (WJW Sermon 60, “The General Deliverance” 2:450).

John Wesley’s realistic outlook on the discord of humanity produced in him the desire to be a part of God’s symphony. This was a result of his confident hope in the Creator’s grace to heal the disharmony through the redeeming Son, applied by the sanctifying Spirit, to make wholeness possible for all humanity. Neither the necessary power, nor the love from God’s side was lacking. The mission, then, is to persuade humanity individual-by-individual, and group-by-group to accept God’s diagnosis and to avail themselves of the cure imbedded and offered in the work of Christ for full salvation.

Mission in John Wesley’s Heritage

Wesley came by his evangelistic zeal for ministry and mission in his own pedigree. Since his father and both grandfathers were ministers, he experienced this example in many parts of his heritage. Theodore Doraisamy, drawing from T. E. Brigden, emphasizes the missionary spirit in the Wellesley family by suggesting that the scallop shells in the Wesley coat-of-arms was derived from a forefather crusader and pilgrim to the Holy Land (Doraisamy 1983:5). Furthermore, “John Westley, the paternal grandfather of John Wesley, had a burning desire to go to Surinam,” and John’s own father, Rev. Samuel Wesley, Sr., promoted a “missionary spirit and published a comprehensive scheme of missions for India, China, and Abyssinia” (Doraisamy 1983:5, Schmidt 1958:19). The missionary emphasis and impact on John Wesley was lasting. A year after his own missionary learning experience in Georgia, Wesley wrote to James Hervey on March 20, 1739, regarding his desire to be a real Christian and following God’s lead being “ready now (God being my helper) to go to Abyssinia or China, or whithersoever it shall please God by this conviction to call me” (Outler 1964:71).

John Wesley grew up in the rectory environment in Epworth where he saw his father and mother care for people of their parish and pray for missionaries. Susanna intentionally instilled this kind of disposition into young John. In a letter dated February 6, 1712, from Susanna to her husband
Samuel, she writes of a growing conviction of a missionary-minded ministry under the inspiration of the Spirit:

But soon after you went to London last, I light on the account of the Danish Missionaries. I was, I think, never more affected with any thing; I could not forbear spending good part of that evening in praising and adoring the divine goodness, for inspiring them with such ardent zeal for his glory. For several days I could think or speak of little else. I thought I might pray more for them, and might speak to those with whom I converse with more warmth of affection. I resolved to begin with my own children; in which I observe Thursday, with Jacky [John] to advance the glory of God, and the salvation of souls. (WJW Journals 1:386-7)

Some of the content of Susanna’s weekly sessions with her children included “translated accounts of the labors of the earliest Protestant missionaries to India, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Plutschau” (Doraisamy 1983:5; c.f. Schmidt 1958:19). This early instruction grounded Wesley’s understanding of missio Dei in a motivation of gloria Dei. For example, in his Journals for Thursday, 24 March 1785, Wesley reflects,

I was now considering how strangely the grain of mustard seed, planted about fifty years ago, has grown up. It has spread through all Great Britain and Ireland; the Isle of Wight, and the Isle of Man; then to America, from the Leeward Islands, through the whole continent, into Canada and Newfoundland. And the societies, in all these parts, walk by one rule, knowing religion is holy tempers; and striving to worship God, not in form only, but likewise ‘in spirit and in truth’ for the glory of God. (Works (Jackson) Journals 4:298-9).

Although many factors entered into Wesley’s missional praxis, his mother’s fervency, after being affected so deeply by the above account, certainly is an important connection between “missions to the peoples and missions to the people” (Schmidt 1958:25 [my emphasis]).

**Christian Spirituality Inspires Mission**

Wesley offered the fullness of Christ to those who would accept the multidimensional work of the gospel. One of his major emphases dealt with the spiritual dimensions of life. As was his custom, Wesley began with sacred Christian Writ for his understanding and pattern of life and ministry. Wesley’s was a deep commitment to Scripture resting his other practices squarely upon its foundation. Randy Maddox affirms this interpretation, “it is no surprise that Wesley consistently identified the Bible as the most basic authority for determining Christian belief and practice” (1994:36).
Another fundamental building block for Wesley’s deep convictions included his practice of personal and corporate prayer. John Wesley learned to pray to God early in life as a result of the prayer lives of his godly parents in the home and at church. His parents held daily devotions in their home. Wesley, himself, read prayers from the *Book of Common Prayer* and the Bible at home and at church. The liturgy of the Church of England included many written and recited prayers, and allowed extemporaneous prayer. During his education at Charterhouse and in his professional ministry training at Oxford, Wesley further developed skills in prayer, especially in the ministrations and duties of religious office (Telford 1959:37-39, Higgins 1960:15).

