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The Asbury Journal

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

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

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From the Editor

What is the role of the church in today's society? How have we gotten to the position we are currently in? How do we as a people called Methodists respond to the changing dynamics and needs of our modern world? The articles in this issue all revolve around those key questions as Methodism continues to wrestle with its identity and role in today's world. We start everything with a rousing paper by Philip R. Meadows about the importance of zeal in the history of Methodism, and even more as a key to reviving the church spiritually for a potential future in evangelism, discipleship, and mission. This paper challenges all of us to think about our spiritual values and how they fuel the growth of the church. George Hendricks and Kelli Taylor offer an insightful look into how the Fresh Expressions Movement and storefront churches may offer Methodism a way forward, along with the challenges of pastors who maintain a secondary career in order to lead churches with fewer resources. Rebekah Clapp brings a Wesleyan theological approach to bear on the pressing question of immigration and the Dreamers in modern U.S. politics. How should Methodists respond to such a current issue, but root it in our unique theological heritage? Jonathan A. Powers goes back to early church history and the foundation of Methodism to explore how Christian catechesis has worked to help develop social holiness within the Christian community.

Other articles are not specifically Methodist in orientation, but still offer insight into how the church can understand and apply scripture to our lives. Edward T. Wright sets out in his article to understand how we can balance faithfulness to the historicity of Jesus and our commitments to the theological Christ in our academic work and preaching. He uses the narrative of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness to examine what maintaining this balance of academics and faithfulness might look like. Sochangam Shirk, explores the theology of African theologian, Byang H. Kato, and his commitment to biblical truth in the process of contextualization. Throughout these papers the theme of zeal seems to constantly emerge in different, yet significant ways.

Several special essays conclude this issue. Mark R. Elliott reflects back on his life growing up in Georgia during segregation. He questions his own activity or non-activity in a speech written for an audience in Russia, in order to bring those practical lessons he has learned to a global stage, also full of prejudice and hatred for the “other.” Logan Patriguin delves into a new theological approach for understanding the Fall and examines how this might help better inform preachers in today’s churches. Finally, in the essay *From the Archives*, we explore one of the strangest collections in the Archives and Special Collections at Asbury Theological Seminary, which reveals a fascinating story of the scientific study of children’s teeth and a woman’s heart for improving the lives of impoverished sugar plantation workers in Hawaii. Zeal continues to drive the conversation.

On a personal note, in March I lost my father, John Danielson (Dec. 28, 1937-Mar. 9, 2019). He was a humble man, a part-time local Methodist pastor who then became full-time. God called him out of the golfing world where he worked as a golf club professional. He served Methodist churches in Florida and Maine and he exhibited the type of zeal Dr. Meadows refers to in his article. He had a passion for preaching and a love for people that was contagious. He would not have understood the academic language of these articles, but he would have applauded their message. Our task is to reach the people of this world with the love of God expressed through the sacrifice of Jesus. We are empowered to do this through the Holy Spirit to care for the stranger and the marginalized and to preach the Gospel at every chance. My father resonated with this message. I will miss him dearly, but I also know he is up in heaven joining the heavenly throng in casting his crown before the lamb and praising God. As we wonder what our role is in today’s world, so full of problems and issues, and as we even wonder about the future of Methodism, let us remember our task is to fight the good fight, to finish the race, and to keep the faith so we might win the crown of righteousness reserved for all who long for his return (2 Timothy 4:6-8). That level of zeal is our goal, and anything that brings us closer to the Kingdom of God is worth the effort.

Robert Danielson Ph.D.

Philip R. Meadows

*The Spirit of Methodism: Missionary Zeal
and the Gift of an Evangelist*

Abstract:

The church does not need more vital congregations, but rather a few vital Christians, whose vitality is not measured in terms of institutional effectiveness, but by missionary zeal. This zeal is a hungering and thirsting for just one thing: the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It cannot be manufactured, but can be caught from those who have been gifted by the Spirit to continue the charism of their founder, and fanned into flame. Without this type of Christian, there is no movement, and there is no Methodism. John Wesley's most important legacy was not his doctrine or his discipline but a movement of zealous preachers and people who put flesh on the way of scriptural holiness. This paper explores the nature of that legacy and the spiritual zeal it fostered. This paper concludes that this same "spirit" is available to all who would commit to the doctrine and discipline of the Methodist movement. A version of this paper was delivered before the faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary to conclude the formal installation of the author in the Sundo Kim Chair of Evangelism on December 4, 2018.

Keywords: zeal, John Wesley, Methodists, revitalization, discipleship

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I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. This will undoubtedly be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out. (John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Methodism*)¹

Introduction

Just five years before his death, at the age of eighty-three, Wesley wrote *Thoughts Upon Methodism* as the spiritual father of a trans-Atlantic movement into which he had invested a lifetime of ministry. He claimed to be unafraid that the people called Methodists “should ever cease to exist in either Europe or America.” The movement was too big, too well organized, and too successful to imagine it disappearing any time soon. What he feared, however, was that this movement would lose its spiritual vitality, and his legacy would end up becoming a dead sect bereft of the charismatic gifts it was raised up to spread.

More than two hundred and thirty years later, is not difficult to interpret Wesley’s prognosis as a tragic diagnosis of the general state of contemporary Methodism in the West. The situation is much worse than he feared, however, since persistent numerical decline has made it conceivable that one day the people called Methodists might actually cease to exist, even as a dead sect. Worse still, that day might not be too far ahead for some Methodist connections around the world.² One response from Wesleyan scholars and denominational leaders within the wider Methodist family has been a growing conviction that Methodism needs to recover its original nature as a discipleship movement.³ In different ways they lay blame on the processes of institutionalization, while recognizing this critique puts us on the horns of a dilemma. The character of a movement is quite different from that of an institution, but the growth of a movement requires the kind of organizational structures that are susceptible to being institutionalized.⁴ In simple terms, is it possible for the structures of an institution to retain the character of a movement?

Consider a range of voices from within the United Methodist Church. First, Scott Kisker roots the problem of decline in the changing identity of Methodism from an evangelistic movement to a “mainline” denomination. This was accompanied by a shift in perception about Wesley himself: “We no longer viewed our founder as an evangelist, a man caught

up in a movement of the Holy Spirit," but as a mere folk theologian whose principles could be used to justify a respectable but "unholy alliance" with wider society.⁵ George Hunter develops this further by describing early Methodism as a "contagious Christian movement" that "contrasted remarkably with the more institutionalized expressions of Christianity."⁶ As such, the key question is whether "a once great movement, which over time developed into a more sterile institutional form, can become a contagious movement once again? If so, what would that look like?"⁷ His characteristic solution is to deploy church growth principles at the level of congregational mission. Scott Jones has urged the denomination as a whole "to become a movemental institution", whose most important characteristics are "clarity of purpose and discipline of execution."⁸ Finally, Gil Rendle enquires whether new movements can be "birthed by and live within an established institution" in order to "provide new life and energy"?⁹ This is an interesting proposal, but the history of Methodism doesn't make it look too promising at first glance.¹⁰

Amidst these varied insights and agendas, there is a shared conviction that the process of institutionalization has instilled a collective "amnesia" about Methodist doctrine, spirit, and discipline. In one way or another, they conclude with a prophetic call to change that begins with doctrine, is long on discipline, but often short on spirit!¹¹ The aim of this paper is not to resolve the complexities of movement thinking and the challenges of institutionalization. It is simply to examine Wesley's own views on the origin and growth of early Methodism along with his mature concerns about its spiritual health, and let this discernment speak into the current debate. More specifically, I will attempt to draw out what Wesley means by the "spirit" of Methodism, and why the decline and future of the people called Methodists is ultimately a spiritual issue that calls for missionary zeal and calls out the gift of evangelist.

Facing Our Timidity

Wesley's fascination with collecting statistics on Methodist membership is one thing his spiritual children have not abandoned since the movement began. Drawing on this data, scholars have been able to narrate the astonishing rise and fall of Methodism, as a trans-Atlantic phenomenon, even if there is disagreement about how to interpret the facts.

Very helpfully, David Hempton concludes his book, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit*, by surveying various social-historical explanations for numerical decline.¹² I will roughly follow his example as a springboard for reflecting on Wesley's own observations, which provide clues about the underlying spiritual dynamics at work.

Routinization

First, there are explanations for decline based on the Weberian principle of routinization.¹³ This theory posits the inevitable change of character in social movements as they are transmuted from charismatic organizations into settled institutions. In short, the charismatic vitality with which a movement first sets out is channeled into institutional structures and eventually gets lost. Flexible structures put in place by the first generation to organize and serve a growing movement, become the hardened objects of preservation by subsequent generations. From a theological perspective, it can describe how the church ends up having the form of religion without the power of godliness; and it is not difficult to see how this process can account for the decline of Methodism as an ecclesiastical institution. Ironically, formalism in the Church of England was the very problem that the early Methodist movement sought to address.

I suggest that turning to Wesley helps us uncover the spiritual dynamic behind this process of routinization, as the temptation to exchange the cost of missionary zeal for the comfort of institutional structures.¹⁴ It's a problem that goes back to the origins of the church itself. The descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost gave birth to a holiness movement that would spread across the earth. But from the beginning, there have been two powers at work in the church: a "mystery of godliness," which is the sanctifying power of the Spirit; and a "mystery of iniquity," which is the energy of Satan instilling a love of the world and especially its riches.¹⁵ Apart from times of overt persecution, the mystery of iniquity works by stealth, darkening people's hearts, and quenching the Spirit by imperceptible degrees. This process fatally wounded the early Christian movement when Constantine flooded the church with riches and power, and effectively killed its radical witness in the world.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the mystery of godliness has re-emerged periodically in "revivals of religion," or movements of real Christianity raised up by God to renew a worldly church.¹⁷ He noted the observation of Martin Luther, however, that such

movements rarely lasted for more than one generation, or about thirty years, after which their founding zeal was lost and they either perished from the earth or remained as a dry cold sect. In Wesley's estimation, this was the fate of the Reformation churches themselves, and he feared it might be the fate of Methodism as well. But why?