As an ordained Anglican clergyman, Wesley expected to pray on behalf of the people to whom he ministered. Wesley’s dedication was affirmed with the surprised joyful response of the parishioners to being prayed for by their cleric as a part of the role and function of a minister, which was often contrary to the common practice of his contemporary Anglican priests. He believed, “To be an instrument for making people whole [is] the minister’s sacred duty” (Higgins 1960:15). He regularly prayed for others, especially those who needed salvation.

In Wesley’s ministry over the years, many people wrote letters asking him to pray for their souls. He prayed for thousands of people concerning their relationship to the Lord and their other specific needs. Prayer, for Wesley, served as an avenue to put people in touch with the presence of God. His personal practice of prayer coupled with Bible reading and regular attendance at the means of grace kept him in tune with Jesus. Wesley’s practice of prayer was an avenue that especially enabled the revival work to progress. It is no small comment to say that he was a man of prayer. Prayer was an avenue of open communication with God. Wesley prayed as easily as he breathed. This close communion with the Lord permeated all that Wesley did, was the cutting edge of the effectiveness of his works, and was one of the primary prongs on which the Methodist revival hung. God transformed his life and ministry through prayer.

John Wesley understood priestly care in broad parameters. Clearly, Wesley ministered to the inner spiritual needs of people, but he conceived Christian spirituality to encompass ministry to external needs as well. For example, John Cule asserts, “There were scores of ordinary clergy who showed a practical interest in the health care of their parishioners, firmly rooted in the Church’s long established teaching of *caritas*” (1990:44; cf. Macdonald 1982:106, Schmidt 1958:9). This was especially the case with Wesley.

Again, John Wesley believed that personal inward works of the Spirit should find an outward form of expression that helps others. Prayer for others can lead to personal involvement in the answer. For example, those who are sick in body need health care. Often in the eighteenth-century, some of this kind of care involved the church, or at least, specialized clergy.
“Physic,” the term for the physical care related to the health of persons, although not a primary (or official) function of the clergy in Wesley’s century was one aspect of some ministers’ activities (see below). The job of parish priests was to meet the needs of the parishioners. Their watchword, derived from the New Testament, was “doing good” (Schmidt 1958:19). Wesley explains this in more detail in a letter to Richard Morgan, 18 October 1732. In his sermon “On Pleasing All Men,” Wesley emphasized this point,

Weep with them that weep. If you can do no more, at least mix your tears with theirs; and give them healing words, such as may calm their minds, and mitigate their sorrows. But if you can, if you are able to give them actual assistance, let it not be wanting. Be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame, a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless. This will greatly tend to conciliate the affection, and to give a profitable pleasure, not only to those who are immediate objects of your compassion, but to others likewise that “see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” [Matt. 5:16]. (WJW Sermons 3:424)

This is how John Wesley viewed “all the world as my parish.” His explanation of this phrase, previously written to a friend and recorded in his Journal for Mon, 11 June 1739, declared,

A dispensation of the Gospel is committed to me; and woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel. But where shall I preach it, upon the principles you mention? Why, not in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America; not in any of the Christian parts, at least, of the habitable earth. For all these are, after a sort, divided into parishes. If it be said, ‘Go back, then, to the Heathens from whence you came:’ Nay, but neither could I now (on your principles) preach to them; for all the Heathens in Georgia belong to the parish either of Savannah or Frederica. “Suffer me now to tell you my principles in this matter. I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation. This is the work which I know God has called me to; and sure I am, that his blessing attends it. Great encouragement have I, therefore, to be faithful in fulfilling the work He hath given me to do. His servant I am, and, as such, am employed according to the plain direction of his word, ‘As I have opportunity, doing good unto all men:’ And his providence clearly concurs with his word; which has disengaged me from all things else, that I might singly attend on this very thing, and go about doing good.” (Works (Jackson) Journals 1:201-2).
A key to bringing glory to God was “doing all the good” one could to others. Wesley intended to take care of the people within his charge in any and all the ways at his disposal appropriate to the gospel. In his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*, concerning Jesus’ raising to life a little dead girl (Mark 5:43), Wesley clarifies, “[Jesus] commanded something should be given her to eat—So that when either natural or spiritual life is restored, even by immediate miracle, all proper means are to be used in order to preserve it” (Wesley 1954:157). Wesley’s rationale for his extensive discipleship emphasis can also be seen in this above comment. The emphasis is that life is to be taken as a whole, or holistically. Even in the account of physical wellness being restored to the girl, with no direct mention about her spiritual condition by Jesus, Wesley infers it, because he believed that Jesus works multi-dimensionally.