Wesley believed that God raised up the Methodist movement to renew the spirit of biblical and primitive Christianity. It all began with just a few zealous young men in Oxford, and from there it spread throughout the world.¹⁸ As a "revival of religion," the people called Methodists had two unique traits compared with other historical movements. First, he boasted they were still very much alive and growing after more than sixty years. And second, he claimed their "peculiar glory" was retaining the character of a renewal movement, capable of uniting all real Christians in a lifeless and divided Christendom. Because of this calling, he refused to let the people called Methodists become a separate church, despite the tensions this caused and the apparent benefits it would appear to offer the movement. For Wesley, it would be in "direct contradiction to [God's] whole design in raising them up; namely, to spread scriptural religion throughout the land, among people of every denomination."¹⁹ He viewed the desire for independence and "party spirit" as a sign of the mystery of iniquity at work tempting them to substitute the cost of a missionary vocation for the ease of a settled institution in alliance with the world. Following the Reformation, he observed that when the Presbyterians, Anabaptists, and Quakers gained their autonomy as separate churches, they lost their missionary vocation and then "did scarce any good, except to their own little body." Indeed, Wesley recounts a prophetic word given to him personally, that "whenever the Methodists leave the Church, God will leave them."²⁰

Of course, Wesley also assisted in the foundation of a separate Methodist church in America, but only when there was no established church left to renew. Perhaps Wesley believed the spirit of a movement could inhabit the structures of a church, so long as the mystery of iniquity was subdued by their zealous discipleship.²¹ It is routinization not organization that is the problem. But when ecclesiastical ambition turns our desire for structures into an end in itself, we end up turning a living organization into a lifeless institution. Wesley knew that putting ecclesiastical ambition and self-preservation ahead of missionary vocation would compromise the spirit of Methodism and the character of a movement.

Accommodation

Second, there are socio-historical accounts of decline that tend to idealize the pioneers of early Methodism and attribute the problem of decline to a deliberate series of choices that gradually departed from the founding missionary vision. The principle of routinization, from movement to institution, might also be aligned with the transformation of Methodism from a “sect” to a “church.”²² Sociologically speaking, a “church” can be defined as an institution that seeks to exist in equilibrium with the world, by accommodating to the customs of the dominant culture; whereas a “sect” occupies a stance of protest to worldliness, both in the culture and the church. Wesley believed the Methodist movement was raised up to be a holiness sect, and to become a separate church would set it on a path to accommodation and death. He could refer to Methodism as a sect with a catholic spirit!²³ What he feared was that it would become a “dead sect,” alongside every other institutionalized church. From this perspective, Methodist decline might confirm a failure to heed Wesley’s advice of holding fast to the doctrine, spirit, and discipline, which originally defined them as a movement.²⁴ What are these defining characteristics?

First, Wesley maintained the “fundamental doctrine” of the Methodists was that “the Bible is the whole and sole rule both of Christian faith and practice,”²⁵ and the essence of this is “holiness of heart and life.” Second, he traces the “spirit” of Methodism back to the Holy Club in Oxford, again, where four “zealous members” of the church gathered in the pursuit of holiness.²⁶ Third, this zealous spirit eventually took them out of the church institutions and into the fields, where they proclaimed the doctrine of holiness, and invited people to join the movement by participating in the “discipline” of society, class, and band meetings. Wesley describes the “essence” of Methodism as holiness of heart and life. Methodist doctrine, spirit and discipline are the “circumstantial” that serve the pursuit of holiness. But Wesley warns that if “the circumstantial parts are lost, the essential will soon be lost” and “what remains will be dung and dross.”²⁷

Wesley described the people called Methodists as a “vineyard of the Lord,” tended and made fruitful through the gifts of doctrine, spiritual helps, and discipline.²⁸ First, he celebrates how they maintained “with equal zeal and diligence, the doctrine of free, full, present justification... and of entire sanctification both of heart and life...being as tenacious of inward holiness as any mystic, and of outward as any Pharisee.”²⁹ Second,

he speaks of Methodist societies, classes and bands as “spiritual helps” for pursuing the essence of this doctrine. And, third, the movement grew by these means, as the mystery of iniquity was overcome through the exercise of robust discipline. Regular examination of the Methodist people enabled their spiritual leaders to promote zeal, admonish sin, and exclude “disorderly walkers” from the movement.³⁰ When Wesley talks about “discipline” he is primarily referring to the principles of both embrace and exclusion associated with the covenantal dynamics of belonging to a voluntary movement. It is this discipline that the practices of society and class meeting were intended to serve.

Yet Wesley was forced to bemoan how even this vineyard brought forth wild grapes, because they exchanged their first love for “that grand poison of souls, the love of the world.” They once endured suffering for the sake of the poor, but they had become soft by the comfort of riches. Their thirst for God had been slaked by the desires of the flesh and neglect of the spiritual helps.³¹ Indeed, Wesley’s fear for the people called Methodists was rooted in the observation of what seems like an inevitable sociological principle: “I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality; and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will...love of the world in all its branches.” In the end, “although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away.” In other words, it would seem that Methodism contained the seeds of its own demise.³²

Eighteen months before his death, Wesley rehearsed this penetrating critique with deep lament over a movement that could be so blessed with doctrine and discipline, yet whose spirit was so undermined by worldly desires.³³ He argued that the accumulation of riches, when it left some in needless poverty, would “continually grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and in a great measure stop his gracious influences from descending on our assemblies.”³⁴ For Wesley, this was a failure of good stewardship. The accumulation of riches was another sign of the mystery of iniquity at work: that they had “forgot, or at least not duly attended to” the cost of discipleship and the demand of Jesus to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow him. With a note of regret, Wesley observed that the work of God could go on in a “surprising manner” notwithstanding this “capital defect,” but not in the same degree and presumably not without continually undermining itself. Despite the benefits of sound doctrine and discipline,

the only way to preserve the spirit of Methodism from accommodation to worldliness, was to recover their missionary zeal and give away their riches as an act of spiritual warfare.³⁵ In the end, it is selfish ambition and worldly aspirations that compromise the spirit of Methodism and the character of a movement.

Secularization

Third, there are various explanations for the decline of the Methodism rooted in secularization theory.³⁶ At the risk of oversimplifying an increasingly contested field of research; the problem of secularization can be addressed from two different perspectives when it comes to the church. On the one hand, there are external factors associated with the rise of modernity, the collapse of Christendom, and the marginalization of Christian belief in Western culture as a whole. From this perspective, Methodist decline can be attributed to the difficulty of attracting unchurched people to an increasingly irrelevant social institution. On the other hand, there are factors internal to the church itself that have contributed to its own demise. From this perspective, the spirit of Methodism loses out to the spirit of Enlightenment, as its supernatural convictions and missionary zeal are gradually accommodated to the customs of liberal modernity.³⁷ Theologically speaking, the intrinsic problem of secularization is not that it rules out belief in God, but that it makes such belief irrelevant to pursuits of everyday life, and kills the church by stealth, from the inside out.³⁸

It would be anachronistic to say that Wesley lived in a secular context, but he did live through the emergence of Enlightenment culture and has something to say about its internal effects on the church.³⁹ Wesley argued that the underlying spiritual disease of humanity was “living without God” in the world, and such are “the vast majority of even those who are called Christians!” They are not atheists in the common sense of the word, but “practical Atheists” who are dissipated by the world and uncentered from God.⁴⁰ We might say the mystery of iniquity does its worst by having us profess belief in God while living as though he doesn’t exist, or at least settling for a way of life that is indistinguishable from those who don’t believe. When this mindset invades the church, it results in a process of self-secularization. Ronald Knox suggested that Methodism emerged on the cusp of modernity as a movement of enthusiasm, and an antidote to the Deists who were making practical atheism theologically respectable in the church.⁴¹

Wesley helps us diagnose the root problem of self-secularization as spiritual “dissipation.” We are encompassed by a world that tends to separate us from God; that make us inattentive to his presence; that distracts us from everyday discipleship; that forms in us the habits of practical atheism; and eventually conforms us to its own godless values. Spiritual dissipation is the constant threat of being gradually and imperceptibly unhinged from God, until his influences are gone, and only worldliness remains. This is a problem that affects the hearts of every individual, spreads through the church, and infects the development of whole denominations. If the people called Methodists lose enthusiasm, they lose their very reason for being.⁴²

Though Wesley still lived in a deeply Christendom context, he described eighteenth century England as a thoroughly “dissipated and ungodly” nation. He viewed Methodists to be those who had “not yet bowed either their knee or their heart to the god of this world; who, cleaving close to the God of heaven, are not born away by the flood” of practical atheism. They “dare swim against the stream,” and “if they cannot turn the tide back, they can at least bear an open testimony against it!”⁴³ The cure of dissipation is to have a “single eye,” to “pursue one thing: happiness in knowing, loving and serving God” alone.⁴⁴ Again, Wesley traces this conviction back to the origins of the movement, as a core conviction of the Holy Club. They gathered to remind one another that, “By the grace of God, this one thing I do: (at least it is my constant aim:) I see God, I love God, I serve God. I glorify him with my body and with my spirit.”⁴⁵ Perhaps this is why Wesley continued to urge the impossibility of being “half a Christian” or even “half Methodist.”⁴⁶ Swimming against the tide is not for the half-hearted or double-minded! This was the zealous “spirit” with which they first set out!

Hampton suggests that Methodism was a profoundly counter-cultural movement that “thrived on opposition, but it could not last long on equipoise alone.”⁴⁷ The cost of ecclesiastical ambition in this world was a decline in “otherworldly zeal,” which compromised both its central message and evangelistic spirit. The long-term outcome has been an unsustainable pattern of increasing influence and decreasing recruitment. So, it would seem there are only two options for a movement of enthusiasm in a secular culture. Swim against the tide, or be swept away by it. Sound doctrine helps us discern the dangerous currents in which we swim, and the direction in which we must travel. Sound discipline can train us for the

swim, and help us stay on course. But only an enthusiastic and zealous spirit will empower us to keep on swimming, and turn opposition into an opportunity for witness. All it takes is a half-hearted commitment to God amidst the tides of practical atheism for self-secularization to fatally wound the spirit of Methodism and the character of a movement.

Inoculation

Let me add one more perspective. John Haywood has shown how the principles of social epidemiology can account for the growth and decline of Methodism as a function of enthusiasm.⁴⁸ The process of social diffusion by which the early Methodist movement grew and spread so rapidly was exactly the opposite of spiritual dissipation. On these terms, enthusiasm can be thought of as an infectious disease, and the enthusiast as a contagious believer. Evangelistic potential is a measure of how deeply an enthusiast is infected and how much contact is made with susceptible people. The vitality of a church or movement, therefore, is determined by the proportion of enthusiasts and the quality of their missionary zeal. Growth loses momentum for lack of enthusiasm, and numerical decline sets in as missionary zeal is reduced. Wesley understood that the movement would fail if the mystery of iniquity caused them to settle for being half Methodists and immunized them against the “disease” of scriptural holiness. Worse still, Methodism might become so accommodated to lukewarm Christianity that its false witness simply inoculates the general population against the real thing.

Wesley has plenty to say about the social diffusion of the gospel in a movement of enthusiasm.⁴⁹ He observed how the Spirit at Pentecost filled the apostles with overflowing boldness, gathered a community of radical holiness, and scattered them abroad as a movement of gospel witness. Real Christianity did not consist in systems of doctrine or structures of discipline per se, but was a powerful reality to be encountered in “men’s hearts and lives.”⁵⁰ The Spirit of holiness set their hearts ablaze with love for God and neighbor, and gave birth to a gospel movement by “spreading from one to another, and so gradually making its way into the world.”⁵¹ Persecution could not prevail against their zealous love, and martyrdom provided an opportunity for showing that “their lives were of equal force with their words.”⁵² But the mystery of iniquity grew up alongside, then as now, and “we tread a beaten path: the still unceasing corruptions of the succeeding generations.” Wesley asks, “Where does this Christianity

now exist?" Far from living as "burning and shining lights" with a "burning zeal" for evangelism, he said the Western church was "as far from it as hell is from heaven!" Could the answer be found among the people called Methodists?⁵³

As we have seen, Wesley observed that the origins and growth of early Methodism followed the same pattern as the early church. God raised up a few young men in Oxford, and awakened them to the truth about holy love, which they boldly "declared on all occasions, in private and public; having no design but to promote the glory of God, and no desire but to save souls from death." From there, "the little leaven spread wider and wider," until the movement spread to every part of the land, from England to Ireland, America and beyond. From place to place, this pattern was repeated as word and Spirit raised up a zealous few through whom the kingdom of God would be established and "silently increase, wherever it is set up, and spread from heart to heart, from house to house, from town to town, and from one kingdom to another."⁵⁴

Wesley claimed that "the grand stumbling block" to the general spread of the gospel was "the lives of Christians;" that is, nominal and worldly Christians whose lives belie the truth of holy love.⁵⁵ But God never leaves himself without a witness, and where Christianity has become cold and dead, the Spirit of holiness can begin the process again. He cautioned would-be Methodists that the world would label them "hot-brained enthusiasts," because they insisted on "infecting so many others" with their extremist views. "Zealous lovers of God and man" can expect to be persecuted and suffer the loss of family, friends and even life itself. But, he says, this is "the very badge of our discipleship" and "if we have it not, we are bastards and not sons" of God.⁵⁶

This is how Wesley prepares the ground for talking about "social holiness," which is really an evangelical missiology aimed at the general spread of the gospel. If the mystery of iniquity could not silence the Methodist movement through blatant persecution, it might tempt her members to avoid it by settling for a form of private spirituality or public morality. This is the problem of "solitary Christianity," or the temptation to believe that one can be a real Christian and live anonymously in the world. For Wesley, this is not merely a problem, it is an impossibility! The Spirit of holiness makes us the salt of the world, and it is the nature of true holiness "to diffuse itself, on every side, to all those among whom you are." Indeed, "this is the great reason why the providence of God has so mingled

you together with other men, that whatever grace you have received of God may through you be communicated to others."⁵⁷ The same logic may be applied to the beauty of holiness as the light of the world. Just as it is impossible to hide a city on a hill, so it is impossible to conceal "a holy, zealous, active lover of God and man."⁵⁸

The only way to stop our light from shining is to snuff it out. The only way to stop salt from savoring is to stop being salt. Or, to reverse the logic, "Whatever religion can be concealed, is not Christianity!" Perhaps a candle can be re-lit, though scripture gives us reason to doubt. But it is certain that saltiness cannot be regained once it is lost. A believer may fall and rise again, but falling to the point of apostasy is another matter. Wesley appeals to those who "once were holy and heavenly-minded, and consequently zealous of good works," but have now become "flat, insipid, dead, both careless of your own soul and useless to the souls of other men."⁵⁹ They are like the branches that have stopped bearing fruit, and which the Father will cut down and cast into the fire.

What is social holiness? It is the social diffusion of the gospel, or the spread of scriptural holiness. The gospel of holy love is the most virulent disease in the world. If we have it, we are contagious. If we are not contagious, we do not have it. The mystery of iniquity is working to immunize us against it, through instilling the fear of persecution or just a plain love of this world. What if Methodist decline is a sign of denominational apostasy, that goes beyond the maintenance of sound doctrine and discipline? What if the abject dearth of evangelism is a sign of catastrophic power failure? In the midst of a thriving movement, Wesley insisted there was no reason to believe Methodism must eventually peter out. God could use the method of contagious witness until holiness and happiness covered the whole earth. But what if the Lord is finished with the institutions of Methodism, because they long since ceased to be a gospel movement and are now another stumbling block to his mission. These may just be the ruminations of a "hot brained enthusiast," but wouldn't that be the point?! It is only when we stop asking such questions that we compromise the spirit of Methodism and the character of a movement.

Fanning the Flame

It should be clear by now that my simple assessment of the problem facing Methodism is a failure of "spirit" long before it is an issue

of doctrine and discipline. But the word “spirit” is an elusive term to define. Theologically speaking, the human spirit is that which makes us capable of communion with God, opens us to the influences of the Holy Spirit, and enables us to become co-workers with Jesus in his kingdom.⁶⁰ From a Wesleyan perspective, when the Spirit of holiness sets our hearts on fire with love for God and neighbor, the human spirit responds with missionary zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. This is the true spirit of Methodism and defines the character of the movement. Let me be clear. You can’t have this spirit without doctrine and discipline; but you can easily be learned and disciplined without the zeal of holy love infusing the heart, transfusing the life, and diffusing into the world. So, how is this spirit fanned into flame?

The Fire of Holy Love

It has been claimed that Methodism was born in song.⁶¹ Congregational singing held together the doctrine, spirit and discipline of Methodism in a single practice.⁶² On the one hand, John Wesley claimed that singing for the Methodist was “a means of raising or quickening the spirit of devotion, of confirming his faith, of enlivening his hope, and of kindling or increasing his love to God and man.”⁶³ On the other hand, he urged the Methodists to “sing spiritually” and “have an eye to God in every word you sing...and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually.”⁶⁴ Charles also warned, “Still let us on our guard be found, / and watch against the power of sound with sacred jealousy; / lest haply sense should damp our zeal, / and music’s charms bewitch and steal / our heart away from thee.”⁶⁵ There is a difference between emotivism and true renewal. The ultimate test of singing as a means of grace is that the flame of zealous love still consumes us when our meetings are over, in everyday discipleship and mission.

Zealous love is a constant theme in the hymns, and the spirit to be kindled in the singing. Charles perhaps gives us his best theology of zeal in two short verses:

Jesus, I would find,
Thy zeal for God in me,
Thy yearning pity for mankind,
Thy burning charity.

In me thy Spirit dwell!
 In me thy bowels move!
 So shall the fervour of my zeal
 Be the pure flame of love.⁶⁶

Zeal is the fire of holy love burning in our hearts for God and neighbor. It is a fire kindled by the Spirit that consumes our affections and moves us by its power. But above all, it is the zeal of Jesus himself imparted to us by the Spirit: "O arm me with the mind, / Meek Lamb, that was in thee! / And let my knowing zeal be joined / With perfect charity. / With calm and tempered zeal, / Let me enforce thy call, / And vindicate thy gracious will, / Which offers life to all."⁶⁷ This is missionary zeal for the least and the lost. The Spirit also imparts a passion, to be a living sacrifice, offering up ourselves to God and laying down our lives for others: "Let me to thy glory live: / My every sacred moment spend, / In publishing the sinner's friend. / Enlarge, inflame, and fill my heart / With boundless charity divine! / So shall I all my strength exert, / And love them with a zeal like thine; / And lead them to thy open side, / The sheep, for whom their Shepherd died."⁶⁸

Charles also warns against the temptation of "Laodicean ease." We must beware seeking the pleasures of this world and settling for a "lifeless form" of religion while losing the power of God. He intercedes, "Thou rather wouldst that we were cold / Than seem to serve thee without zeal."⁶⁹ The fire of the Spirit only falls upon those who long to have their sinful ways put to death, and be entirely consumed by the gospel cause:

Thou God that answerest by fire,
 On thee in Jesu's name we call;
 Fulfil our faithful heart's desire,
 And let on us thy Spirit fall.