Love Produces Mission

For Wesley, the loving God who created us in his image now wants to restore the original image of God in us, so that we may recover the loving relationship with God by being conformed to the image of His Son. This, in turn, enables people to love one another. In God’s final provision, all creatures will be reconciled (Col. 1).

John Wesley’s involvement in the lives of the common people, that is, his zeal, was to help them find wholeness in Christ. This is Wesley’s prime motive for himself and for others. In 1738, after Wesley returned from Georgia and was transformed through his experience at the society meeting on Aldersgate Street, he intensified his efforts to help others experience vital salvation. Wesley gave clarity to himself and the whole movement in these words,

This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Such a work this hath been in many respects, as neither we nor our fathers had known. Not a few whose sins were of the most flagrant kind, drunkards, swearers, thieves, whoremongers, adulterers, have been brought “from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Many of these were rooted in their wickedness, having long gloriéd in their shame, perhaps for a course of many years, yea, even to hoary hairs. Many had not so much as a notional faith, being Jews, Arians, Deists, or Atheists. Nor has God only made bare his arm in these last days, in behalf of open publicans and sinners; but many “of the Pharisees” also “have believed on Him,” of the “righteous that needed no repentance;” and, having received “the sentence of death in themselves,” have then heard the voice that raiseth the dead: Have been made partakers of an inward, vital religion; even “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” The manner wherein God hath wrought
this work in many souls is as strange as the work itself. It has generally, if not always, been wrought in one moment. “As the lightning shining from heaven,” so was “the coming of the Son of Man,” either to bring peace or a sword; either to wound or to heal; either to convince of sin, or to give remission of sins in his blood. (Works (Jackson) Journals 1:150-1).

In “A Paraphrase on the Lord’s Prayer” from Sermon 26, “Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount” (6th discourse) Wesley writes,

Son of thy Sire's eternal love,
Take to thyself thy mighty power;
Let all earth's sons thy mercy prove,
Let all thy bleeding grace adore.
The triumphs of thy love display;
In every heart reign thou alone;
Till all thy foes confess thy sway,
And glory ends what grace begun.
Spirit of grace, and health, and power,
Fountain of light and love below;
Abroad thine healing influence shower,
O'er all the nations let it flow.
Inflame our hearts with perfect love;
In us the work of faith fulfill;
So not heaven's host shall swifter move
Than we on earth to do thy will.
(Works (Jackson) Sermons 5:342-3, par. 4-5)

The God, who created the world in the first place, is at work recreating it in the present. Physical healing is one signal that the behind-the-scenes, loving Creator is still involved with creation. Yet, God is not content to work alone. As noted above, this is the work of the church in tandem with the Holy Spirit.

Christians in Mission

People listened to Wesley, because they could observe in his life, and the Methodists in general, going about doing good, as consistent with the glad tidings of the gospel message that he brought to them—deeper than they knew in the main Anglican Church. Wesley’s optimistic hopes for the universal redemption of a world marred by sin’s effects remained high. He believed the Methodist Revival was both a sign of hope and a pattern of God’s design for “the general spread of the Gospel”. Wesley recorded preaching from Isaiah 11:9 seven times from 1747 to 1755 and wrote the sermon “The General Spread of the Gospel” from Dublin, Ireland, in April 1783, as a reminder that God is at work in the world so that “The earth shall
be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Is. 11:9). Wesley concluded, “The loving knowledge of God, producing uniform, uninterrupted holiness and happiness, shall cover the earth; shall fill every soul of man” (WJW Sermon 63, 2:488). Wesley practiced what he preached—a gospel that encompassed the needs of the people in the fullness of Christian love!

Mission among Other Faiths

John Wesley’s plan for reaching the ordinary citizen in Britain was not conceptually different than reaching others around the globe. Although after his mission to Georgia, Wesley poured more of his time and effort into the local landscape closer to home, his thoughts continued to take in the rest of the world. Wesley notes, “But, blessed be God, he hath not yet left himself without witness” (WJW Sermon 79, “On Dissipation” 3: par. 9).