Bound to the altar of thy cross,
 Our old offending nature lies.
 Now for the honour of thy cause,
 Come and consume the sacrifice!

Consume our lusts as rotten wood,
 Consume our stony hearts within;
 Consume the dust, the serpent's food,
 And lick up all the streams of sin.

It's body totally destroy!
Thyself the Lord, the God approve!
And fill our hearts with holy joy,
And fervent zeal, and perfect love.⁷⁰

The nature of God is a consuming fire. To be consumed by his zealous love is the heart of Christian perfection. To share his burning heart for the world is our missionary zeal. This is the spirit of Methodism. This is the fire of love we must fan into flame. Where it is lacking, the movement dies.

The Order of Godly Zeal

John Wesley opens his sermon *On Zeal* by claiming there are “few subjects in the whole compass of religion, that are of greater importance than this. For without zeal it is impossible, either to make any considerable progress in religion ourselves, or to do any considerable service to our neighbor.”⁷¹ Yet, he laments that “there have been so few treatises on the subject,” and I can say it remains the same today.⁷² The nature of zeal, like spirit, is hard to define and even harder to defend as a religious virtue. On the one hand, religious zeal in particular is easily and justifiably associated with the use violence, and so better avoided altogether. On the other hand, zeal has typically involved the kind of enthusiasm that settled religious institutions bent on accommodation to the world cannot tolerate. Perhaps it is not surprising that reflection on the nature of true zeal, where it can be found, is a recurrent theme in spiritual movements whose missionary vigor has been a challenge to the lukewarm state of the church.

Wesley begins by reflecting on the etymology of zeal, as the general experience of having our affections made “hot” or strongly moved for some purpose. True spiritual zeal, however, “is all love,” as “the love of God and man fills up its whole nature.” Love exists in degrees, and it is possible to be loving but not zealous. So, like Charles, he defines true Christian zeal as “fervent love,” or “the flame of love.”⁷³ It is not just one affection among many, but a quality that permeates the soul. Nor is it a fleeting temper, but “a steady, rooted disposition.”⁷⁴ It is the gift of Pentecost; and as the fire of the Spirit burns up the roots of pride, bitterness and anger, it also bears the fruit of humility, meekness and patience.

Zeal also comes in degrees, and we are to be more or less zealous depending on the object of our love. Wesley illustrates this by allotting the ingredients of Christian discipleship to a set of concentric circles.⁷⁵ First,

the love of God and neighbor is at the center, and we should be most zealous for the Spirit of love to be shed abroad in our hearts. Second, this hot center is surrounded by every other holy affection, and we should be zealous for holy love to reign over all our dispositions and actions. Third, these fervent affections are encompassed by the works of piety and mercy, and we should become zealous co-workers with the Spirit in saving our own souls and those around us. And fourth, the pursuit of holiness in heart and life is encapsulated by the church, and we are to be zealous for that fellowship that provokes us to ever greater love and goodness. This, says Wesley, is “the entire, connected system of Christianity.”⁷⁶

On the one hand, the order of zeal describes a life of discipleship in which the flame of love spreads from the inside out, from heart to life, and from person to person. It accounts for how the gospel is spread, from heart to heart, house to house, town to town, and nation to nation. On the other hand, the flame of love may be fanned from the outside in, through a commitment to Christian fellowship that holds us accountable for using the spiritual disciplines as means of grace in the pursuit of holiness. But the order of zeal must always flow from the inside out. One way to account for the decline of Methodism is not merely a lack of zeal, but a fatal inversion of its true order. When the structures of the church, or the disciplines of fellowship, or the works of piety and mercy become the objects of our greatest zeal, then these means of grace all too easily become ends in themselves.⁷⁷ The flame of love is asphyxiated by the very means ordained to increase it.

The Essence of a Missionary Spirit

Wesley says that “zeal for all good works is, according to my idea, an essential ingredient of true religion,” and true zeal is the “the flame of love, or fervent love to God and man.”⁷⁸ He argues that truly zealous works of piety are motivated by a fervent longing for more of God; and truly zealous works of mercy flow from it, by using “every means in your power to save souls from death.”⁷⁹ The whole logic of zealous love is evangelistic and missionary in nature. It is an all-consuming love for others that is “on the full stretch to save their souls from death,” while ever “the glory of God swallows him up.”⁸⁰ If our works of piety are truly zealous, it will be proved in our works of mercy; and if our works of mercy are truly zealous, it will be proved by drawing people to the God of love himself. To those who would reduce works of mercy to alleviating the needs of the body alone,

Wesley says, "Friend, come up higher! Do you 'prophesy' in the 'name' of Christ?" Pray that "the influence of his Spirit attend your word, and make it the power of God unto salvation."⁸¹ Truly zealous works of mercy are evangelistic in nature, as the Spirit of love anoints both our deeds and our words with the power of effective witness.

This pattern of holiness and mission was most prominently set forth by the early Methodist preachers as an example for the whole movement to follow.⁸² John Gaulter observed that his fellow preachers "gave efficacy to the savour of their discourses by the active piety of their lives; and their glowing zeal for the salvation of souls."⁸³ As a young convert, William Black recounted, "I felt a peculiar love to souls, and seldom passed a man, woman, or child without lifting up my heart to God on their account; or passed a house without praying for all in it . . . so that sometimes I was constrained to speak to them, though I met with rough treatment in return."⁸⁴ Such zeal gave their lives a highly contagious quality, and the conversation of Thomas Walsh was likened to a "fire; warming, refreshing, and comforting all that were about him, and begetting in their souls a measure of the same zealous concern for the glory of God, and the salvation of sinners, which burned in his own breast."⁸⁵ In the midst of a powerful love-feast, John Furz recorded how a group of local leaders became so "filled with zeal for the glory of God, and the good of souls" that "they dispersed themselves on Sundays, went into the country villages, sung and prayed, and exhorted the people to turn to God."⁸⁶

The preachers were known for their single-eyed devotion to one thing: a longing for more of God's love in their own lives, in order to share that love with others, and to stir up the same missionary zeal throughout the Methodist movement. In particular, they put flesh on the evolving doctrine of Christian perfection as the ultimate expression of zealous love. Seeking perfection was more about mission than morality. Alexander Mather described the experience as having a "heart wholly devoted to God," and being filled with "a fervent zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls, as swallowed up every other care and consideration."⁸⁷ They were not all "extraordinary or splendid" as preachers, but the flame of love shone through their lives and made them fruitful in their labors. In a letter to Miss Bolton, Wesley encouraged this favorite preacher to, "Stir up the gift of God that is in you. Be zealous! Be active! Spare no one. Speak for God, wherever you are." She must "aspire after full salvation" and exhort others

to follow her example. Finally he warns her “do not decline in your zeal for this.”⁸⁸

Wesley observed that where this proclamation was lacking in any place, the whole Methodist society would sink into decline, both spiritually and numerically. The early Methodist preachers fanned the flame in others by holding fast to the doctrine of perfect love and the discipline of Methodist society, in both precept and example. One of Wesley’s assistants wrote about a couple of ordinary local preachers, “men of not large gifts, but zealous for Christian perfection,” by “their warm conversation on the head, kindled a flame in some of the Leaders. These pressed others to seek after it; and for this end appointed meetings for prayer. The fire then spread wider and wider, till the whole society was in a flame.”⁸⁹

Guarding the Good Deposit

In the end, it is missionary zeal that guards the doctrine and discipline of the movement. Fortunately, Wesley does not leave us guessing about the “good deposit” he intended to pass on. He claimed the doctrine of “full sanctification,” or perfection in love, was “the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly he appeared to have raised us up.”⁹⁰ And the “Large Minutes” of Conference, which served as a standard of discipline, records that “God’s design in raising up the Preachers called Methodists” was “to reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land.”⁹¹ This language of being “raised up” implies that God had a distinct purpose in mind for them, which would not suffer compromise.

The Charism of the Founder

There is a lot of talk these days among missiologists about the movemental nature of the church, but little theological explanation of what this means. Perhaps the most sustained attempt at a theology of ecclesial movements has come out of the Catholic Church, rooted in the “charism of the founder.” Antonio Romano explains that this charism is a “unique experience of the Spirit” that brings into being a new movement of discipleship and mission.⁹² Founders have the ability to share their experience of the Spirit by a form of spiritual parenting, and establish a

pattern of doctrine and discipline that equips others to perpetuate the charism over time.⁹³

From this perspective, we can argue that the charism of Wesley was the spirit of Methodism: a missionary zeal for the spread of scriptural holiness expressed in the doctrine of perfection, and embodied in the discipline of Methodist society. The memorial to Wesley at City Road chapel gives voice to this charism by describing him as “a man of learning and sincere piety scarcely inferior to any; in zeal, ministerial labors, and extensive usefulness, superior, perhaps, to all men, since the days of St Paul.”⁹⁴ This is not an exaggerated eulogy, but an epitaph to a spiritual parent, by a people who had enjoyed the gift of the Spirit through him.

The biggest danger to a spiritual movement is forgetting their charism, which is likely to come through the processes of institutionalization. Romano explains that amnesia leads to “spiritual suicide.”⁹⁵ It is a form of “betrayal” in which we prefer the foundational structures of a movement to the evangelical spirit of the founder himself. A movement “will continue to live and bear fruit as long as the community’s spirituality is passed on from one person to another...through the constant attempt to transmit to posterity the founder’s unadulterated spirit.”⁹⁶ If the founding charism evaporates, however, the movement is thrown into a state of spiritual crisis and decline, and the original charism is “transmuted into a heap of cold ashes.”⁹⁷ There is no chance of recovering the spirit of Methodism without faithfulness to the founder’s doctrine and discipline, but there is no chance of recovering the character of a movement if that doctrine and discipline blinds us to the spirit from which they came. The question is, do we want the real Wesley, a spiritual parent on fire with missionary zeal, or just a safe version made in our own lukewarm image?