From current ways of talking about people and religions encountered throughout the world, Wesley’s terms would seem disparaging. As mentioned above, his general sentiment concerning all approaches to God was covered under the archaic term “heathen.” He was not denying that God’s grace was at work among them, but more notably, he was expressing the universality of sin being manifested.

Although John Wesley was restricted from working among the American natives as much as he would have liked, he was able to make some observations. As the quotations below illustrate, Wesley also picked up stories of variable accuracy from other colonists, travelers, and other Native peoples. Wesley remarked,

As gross and palpable are the works of the devil among many (if not all) the modern heathens. The natural religion of the Creeks, Cherokees, Chicasaws, and all other Indians bordering on our southern settlements (not of a few single men, but of entire nations) is to torture all their prisoners from morning to night, till at length they roast them to death; and upon the slightest undesigned provocation to come behind and shoot any of their own countrymen. Yea, it is a common thing among them for the son, if he thinks his father lives too long, to knock out his brains; and for a mother, if she is tired of her children, to fasten stones about their necks, and throw three or four of them into the river one after another.

It were to be wished that none but heathens had practiced such gross, palpable works of the devil. But we dare not say so. Even in cruelty and bloodshed, how little have the Christians come behind them! And not the Spaniards or Portuguese alone, butchering thousands in South America. Not the Dutch only in the East Indies, or the French in North America, following the Spaniards step by step. Our own countrymen, too, have
wantoned in blood, and exterminated whole nations: plainly proving thereby what spirit it is that dwells and works in the children of disobedience. ("A Caution against Bigotry," *WJW* CD-ROM)\(^{18}\)

John Wesley went to great lengths in his sermons to establish that those who practice other faiths have neither a natural advantage nor disadvantage to those in so-called Christian lands, because all people are equally condemned under the law and in need of Christ. In his sermon, "Wandering Thoughts," he made this point inadvertently\(^{19}\) when he wrote sarcastically, "…See how these Christians love one another. Wherein are they preferable to Turks and pagans? What abomination can be found among Mahometans or heathens which is not found among Christians also?" (*WJW* Sermon 41, 2:128).

More explicitly, however, Wesley wrote in “Original Sin” Sermon 44,

‘They are all gone out of the way’ of truth and holiness; ‘there is none righteous, no, not one’[Ps 14:4 BCP]. And to this bear all the prophets witness in their several generations. So Isaiah concerning God’s peculiar people (and certainly the heathens were in no better condition): ‘The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores’ [Isa 1:5-6]. The same account is given by all the apostles, yea, by the whole tenor of the oracles of God. From all these we learn concerning man in his natural state, unassisted by the grace of God, that ‘all the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart’ are still ‘evil, only evil’, and that ‘continually’.\(^{20}\)

As Wesley continues to compare the Christian and non-Christian, he adds this about morality

But it is equally certain that all morality, all the justice, mercy, and truth which can possibly exist without Christianity, profieth nothing at all, is of no value in the sight of God, to those that are under the Christian dispensation. Let it be observed, I purposely add, ‘to those that are under the Christian dispensation’, because I have no authority from the Word of God ‘to judge those that are without’. Nor do I conceive that any man living has a right to sentence all the heathen and Mahometan world to damnation. It is far better to leave them to him that made them, and who is ‘the Father of the spirits of all flesh’; who is the God of the heathens as well as the Christians, and who hateth nothing that he hath made. But meantime this is nothing to those that name the name of Christ: all those being ‘under the law’, the Christian law, shall undoubtedly be judged thereby. And of consequence, unless
those be so changed as was the animal above mentioned, unless they have new senses, ideas, passions, tempers, they are no Christians! However just, true, or merciful they may be, they are but atheists still. ([WJW] on CD-Rom Sermon 130, “On Living Without God,” par. 14).

Mission in a Wesleyan Mode

The implications of Wesley’s view of culture and other non-Christian religious traditions were that all societies exhibit the natural bent of humanity toward fear, anxiety, despair, and desire for release from their torments. In contrast, the kingdom of God offers grace to people of all cultures that make their interpenetration a creative reality of God’s reign in the midst of the peoples of the world. Wesley held the negative and positive aspects of cultures in tension. Thus, this kind of cultural assessment has important implications that bear on mission, in general, and a Wesleyan approach to mission in particular.