Raising Up Spiritual Children

The elderly Wesley recounted how God enabled him to raise up a few, young, poor preachers “without experience, learning, or art; but simple of heart, devoted to God, full of faith and zeal, seeking no honor, no profit, no pleasure, no ease, but merely to save souls.” And those who responded to the ministry of these preachers were “of the same spirit... simple of heart, devoted to God, zealous of good works” and desiring to attain full salvation.⁹⁸ A movement can only continue if its charism or spirit is imparted from one generation to the next. But over time, the mystery of

iniquity made some of his spiritual children “less zealous for God; and, consequently, less active, less diligent in his service.” As a consequence, “their word was not, as formerly, clothed with power: It carried with it no demonstration of the Spirit,” and “the same faintness of spirit was in their private conversation.” And as they “declined from their first love, so did many of the people.”⁹⁹

Given this state of declension, Wesley was bold enough to question whether God might “remove the candlestick from his people, and raise up another people, who will be more faithful to his grace.” At least, he warns those preachers who have lost their first love that God might “take the word of his grace utterly out of your mouth! Be assured, the Lord hath no need of you: his work doth not depend upon your help.”¹⁰⁰ For God can always raise up another movement, or new preachers, “endued with the spirit which they had lost...more zealous, more alive to God.” Surely the birth of the Holiness Movement and its Pentecostal offspring should remind us that the spirit of Methodism can live on, with or without their dying parents.

After Wesley’s death, one of his favorite sons, John Pawson, wrote his own last letter to a second generation of preachers, praying that “a double portion of that Spirit which influenced the first Methodist preachers may rest upon you who are likely to be their successors.” Following the example of Wesley, he urges them to hold fast to the principles with which they first set out, but his order begins with an appeal to the “spirit” of Methodism: “Take great care that you all constantly maintain the primitive Methodist spirit. Be serious, spiritual, and heavenly-minded. Be lively, zealous, and active in the service of God. Be crucified to this vain world, and filled with that Holy Spirit which raises the soul from earth to heaven” for “you are in great danger of conforming to the world, in your dress, your manners, and in your spirit and temper of mind.” And he offers a word of caution in admitting people to the ministry. We must be sure they are “soundly converted to God, are zealous for his glory,” and “only wish to spend and be spent in his work.” Because, “if ever the life and power of godliness begin to decay among the Methodists, look well to yourselves; for the first cause will be with the preachers.”¹⁰¹

The Character of a Methodist

W.E. Sangster, famous preacher of Westminster Central Hall in London, was a faithful son of Wesley in British Methodism. About eighty years ago, he reflected on how “the fire that once glowed with a great white heat burns low” in the Church.¹⁰² On the one hand, he held on to the hope that Methodism could be “born again,” and refused to accept the pessimist’s accounts of doom. On the other hand, he claimed that “the future of Methodism demands a faith that can move mountains, but the stupid optimists, if any survive, had better be killed off first.”¹⁰³ After surveying various explanations for decline, from the external challenges of culture to the internal failures of the Methodist machine, he comes to a simple but profound conclusion: “General criticism of ‘Methodism’ must give way to clear, incisive, and detailed criticism of a Methodist.”¹⁰⁴

Reflecting on the charisma of Wesley and the early Methodist movement, he observed that “there has been a definite diminution of vital and personal religion”, and the joyful “exuberance of primitive Christianity does not shine from us.” When it comes to sharing faith, Sangster laments, “small wonder we cannot give this glad secret away: we have so little to give.”¹⁰⁵ So, he argued that the nature and future of the church would depend on recovering a passion for scriptural holiness, kept alive through the disciplines of spiritual fellowship, and overflowing in “zeal for personal evangelism.” Even though “Methodism has lost its missionary passion,” he assures us that “a minority of passionate God-directed disciples could begin at once to affect the history of the world.”¹⁰⁶ It was the method of Jesus, it was the fruit of Pentecost, and it is what happened at the origins of Methodism.

A well-known story about Sangster has him interviewing a nervous young man for the Methodist ministry, who felt compelled to warn them that he had a shy disposition, and was not the sort of person who would set the river Thames on fire! “My dear young brother,” responded Sangster with wit and wisdom, “I’m not interested to know if you can set the Thames on fire. What I want to know is this: if I picked you up by the scruff of your neck and dropped you into the Thames, would it sizzle?”¹⁰⁷ Sangster was not primarily concerned with the young man’s natural dispositions for the ministry, but whether his heart was aflame with love, so that God might use him powerfully.

What the church needs is not more vital congregations, just a few vital Christians; where vitality is not measured in terms of institutional

effectiveness, but the glow of missionary zeal. It is a hungering and thirsting for just one thing: the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It cannot be manufactured, let alone mass-produced. But it can be caught from those who have been gifted by the Spirit to continue the charism of the founder, and fanned into flame. Apart from such persons, there is no movement, and there is no Methodism.

The Work of an Evangelist

In concluding, it is important to remember that Wesley's concerns about the health of the people called Methodists were not driven by numerical decline, but waning spiritual vitality. The organization was not declining at that point, but even in its advance he could discern the seeds of its own demise. And he observed that the momentum of the organization might well continue long after the spirit of the movement had evaporated. So, returning to our original question: Is it possible for the structures of an institution to retain the character of a movement? With Wesley's help, I have argued that this is ultimately a spiritual question that requires a spiritual answer. And the spiritual question is this: Are we lacking in zeal (Romans 12:11)? Or, put differently: Do we desire to be more zealous?

Zeal, of course, is not a virtue in itself. It has the general character of fervent love, but it always takes on the nature of that which is loved. The spirit of Methodism is not merely compromised by indifference, but can be lost through a false zeal for the ways of this world, which blinds it to the way of scriptural holiness, both concealing and compromising our true doctrine and discipline. But let us carefully observe that worldliness is no respecter of theology, for there are just as many culturally dissipated evangelicals as there are culturally determined liberals. Worse than this, there is a false zeal for the church itself, which makes the preservation of institutional structures more important than the pursuit of evangelistic mission, and all but guarantees the processes of routinization, accommodation and self-secularization.

When Wesley said that true zeal is only fervent love, he meant the holy love of God and neighbor, the essence of scriptural Christianity: that sets us ablaze by the Spirit, transforms us into the likeness of Jesus, and empowers us to give up everything for his cause. Pursuing this missionary zeal was the life of the early Methodist preachers; and fanning it into flame was their work as evangelists. If the church needs more vital Christians, and

true vitality is the flame of love, then we must pray that God will raise up those with the gift of an evangelist, and invest in them. They would need to re-evangelize the church in order to reach the world.

The gift of an evangelist is not the same as that of a prophet, though the two do go together. Wesleyan evangelists are not primarily concerned with discerning the signs of times. They are not motivated by a desire for gaining influence in the world or stemming decline in the church. They are simply zealous for the glory of God in the salvation of souls: to win not merely converts, but followers of Jesus; not merely disciples, but hearts set on fire by his Spirit; and not merely burning hearts, but lives of holy love through which this fire becomes a contagious movement. Evangelists are joyful when they see the gospel spreading from one glowing person to another; for they know that such a people have the power and the passion to accomplish anything in the church and the world. They are indignant when they see the glory of God being compromised, and his evangelistic mission to the least and the lost. In this way, they go to war against the mystery of iniquity, and become the Spirit's antidote to routinization, accommodation, and self-secularization of the church. But to those who have been inoculated against scriptural Christianity, their medicine will be bitter in the mouth.

From this perspective, Wesley's most important legacy was not his doctrine or his discipline but a movement of zealous preachers and people who put flesh on the way of scriptural holiness. They were remembered for their intrepidity, determination, resilience, and self-denial; for a flame of love that left all forms of religion in the shadows; and for a spiritual glow that was experienced by others as a display of raw power! And here was the good news for every broken heart and impoverished life: This same "spirit" was available to all who would commit to the doctrine and discipline of the Methodist movement.

If my arguments are right, the solution to decline will not be popular, because it will plunge our institutions into a state of tension. What the church needs today are zealots on fire with missionary zeal: uncompromising in their doctrine and unyielding in their discipline. Jesus raised up a few, and they changed the world. Wesley did the same, and his immediate successors kept the fire burning. So, I see my calling as an evangelist at Asbury Theological Seminary is to raise up a few young zealots, and pray for the charism of the founder to burn in their hearts. Of course, this must start with fanning the flame in my own heart, so I can

fan the flame in the lives of others. How does that flame get fanned? First, by creating a hunger for the beauty of holiness through proclaiming the doctrine of perfect love, as command and promise. Second, by showing those who are hungry how they may be filled by the Spirit through the means of grace and a life of obedience. Third, by investing my own life in them, through the disciplines of fellowship, so they might find the flame of love in my heart and catch on fire themselves. Fourth, by urging them to catalyze little movements of zealous love wherever they go. And, fifth, by preparing them to live as movement leaders who are ready to swim against the tide of institutionalism, so that “if they cannot turn the tide back, they can at least bear an open testimony against it!”¹⁰⁸

Let me give Wesley the last word. Being zealous means “performing all the ordinary actions of life with a single eye and a pure heart, offering them all in holy, fervent love, as sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.”¹⁰⁹ And when it comes to the day of judgment, the Lord will inquire of us all, “[W]hen thou wast made a partaker of this Spirit, crying in thy heart ‘Abba, Father’...Didst thou from thenceforth present thy soul and body, all thy thoughts, thy words, and actions, in one flame of love, as a holy sacrifice, glorifying me with thy body and thy spirit? Then ‘well done, good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!’”¹¹⁰

End Notes

¹ John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Methodism* (1786), in: Thomas Jackson (Ed.), *The Works of John Wesley* (1872), ¶1, 13:320. Hereafter, WJW.