John Wesley’s mission interests extended beyond his local context. When following his mission training by his mother, supplemented by the missionary scheme supplied by his father, and given John Wesley’s personality to initiate, construct, expand, and follow a routine to maintain his work by using his theological source elements to understand his own personal patterns of ministry, it is possible to see a scriptural skeleton inside Wesley’s actions. The New Testament expansion of the early church moved from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and then to “the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8NIV). This analogy relates to Wesley’s discernable general plan of progressive mission: London and the surrounding regions of the British mainland, the outer islands and colonies, and beyond British limits to the ends of the earth. Wesley’s main sphere of personal mission did not reach to “the ends of the earth” before the end of his life, but it was ever on his heart and by his prayers continually sought its healing, as noted earlier.

Wesley contributed a comparatively more holistic view and practice of mission to convey God’s intention and acts of renewing the created order in God’s image. This personal conveyance of God’s personal involvement, grounded in God’s nature of holy love displayed uniquely in the person and work of Jesus Christ, appealed to the masses of eighteenth-century England. It would be presumptive to claim that all Protestant mission endeavors since Wesley bear direct marks derived from Methodist revival influences. Yet, just as William Carey’s ringing call to mission is heard beyond his Baptist circles and the direct influence of the Baptist Missionary Society (est. 1792), so K. S. Latourette reminds the contemporary mission worker that the Wesleyan revival “gave rise to currents of life which were increasingly to mould human culture in art, literature, thought, government, economics, morals, and religion” (Latourette 1953:839). Wesley’s theology and practice of ministry...
spoke as a metanarrative through which the people could find God, and find meaning and value in their lives and surroundings. This careful attention to work for godly structures, means, and processes of life provided a methodical, consistent way of change and direction for the goals of reaching people with the gospel.

John Wesley cautiously approached committing immediate resources to distant lands. He continually assessed Methodist ability to supply discipline, catechesis, and connection to geo-social groups at great distances. So, when Thomas Coke provided a Plan of the Society for the Establishment of Mission among the Heathen (1783), Wesley, though whole-heartedly in favor of the enterprise, in his practical caution, was more judicious with the timing (Hylson-Smith 1997:298). Meanwhile, the recurring theme of the salvation of the whole world remained a part of Wesley's personal, corporate, and instructional prayers (Wesley 1738:46).

Latourette's above comment, made over a half-century ago, points to the flavor of evangelistic mission that holds in tension the comprehensive elements necessary for a complete abundant life in Christ. Latourette attributed to Wesley and his followers a radical, if subtle, influence on the general shape of mission, especially those arising from within Protestantism. A correlative voice for this interpretation, professor of Church History Heather Curtis, notes anti-Calvinist currents provided an “increasingly ubiquitous Arminianism that was steadily transforming the character of both American and British Protestantism” (Curtis 2007:59).

Although Curtis is writing specifically about the Faith Cure Movement of the late nineteenth century, she connects Dr. Charles Cullis, M.D., homeopathy, and the Holiness Movement with “Arminian sensibilities, [propagated through Methodist heritage,] about human nature to offer an active alternate position about health and resisting affliction” in contradistinction to a passive resignation to sickness as God’s will that reflects a Calvinistic view (Curtis 2007:60, 62-63).

Conclusion

John Wesley’s approach to mission was encompassing enough to be described accurately as holistic. Its features and sound theological components continue to offer the contemporary practitioner an approach to ministry to emulate, because it often reaches people in mission contexts (Snyder 2002:24). John Wesley’s practical approach to mission provides an important resource for faithful and relevant contemporary missiological thought and practice. His example for the church had seminal impact on his immediate context, but also influenced a wider audience.

A Wesleyan-flavored Christian mission demonstrates a universal love for people of all lands and for particular people in their need for Christ. A Christ-centered mission, as Wesley demonstrated, must be grounded in vital personal
and corporate Christian spirituality, flow from the love of Christ to others, point them to God wherever we are in the world-parish. Like Wesley, our lives need to consist of loving pastoral care responding to the desperate conditions faced by the poor in whatever country, city, village, or open-air venue, or faith tradition we find them. Application of love-in-mission integrates the elements of holy attitudes, motivated words, and the tangible works (healing, salvation, food, money, etc.) for the beneficiary. God’s broad love for individuals is for “the healing of the nations.”

Endnotes

1 The content of this article was presented as a paper at the annual Wesleyan Theological Society meeting held in March 2012. It is also excerpted primarily from Chapter 4 of my D.Miss dissertation.

2 In the quotations from John Wesley, the eighteenth-century British syntax and cultural sensitivities have been retained without amendment.