² See, for example, British Methodist Church, “2017 Statistics for Mission Triennial Report”, based on membership and attendance data for the period 2014-2016 (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/2933/conf-2017-42-statistics-for-mission.pdf>, accessed 3 January 2019). The report shows a current membership of approx. 188k members, which represents a loss of approx. 75,000 members in the decade 2006-2016. More than 50% of churches have fewer than 17 members. At this rate of decline, membership will fall to zero in approx. 25 years from 2016. Rates of decline in the United Methodist Church are comparable, though the denomination is much stronger numerically (<http://www.gcch.org/history/united-methodist-membership-statistics>, accessed 3 January 2019).

³ Scott Jones, *The Once and Future Wesleyan Movement* (Abingdon Press, 2016), xiii. This is the central thesis of Martyn Atkins, *Discipleship... And the People Called Methodists* (Methodist Publishing, 2010).

⁴ See Jones, *Wesleyan Movement*, 14; and Atkins, *Discipleship*, 27-28, 51f. Neither of these denominational leaders wrestle with the sociological differences between movement and institution, and to what extent they may be in/compatible modes of organization.

⁵ Scott Kisker, *Methodist or Mainline? Rediscovering Our Evangelistic Mission* (Discipleship Resources, 2008), 12-18, 23, 114-5.

⁶ George Hunter, *The Recovery of a Contagious Methodist Movement* (Abingdon Press, 2011), 5.

⁷ Hunter, *Contagious Methodist Movement*, 7.

⁸ Jones, *Wesleyan Movement*, 14.

⁹ Gil Rendle, *Back to Zero: The Search to Rediscover the Methodist Movement* (Abingdon Press, 2011), 4, 76-88.

¹⁰ Early Methodism was a renewal movement within the Church of England that could not be accommodated within the existing structures of the Church, nor were those structures open to being challenged by it.

¹¹ See, for example, Jones who interprets the “spirit” of Methodism as a “focus on the Holy Spirit” but he quickly ends up translating this into the need for the flexibility of denominational structures, and his concluding prescriptions are largely managerial in nature (*Once and Future Wesleyan Movement*, 57-62). Laura Bartels Felleman interprets “spirit” to mean “spiritual experience,” and experiencing the work of the Spirit through the different stages on the way of salvation. But the outcome is an attempt to reinterpret the whole exercise in terms of neuro-psychological categories and church vitality programs (*The Form and the Power of Religion: John Wesley on Methodist Vitality* (Cascade Books, 2012), 36-59).

¹² David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (Yale University Press, 2006), ch.8. See also, Martin Wellings follows a similar procedure in “A Time to be Born and a Time to Die? A Historians Perspective on the Future of Methodism”, in: Jane Craske and Clive Marsh (Eds.), *Methodism and the Future: Facing the Challenge* (Cassell, 1999), 152-153.

¹³ Max Weber introduces this principle in, *Economy and Society* (University of California Press, 1978).

¹⁴ Wesley’s central argument can be found with various nuances in Sermon 132, “On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel” (1777) and Sermon 61, “The Mystery of Iniquity” (1783), which can be found in Albert C. Outler (Ed.), *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley*, Vols.1-4 (Abingdon Press, 1976–). Hereafter, *Sermon*. Also, “Thoughts Upon a Late Phenomenon” (1788), WJW 13: 328-330.

¹⁵ Wesley, “Late Phenomenon,” ¶ 1-2. See also, Sermon, “Mystery of Iniquity,” ¶ 11-14.

¹⁶ Sermon, "Mystery of Iniquity," ¶ 27.

¹⁷ Wesley, "Late Phenomenon," ¶ 4; Sermon, "On Laying the Foundation," §II.12.

¹⁸ Wesley, "Late Phenomenon," ¶ 5; Sermon, "On Laying the Foundations," §I.1.

¹⁹ Sermon 107, "On God's Vineyard," §II.8. Wesley, "Late Phenomenon," ¶ 6-8. Wesley consistently maintained that Methodism was raised up to be an ecumenical renewal movement, whose principles and practices were nothing other than plain scriptural Christianity, and should be the commitments of all real Christians.

²⁰ Sermon, "Laying the Foundation," §II.12-15. This proved true for those who separated from Methodism to form their own independent congregations tended to suffer the same fate.

²¹ Wesley's tract, "Thoughts Upon Methodism," was written shortly after this new development in America and the subsequent re-affirmation at annual conference in England for the movement not to become a separate church at home.

²² These distinctions were first introduced by Max Weber, then developed by Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, Vol. 1 (Macmillan, 1931), and H. R. Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Holt, 1929).

²³ Wesley uses the term "sect" in a number of subtle ways. On the one hand, he uses the term "sect" can simply refer to the Methodists as a "distinct" body of people, within the church, and apart from the world. On the other hand, he refuses to accept that the Methodists are "sectarian" or divided against other Christians, with all the negative zeal and bigotry that accompanies it. Methodism is a sect with a catholic spirit.

²⁴ Wesley's frequent argument about the dangers of accommodation to worldliness can be seen in his "Thoughts Upon Methodism" (1786), and Sermon 107, "On God's Vineyard" (1779); and Sermon 116, "The Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity" (1789).

²⁵ Wesley, "Thoughts Upon Methodism," ¶ 2.

²⁶ Wesley, "Thoughts Upon Methodism," ¶ 3; Sermon, "On God's Vineyard," introduction.

²⁷ Wesley, "Thoughts Upon Methodism," ¶ 8.

²⁸ Cf. Isaiah 5:4.

²⁹ Sermon, "On God's Vineyard," §I.8.

³⁰ Sermon, "On God's Vineyard," §II.1-§III.3.

³¹ Sermon, "On God's Vineyard," §V.2-7.

³² Wesley, "Thoughts Upon Methodism," ¶9-10. Even if that demise took a lot longer than Luther's rule of thirty years.

³³ Sermon, "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity," ¶7-8.

³⁴ Sermon, "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity," ¶9.

³⁵ This became a topic that Wesley revisited with increasing intensity in the latter years of his life. See his Sermon 87, "The Danger of Riches" (1780); Sermon 108, "On Riches" (1788); and Sermon 126, "On the Danger of Increasing Riches" (1790). Wesley saw yet another sign of the mystery of iniquity at work was the relationship between increasing in riches, and decreasing in the practice of fasting, abstinence and self-denial.

³⁶ The most influential theories of secularization were first developed by Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (Doubleday, 1967) and Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion* (Macmillan, 1967). Subsequently Bryan Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 1982); Rob Warner, *Secularization and Its Discontents* (Continuum, 2010), and Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In Defense of an Unfashionable Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

³⁷ Beyond the problem of accommodation, we have to reckon with the captivity of persons, churches and entire denominational structures to the mindset of individualism, the privatization of spirituality, and the commodification of its religious goods and services.

³⁸ For a helpful discussion of this as a contemporary issue, see Craig Gay, *The Way of the (Modern) World: Or, Why It's Tempting to Live As If God Doesn't Exist* (Eerdmans, 1998).

³⁹ Wesley's basic arguments can be found in Sermon 79, "On Dissipation" (1783), Sermon 118, "On a Single Eye" (1789), Sermon 125, "On Living Without God" (1790), and his tract, "Thoughts Upon Dissipation" (1783), WJW 11:613-615.

⁴⁰ Sermon, "On Living Without God," ¶6-7. See "Thoughts Upon Dissipation," ¶5-7.

⁴¹ See Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm*, 2nd Edition (Oxford University Press, 1951), 590.

⁴² For Wesley's clearest treatment of the subject, see Sermon 37, "The Nature of Enthusiasm" (1750).

⁴³ Sermon, "On Dissipation," ¶15.

⁴⁴ Sermon, "On Dissipation," ¶18.

⁴⁵ Sermon, "On Dissipation," ¶20.

⁴⁶ This realization first came to Wesley in reading the work of Thomas a Kempis, Jeremy Taylor and William Law during his days in Oxford. They persuaded him that the traits of real Christianity are “simplicity of intention” and “purity of affection” (Wesley, “Plain Account of Christian Perfection”, ¶ 2-4, WJW 11:429; Sermon, “On a Single Eye,” ¶ 1). Only with such a “single eye” can Christians swim upstream and without which they are swept away. See his Letters to Lady Maxwell, 22 September 1764, and 25 May 1765, WJW 12:388-9.

⁴⁷ Hempton, *Methodism*, 201.

⁴⁸ John Hayward, “A General Model of Church Growth and Decline,” *Journal of Mathematical Sociology*, 29:3 (2005), 177-207; “Church Growth via Enthusiasts and Renewal,” presented at the 28th International System Dynamics Conference, Seoul, South Korea, 2010 (<https://www.churchmodel.org.uk/Church%20Growthforproc.pdf>; accessed 2 January 2019). Social epidemiology involves studying the social mechanisms for the spread of disease.

⁴⁹ Wesley’s general argument can be found in Sermon 4, “Scriptural Christianity” (1744); Sermons 23 & 24, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount” Discourse 3 & 4 (1748); and Sermon 63, “The General Spread of the Gospel” (1783).

⁵⁰ Sermon, “Scriptural Christianity,” ¶ 5.

⁵¹ Sermon, “Scriptural Christianity,” §II.1.

⁵² Sermon, “Scriptural Christianity,” §II.8.

⁵³ Sermon, “Scriptural Christianity,” §IV.3-11. This sermon was preached before the University of Oxford, the birthplace of Methodism.