3 A few of the places that give insight to his views are: JWJ Feb. 17, 1787; Ser.28 ‘Sermon on the Mount VIII’ mentions the Hottentots; Ser 38 ‘A Caution against Bigotry’ speaks of the Laplanders of arctic Europe; and Ser. 63 ‘The General Spread of the Gospel’ covers more generic thoughts.

4 In this short paragraph from “The Mystery of Iniquity” (2 Thessalonians 2:7), Wesley is drawing on at least Ecclesiastes 7:29, Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 3:10, and Revelation 13:8 for his remarks.

5 This is contemporary Ethiopia, Eritrea, and southern Yemen.

6 This is the activity of the Creator God restoring rebellious humanity and marred creation to fulfill their original purposes reflected in Genesis 1:26; 2:7; 5:3. The Father sent the Son (John 3:16-17), the Holy Spirit, and the Church (Acts 2) into all the world to call all people into the kingdom of God to be a new creature in Christ and conformed to Christlikeness.

7 See Scott J Jones “John Wesley’s Conception and Use of Scripture.” Ph.D dissertation. SMU, 1992, for an extensive bibliography in support of this point.


9 Physic is the eighteenth century word for medicine. Wesley stated in Sermon 95, “On the Education of Children,” “physic may justly be called the art of restoring health” (WJW 3:349).

10 Wesley explains this in more detail in a letter to Richard Morgan, 18 October 1732.

11 It is interesting that while Wesley was in Georgia (1737), embroiled in the Williamson Case that one of the issues he used in defense of his actions was that his parishioners were married by an ‘irregular’ minister outside his parish without his permission, thus violating his ministerial rights. One wonders if this may have later influenced part of his thinking and “inveterate” practice of ministry beyond the “legal” Anglican boundaries assigned to him.

12 See the letter of Mar. 28, 1739. Outler noted that tradition incorrectly dated this letter as Mar. 20 and written to James Hervey. He suggested, however,
it was addressed “to some clergyman (possibly John Clayton) who had already raised the issue of Wesley’s right to invade other men’s parishes without invitation (see Letters, Vol. 25 in this edition, pp. 614, 616). See also the carefully edited account of Wesley’s conversation with Bishop Butler of Bristol, Aug. 16, 1739, in WHS, XLII.93-100” (*WJW* (Bicentennial Edition) CD-ROM. Richard P. Heitzenrater, ed. “Introduction”, Part 1, footnote 47).

13 *Wellness* refers to that quality of life that we experience lived in Christlikeness and the image of God. A right relationship with God centers us, makes us whole, and brings healing. This is a relationship of love that entails God justifying us, regenerating us, adopting us, sanctifying us, and making us whole persons.

14 Wholeness in Christ is related to how Wesley speaks of “religion.” In “On Former Times” (1787) Wesley clarifies, “By religion I mean the love of God and man filling the heart and governing the life. The sure effect of this is the uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth. This is the very essence of it; the height and depth of religion, detached from this or that opinion, and from all particular modes of worship” (*WJW* Sermon102, 3:448).

15 “Tuesday, October 14, 1735. — Mr. Benjamin Ingham, of Queen’s College, Oxford, Mr. Charles Delamotte, son of a merchant, in London, who had offered himself some days before, my brother Charles Wesley, and myself, took [a] boat for Gravesend, in order to embark for Georgia. Our end in leaving our native country was not to avoid want, (God having given us plenty of temporal blessings,) nor to gain the dung or dross of riches or honour; but singly this,—to save our souls; to live wholly to the glory of God.” (*WJW* Journals 1:17)

16 For Wesley, this is a work of mercy. He supports this practice in these words, “[Our Lord] has laid before us those dispositions of soul which constitute real Christianity; the inward tempers contained in that “holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;” the affections which, when flowing from their proper fountain, from a living faith in God through Christ Jesus, are intrinsically and essentially good, and acceptable to God. He proceeds to show… how all our actions likewise…may be made holy, and good, and acceptable to God, by a pure and holy intention. Whatever is done without this, he largely declares, is of no value before God. Whereas, whatever outward works are thus consecrated to God, they are, in his sight, of great price. The necessity of this purity of intention, he shows, first, with regard to those which are usually accounted religious actions, and indeed are such when performed with a right intention. Some of these are commonly termed works of piety; the rest, works of charity or mercy. Of the latter sort, he particularly names almsgiving; of the former, prayer and fasting. But the directions given for these are equally to be applied to every work, whether of charity or mercy. [W]ith regard to works of mercy, “Take heed,” saith he, “that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.” “That ye do not your alms:” —Although this only is named, yet is every work of charity included, everything which we give, or speak, or do, whereby our neighbour may be profited; whereby another man may receive any advantage, either in his body or soul. The feeding the hungry, the clothing the naked, the entertaining or assisting the stranger, the visiting those that are sick or in prison, the comforting the afflicted, the instructing the ignorant, the reproving the wicked, the exhorting and encouraging the well-doer; and if there be any other work of mercy, it is equally included in this direction (*WJW* Sermons 5:328-9) (My emphasis).
In the following paragraph, Wesley provided a snippet of the spread of Methodism as the renewal work of the Spirit through the church for the transformation of the world: “From Oxford, where it first appeared, the little leaven spread wider and wider. More and more saw the truth as it is in Jesus, and received it in the love thereof. More and more found “redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins.” They were born again of his Spirit, and filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It afterwards spread to every part of the land, and a little one became a thousand. It then spread into North Britain and Ireland; and a few years after into New York, Pennsylvania, and many other provinces in America, even as high as Newfoundland and Nova-Scotia. So that, although at first this “grain of mustard-seed” was “the least of all the seeds;” yet, in a few years, it grew into a “large tree, and put forth great branches.”

See Dt 31:26 (Book of the Law); Jos 22:34 (Lord’s altar); Job 16:19 (character), Ps 89:37 (moon); Isa 20:42 (the Lord), Isa. 30:8 (scroll); Lk 23:48 (observation); Jn 1:7-8 (proclamation); Rom. 2:15 (conscience); Rev 1:5 (Jesus).

Wesley uses this term about 431 times in his works.

Wesley had been frustrated in his intentions to go to the Native Americans as a missionary. Oglethorpe and the Georgia Trustees wanted his work restricted to Savannah. His first-hand contacts with the Indians were, therefore, limited. Here, obviously, he is passing on hearsay about them to readers who would have had no way of knowing that later scholars would conclude that his condemnations of the Indians ‘were extremely harsh and unrealistic’; cf. J. Ralph Randolph, ‘John Wesley and the American Indian: A Study in Disillusionment’, Meth. Hist., X.3:11 (Apr. 1972). See also Randolph’s fuller study of Wesley on the Indians in his British Travelers among the Southern Indians (Norman, Oklahoma, Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1973). For further comments by Wesley on the Indians, cf. No. 69, ‘The Imperfection of Human Knowledge’, II.6; and JWJ, Feb. 18, 1773.

One might observe how Wesley imitates the biblical pattern of how the Minor Prophets spoke judgment, all the while pointing to repentance, as they started with people far off from Israel/Judah and worked their way closer and closer until they drove home the point among their own people.

He was making the point of how one thought can lead to another and lead away from the original line of thinking to something quite different, but I believe he was expressing his own true sentiment on the issue at hand.

Cf. No. 9, ‘The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption’, §5 and n.

Other areas also affected that Latourette does not mention directly are hymnody and “homeopathic medicine.”

Although Curtis is writing specifically about the Faith Cure Movement of the late nineteenth century, she connects Dr. Charles Cullis, M.D., homeopathy, and the Holiness Movement with “Arminian sensibilities, [propagated through Methodist heritage] about human nature to offer an active alternate position about health and resisting affliction” in contradistinction to a passive resignation to sickness as God’s will that reflects a Calvinistic view (Curtis 2007:60, 62-63).
HIATT: JOHN WESLEY’S APPROACH TO MISSION | 123

Works Cited

Curtis, Heather D.

Cule, John

Doraisamy, Theodore R.

Hiatt, R. Jeffrey

Higgins, Paul L.

Hylson-Smith, Kenneth
1997 The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II. London: SCM Press Ltd.

Latourette, Kenneth Scott

Macdonald, Michael

Maddox, Randy L.

Outler, Albert

Schmidt, Martin
Snyder, Howard A.

Telford, John

Wesley, John
This past year, the archives at the B.L. Fisher Library of Asbury Theological Seminary acquired a rare set of 26 glass lantern slide plates depicting the Centenary Celebration of American Methodist Missions, which was held from June 20 to July 13, 1919 at the Ohio State Fairgrounds in Columbus, Ohio. Commonly known as the Methodist World’s Fair, this extravaganza was organized to celebrate the founding of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1819. In addition, it aimed to gather millions of dollars for missions and recruit future missionaries, while also showing the world the success and challenges of the “civilizing” mission of the time.