⁵⁴ Sermon, “The General Spread of the Gospel,” ¶ 13-17. See also, Sermon 102, “Of Former Times” (1787), ¶ 22.

⁵⁵ Sermon, “The General Spread of the Gospel,” ¶ 21-22. See also, Sermon, “The Mystery of Iniquity,” ¶ 32.

⁵⁶ Sermon, “Sermon on the Mount - Discourse 3,” §III.6-7.

⁵⁷ Sermon, “Sermon on the Mount - Discourse 4,” §I.7.

⁵⁸ Sermon, “Sermon on the Mount - Discourse 4,” §II.2.

⁵⁹ Sermon, “Sermon on the Mount - Discourse 4,” §I.8-9.

⁶⁰ I want to use the word spirit to mean something more like the “spirituality” of Methodism; that is, the human spirit made alive by the Holy Spirit.

⁶¹ The Methodist Church (Britain), *The Methodist Hymn Book* (Methodist Publishing House, 1933), iii. Made popular by the hymn of Brian Hoare, "Born in Song!" in The Methodist Church (Ed.), *Singing the Faith* (Canterbury Press, 2011), #21.

⁶² Preface to Wesley (Ed.), *Collection of Hymns for the People Called Methodists* (1780), ¶4, WJW 14:459.

⁶³ Preface to Wesley, *Collection of Hymns*, ¶8, WJW 14:461.

⁶⁴ Wesley, "Directions for Hymn Singing," ¶5, WJW 14:446.

⁶⁵ Hymn 196 in: John Wesley (Ed.), *A Collection of Hymns for the People Called Methodists* (1780). Hereafter, Hymn.

⁶⁶ Hymn 291.

⁶⁷ Hymn 262.

⁶⁸ Hymn 421.

⁶⁹ Hymn 442.

⁷⁰ Hymn 400.

⁷¹ Sermon 92, "On Zeal" (1781), ¶1.

⁷² Wesley claims to be indebted to a published sermon on zeal by Thomas Sprat (perhaps from 1682), then Bishop of Rochester.

⁷³ Sermon, "On Zeal," §I.3. Elsewhere in his works, Wesley describes Christian zeal as, among other things, "the flame of fervent love," "loving fire from heaven," "burning love," the "vigor of grace," being "fervent in spirit," and as the "essential ingredient of true religion."

⁷⁴ Sermon, "On Zeal," §II.4.

⁷⁵ Sermon, "On Zeal," §II.6-11.

⁷⁶ Sermon, "On Zeal," §II.6.

⁷⁷ Wesley did not scruple to name the General Rules of doing no harm, doing all the good we can, and attending to the ordinances of God, as "the righteousness of a Pharisee" (Sermon, "The More Excellent Way," §VI.5). The problem with the Pharisees was not that they had zeal, but that it was a "zeal without knowledge." Their zeal for the outward letter of the law, obscured the true inward spirit of the law. In other words, they exemplified a fatal inversion in the order of zeal laid out by Wesley.

⁷⁸ Wesley, Letter to Right Reverend Lord Bishop of Gloucester, §I.2-4, WJW 9:145-150.

⁷⁹ Sermon, “On Zeal,” §III.9. Wesley made it plain that works of piety must give way to mercy at love’s “almighty call,” to relieve the needs of our neighbor in body or soul (Sermon, “On Zeal,” §II.9). In this sense, if our works of piety are truly zealous, it will be proved in our works of mercy; and if our works of mercy are truly zealous, it will be proved by draw people to the God of love himself.

⁸⁰ Sermon, “Sermon on the Mount - Discourse 3,” §III.9.

⁸¹ Sermon 33, “Sermon on the Mount - Discourse 13” (1750), §III.4.

⁸² See Philip Meadows, “Mission Spirituality in the Early Methodist Preachers”, in: Robert Webster, *Perfecting Perfection* (Pickwick, 2015), 103-129.

⁸³ Thomas Jackson (Ed.), *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, 5th Edition, Vol.4 (Wesleyan-Methodist Book Room, 1865), 208. Hereafter, EMP.

⁸⁴ EMP 5:257.

⁸⁵ EMP 3:121.

⁸⁶ EMP 5:127.

⁸⁷ EMP 2:194.

⁸⁸ Wesley, Letters to Miss Bolton, November 7, 1771, WJW 12:433, and August 8, 1773, WJW 12:555.

⁸⁹ Wesley, Journal, 4 June 1772, WJW 3:466-7. Wesley also frequently observed that renewal of vitality followed the same pattern, in which the Spirit raised up a few leaders whose contagious zeal would spread from person to person and renew a whole society or local area.

⁹⁰ Wesley, Letter to Robert Carr Brackenbury, 15 September 1790, WJW 13:28.

⁹¹ Thomas Jackson (Ed.), “Minutes of Several Occasions” (1797), Q.2, WJW 8:325-6.

⁹² Antonio Romano, *Charism of the Founders* (St Paul’s, 1994), 29, 55.

⁹³ Romano, *Charism of the Founders*, 133, 143-4, 151-156.

⁹⁴ WJW 5:58.

⁹⁵ Romano, *Charism of the Founders*, 21.

⁹⁶ Romano, *Charism of the Founders*, 129.

⁹⁷ Romano, *Charism of the Founders*, 63, 140.

⁹⁸ Sermon 68, "The Wisdom of God's Counsels" (1784), ¶ 13.

⁹⁹ Sermon, "The Wisdom of God's Counsels," ¶ 14-15.

¹⁰⁰ Sermon, "The Wisdom of God's Counsels," ¶ 19-20.

¹⁰¹ EMP 4:88-90.

¹⁰² W.E. Sangster, *Methodism Can Be Born Again* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), 14.

¹⁰³ Sangster, *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ Sangster, *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, 27.

¹⁰⁵ Sangster, *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, 29, 31.

¹⁰⁶ Sangster, *Methodism Can Be Born Again*, 67, 112.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Charles Swindoll, *The Tale of the Tardy Oxcart: And 1,501 Other Stories* (Word Publishing, 1998), 632. Classified under "Zeal". I am unsure of the precise origins of this story.

¹⁰⁸ Sermon, "On Dissipation," ¶ 15.

¹⁰⁹ Sermon 29, "Sermon on the Mount - Discourse 9" (1748), ¶ 7.

¹¹⁰ Sermon 51, "The Good Steward" (1768), §III.6.

George Hendricks and Kelli Taylor

A Fresh Expression of “And Are We Yet Alive?”

Abstract:

The paper addresses the decline in membership and overall societal influence of The United Methodist Church. In response to these life-threatening developments, new forms of ministry are emerging within the church. Many of these new ministries are grouped under a program called “*Fresh Expressions*” which began in the Church of England and are effectively being implemented in American Methodism. Storefront churches are discussed, bi-vocational ministers are considered and the concept of the “Third Place” as a form of ministry is introduced. Three focused-interviews are utilized to understand the need and necessity for changes in the way The United Methodist Church approaches ministry. The necessary joining of new places of invitation with acts of worship and discipleship is posited as a faithful model for fulfilling the Church’s mission.

Keywords: John Wesley, Fresh Expression, Storefront Churches, United Methodist Church

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The Problem/The Opportunity

Every year at Annual Conferences of the United Methodist Church, and at many of the interim gatherings, clergy and laity stand to sing the words of the traditional Wesley hymn, "And Are We Yet Alive?" Methodists have been asking that question for centuries and today is no exception. In 2018, the question sounds more like this: Why is the United Methodist Church declining in membership? Why are so many individuals leaving the traditional, established expression of the Church or, in some cases, why are they more interested in pursuing more non-traditional settings of ministry (i.e. storefront churches, starting new churches in non-steeple settings, or even attending church at the local pubs?

The declining United Methodist membership was observed at least as early as the 1960's and has given rise to many scholarly observations and comments. One of most straightforward and pointed observations was (surprisingly!) done by one of the bishops of the United Methodist Church. In 1986, Bishop Richard Wilke's published *And Are We Yet Alive*, the essence of which is summarized in his observation, "The United Methodist Church is a church in crisis. Since 1962, the church has been losing influence and membership at a dizzying rate." Bishop Wilke's analysis received mixed reaction among church leaders when it was published. In a private conversation regarding the book, another then-active bishop, respected as deeply spiritual among his peers, retorted, "Bishop Wilke is much too pessimistic about the future of our church!" This bishop was not nearly as concerned about the future of the United Methodist Church as was Bishop Wilke.

Perhaps one could argue that the continued existence of the United Methodist Church is evidence for the power and presence of God in its life. How else can it be explained that a failing and poorly run organization has not already collapsed? Especially given that twenty years after Wilke, three serious analyses of Methodism (Kisker, Lawrence, & Yrigoyen, 2008, 2008, 2008) identified the same issues that Wilke recognized two decades before.

Reflecting on the history of the Methodist Church over the last 30 years, all is not dim. At least two times in this recent history, the Methodist Church significantly influenced and affected the major developments in society. The first instance occurred in the 1840's when the Methodist Episcopal Church split over the issue of slavery. A history professor expressed the opinion that the separation in the 1840's of the mainline American Protestant churches, the largest of which was the

Methodist Episcopal Church, created a climate that rendered the Civil War inevitable. The second major historical influence of our church was its influence on the passage of the XVIII Amendment to the United States Constitution, establishing prohibition as a national law. The issue is not whether prohibition was a good law or not, rather that the influential role of Methodism at the time was causing it to happen.

It is interesting that the major conversation currently before the United Methodist Church centers on the presence in society of homosexual citizens and how our church could respond in ministry to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex and Allies (LGBTQQIA) persons. Few, if any, on any side of this issue, would claim that the opinion and decisions of the United Methodist Church regarding homosexuality will be significant in the ultimate national resolution of this complex issue. Such is the lack of influence of the United Methodist Church in American society. No one would claim that the United Methodists are any longer “opinion makers” on the national scene. The influence of the church’s voice has declined to the point where we are no longer major players in national issues. This is a sharp change from our earlier history.