From the Archives:
The Methodist World’s Fair of 1919

Over one million visitors are estimated to have attended to hear speakers such as World War I war heroes General John J. Pershing and Alvin York, and well-known politicians such as William Jennings Bryan, former President
William Taft, and Alice Paul, a national advocate for women’s right to vote. In addition, there was a Ferris wheel, live animals, a Wild West show, and fireworks to entertain the visitors. Over 500 “native” Christian converts were brought from 37 countries in Africa, Asia, and South America, along with parts of their homes and villages and their material culture. Eight international pavilions exhibited a recreated Hindu temple, a miniature desert, along with elephants, camels, and water buffalo, leading one writer at the time to say this was an “opportunity for enjoying what was the best in a circus, a county fair, a picnic, grand opera, drama and the Church- all at one time.”

Sponsored jointly by the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, who would unite 20 years later in 1939 to form the Methodist Church; this was an effort to show the history and current progress of Methodist missions. Although the financial goals of the pledges were never fulfilled, to the great embarrassment of some leaders, this was one of the largest religious events of its day. Coming after the end of World War I, but before the economic crash of the depression, it was a triumphant assertion of the future possibilities of Methodist missions in winning the world for Christ in the 20th century. On June 27, Dr. Edward Soper gave a sermon of about 300 words through a megaphone from 300 feet above the ground in the army dirigible A-4 out of Akron, Ohio as just one example of the possible use of modern technology in missions.
One stunning success of the Methodist World’s Fair was a pageant called *The Wayfarer* written by a Seattle minister, James E. Crowther. This pageant required 1,500 actors, 1,000 chorus members, and 75 musicians from the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, and included well-known actors from Broadway and the silent film industry. The stage was built in the New York Metropolitan Opera House and shipped in ten railroad cars to Columbus. The pageant covered the history of Christian missions from the early days of the Church through the Reformation, John Wesley, and included a patriotic conclusion with Presidents of the United States. *The Wayfarer* was so successful it later played for six weeks at Madison Square Gardens.
An historic event occurred on July 8, 1919, which was “Motion Picture Day”, when denominational leaders met with members of the National Association of Motion Picture Producers for the Church Motion Picture Convention. The goal was to encourage the production of wholesome and educational productions suitable for American Methodists. Hollywood films along with missionary-made ethnographic films were extensively shown, including some on a ten-story high movie screen billed as the “world's largest motion picture screen”. This was still at a time when the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church was opposed to members watching motion pictures for entertainment. After 1919, this stance changed rapidly. Connected to this openness to silent film, famous Hollywood director, D.W. Griffith was present with his motion picture cameras to record the events of the Centenary Celebration and to film *The Wayfarer*.

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. Events such as the Centenary Celebration of American Methodist Missions of 1919 are easily forgotten over time. 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.
Endnotes

1 All photographic images used courtesy of the Archives of the B.L. Fisher Library of Asbury Theological Seminary who own all copyrights to these digital images. Please contact them directly if interested in obtaining permission to reuse these images.


3 Fred B. Smith “In Stride with the Christian World: An Exposition de Luxe” in Association Men August 1919, p. 876.

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.

Beilby, James K. and Paul Rhodes Eddy, eds.

Bockmuehl, Markus

Boyer, Steven D. and Christopher A. Hall

Brown, Daniel S., Jr. ed.

Christopher, J. Clif

Carroll, John T.

Demarest, Bruce, general ed.
Fowl, Stephen E.

Green, Arthur, ed.

Gutenson, Charles E.

Hagner, Donald A.

Harris, Murray J.

Klink, Edward W., III

Long, Kimberly Bracken, ed.

Longman, Tremper, III and David E. Garland, general eds.

Lyon, K. Brynolf and Dan P. Moseley

Lyons, George
Moreau, A. Scott  

Morton, Brooks St. Clair  

Oden, Thomas C.  

Painter, John and David A. deSilva  

Papanikolaou, Aristotle  

Spencer, F. Scott  

Stassen, Glen Harold  

Stronstad, Roger  

Sweet, Leonard  
Watson, Duane F. and Terrance Callan

Wells, C. Richard and Ray Van Neste, eds.
2012  *Forgotten Songs: Reclaiming the Psalms for Christian Worship.*
     $19.99.

Witherington, Ben, III
About First Fruits Press

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

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

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

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

asbury.to/firstfruits