Robert Schuller speaking to the National Congress of United Methodist Men in 1985, called for the rebirth of mission. He said that very little doubt existed in his mind that the United Methodist Church is a sleeping giant. Stirred into action, it could produce in our time the most sweeping spiritual, social, economic and political changes in the history of the world. “The United Methodist Church has the theology and the organization to literally sweep this country for Jesus Christ. No other denomination has the power, the ability or the freedom to attract the masses of people as does the United Methodist Church; this giant has been lulled to sleep. If this church begins to flaunt what it has and this giant begins to wake up, watch out, for it could literally change this world for Christ” (Wilke, 1986, p. 122). Methodism must think “outside the box” with new approaches to ministry in order to find a way forward.

“Good Numbers” Were a Part of the “Good News”

The Book of Acts in the New Testament discusses the growth of Christianity by references to the number of persons involved as faithful participants. If the positive numbers in Acts are seen as “good news,” then the negative numbers of our current history are anything but good news for Methodism. The United Methodist Church started an advertising campaign,

Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors to encourage an open-door policy and an increase in church membership. New people visited local congregations, and inasmuch; this campaign was a momentary success. But the campaign was a long-term failure because the local congregations were unprepared for this influx of new persons. In an era of fake news, one might say that this campaign was false advertising. To take some liberties with St. Thomas Aquinas, "New slogans are not intrinsically evil, but their manner of usage may make them so!"

While the majority of laity and clergy agree that there are deep issues threatening the United Methodist Church, few have a suggested way forward. We need a fundamental change in the way in which we do business.

There are certainly external influences to consider. Carter and Warren (2017) observe that in the same way that athletic teams have trouble winning on the road, the Church in the United States of America has lost its "home field advantage." The basic American culture is now secular, agnostic or overly hostile to any expression of the Christian faith. In earlier years the church operated in a climate that, at worst, was neutral to a Christian witness. One president of a Methodist-related college for many years recounts conversation he had with each of the college chaplains when they were employed at the church-related institution. He told each campus chaplain to think of his or her work not as ministers to a parish of connected Christians but as those working in a "mission field." In prior history, they may have been able to approach their work with students as parishioners, but currently, as Carter noted we have "lost the home field advantage." The Pew American Religious Landscape Study (2016) discussed the sharp decline of Christianity and the fact that Americans were becoming less religious and less Christian. These numbers once again address the need for approaches in Methodism to lead the way for new methodologies for ministry in the coming years. The United Methodist Church must implement new forms of ministry or continue to deal with church closings and a decline in membership.

Similarly, Rendle (2011: 16) noted that "In 2008 among the 35,000 congregations in United Methodism in the United States, 10,000 had 35 or fewer in average worship attendance." Many United Methodist churches are at the point of closing their doors, and a new approach to ministry is desperately needed. The traditional approach to ministry over the years has focused on Sunday school, the eleven o'clock worship hour,

and occasionally Wednesday evening fellowship. This approach to ministry has been fairly standard for over the last 100 years. However, this way of doing “church” is no longer effective. We can no longer approach this topic as “if we build it (the church) they will come.” Too much of our life as Christians has focused on the church building, which is expensive to build, and even more expensive to maintain.

A recent study by Krejcir (2007: 1) notes that dating back to the early 1980’s church membership and attendance has been in decline and today “nearly 50% of Americans have no church home.” He also noted that by 1900 “there was a ratio of 27 churches per 10,000 people, as compared to the close of the century (2000) where we have 11 churches per 10,000 people in America.” Krejcir (2007: 1) also noted that “Each year over 2.7 million church members fall into inactivity. This translates into the realization that people are leaving the church. From our research, we have found that they are leaving as hurting and wounded victims of some kind of abuse, disillusionment, or just plain neglect.”

The Central Question: Why is the Traditional Church Losing its Appeal?

Raphael Simon once observed, “To fall in love with God is the greatest of all romances; to seek him the greatest adventure; to find him, the greatest human achievement” (Neal 2017: 1). Who wouldn’t be wooed and who wouldn’t want to be a part of this kind of relationship? Indeed, those who encounter God in Jesus Christ are taken aback by God’s love and humbled, awestruck, much the same as was John Wesley at Aldersgate Street when he “felt his heart strangely warmed” and “felt that Christ died for even me.” But one experience does not a life of discipleship make. Romance, as we know, is only part of a lasting relationship. Romance is tested through growing with one another, and ultimately being made one in purpose and mission. Programming to reach new persons for Christ is effective when it is a part of the whole process to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Many leave church because the romance has faded, and the relationship with God never grew, and separation seemed the best option.

Clearly, if the mainline Protestant churches are to achieve their mission (and even perhaps if they are going to survive as viable institutions), a new approach to ministry is needed. Those of us who love and believe in the church cannot expect potential parishioners to show up on our church doorsteps. We must provide new and innovative approaches to ministry. One new concept is the storefront church approach.

The Growth of the Storefront Church

Historically, American culture has been generally accepting of religion with a variety of religious expressions including Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. However, the recent past has seen a pronounced shift in the cultural attitudes toward religion. Diversity within the Christian tradition is quite common nowadays. Methodism, for example, is a broad denomination with a continuum of liberal and conservative perspectives. Amid this diversity, there are a significant number of start-up or store-front churches. For example, in a North Carolina city of about 300,000 persons, hardly a week goes by without the opening of a new storefront or start-up church. The two terms describe similar religious efforts but with different histories, memberships, and methodologies. The storefront church movement grew up during the Great Migration and was often tied to the African American culture and history. The start-up churches had their origin in a broader racial and cultural range and were an indication of the established churches' failure to migrate to certain economic groups and classes. Travel through rural northern Georgia in today's climate, and you will find that the start-up (sometimes called community) church is frequent even in rural America. Further research reveals an interesting development in the rise of the "storefront" church movement. The storefront church and the start-up church share a connection in the importance of alternative forms of ministry. Crumbley (2012: 17) defines the "storefront church" as "faith communities such as the Church which emerged as independent congregations and remain unaffiliated with larger denominations and whose spiritual and symbolic content stand in the tradition of the Sanctified Church."

The rise of the storefront church movement can be traced to the mid 1900's during the time of the Great Migration, where many African Americans migrated from the rural south to seek work in the northern part of the United States, primarily in the large cities. Some of the larger existing black congregations such as Olivet Baptist in Chicago reacted to this migration by developing social services programs to assist newcomers. Many migrants, however, felt unwelcome at larger black churches (with middle to upper level parishioners). McRoberts (2003: 150) discussed the relationship and connection between neighborhoods in the inner city and the black urban neighborhood. She observed, "This relationship challenges both scholarship and policy to focus more on the actual behaviors and

inclinations of religious institutions in depressed urban neighborhoods.” Casillas and Ramirez (2009: 1) noted, “Newly urban congregations responded by developing home-based and storefront churches that resembled the churches of their hometowns.” Storefront and community churches have remained strong influences in black America offering educational and financial resources in addition to religious ministry. The growth of the storefront church movement, although it had its origin in the African American experience during the Great Migration, is not exclusively reserved for the African American church.

These experiences appear to be an early response of Christians to the failure of existing churches to meet the spiritual needs of some marginalized Christians. Hernandez (1999) in her article, “Moving from Cathedral to Storefront Churches” notes that there is a major shift occurring for Latino Catholics who are choosing to convert to Protestantism, specifically Pentecostal and evangelical Christian traditions. It is estimated that 60,000 Latinos transfer loyalties from liturgical to storefront churches each year, many favoring the storefront church environment of intimate ministry to the larger, more formal, cathedral worship structure. According to Hernandez (1999: 216) this “May be the most significant shift in religious affiliation since the Reformation.” It is interesting that the traditional and formal structure of the Catholic Church, with its symbolism and rituals, is not as appealing to this population, who are instead opting for the storefront type of worship environment.

Crumbley (2012) in *Saved and Sanctified: The Rise of a Storefront Church in Great Migration Philadelphia*, discussed ethnographic research concerning how a storefront-style church that started above a horse stable made positive strides in religious innovation through this unique approach to ministry. Storefront churches, like this example illustrates, are largely in working class neighborhoods located near their likely members. This proximity creates a bond between the church and the overarching community that transcends the traditional model of the local church. One example includes an old established United Methodist Church located in the downtown area of a large metropolitan city. Most of the church members travel to the downtown from a variety of locations and neighborhoods throughout the city. As a result, there is only a limited community connection with the migrants to the northern cities that was found in the large urban churches. These churches were vastly different from the local

Baptist church in towns in rural South Carolina. As always, then and now, a church must meet the spiritual needs of those in the community in which it is located (United Methodist Church, Par 252).

Krieger (2011: 73) notes that “Many of the ministers of storefront churches are not formally educated for the ministry; rather they feel “called to their vocations.” Often they are dual-career clergy with secular day jobs—much like the Apostle Paul working with their hands and wits during weekdays and serving the Lord in the evening and on weekends.”

Bi-Vocational Ministers: A Possible Alternative

There is some interest among laity of the United Methodist Church to revise and add to the current structure used by United Methodists to prepare pastors. One retired Elder in the United Methodist Church has expressed interest in a proposal to establish a new bi-vocational category for United Methodist ministers. This category would enable the appointment of ministers to very poor areas that could never afford a “regular” Methodist minister, and to areas where ordained, full-time clergy lack credibility in the community because they are perceived as “out of touch.” As noted later in this paper, one of the failures of our current structure is that a poor area cannot support a pastor. The traditional approach of the Master of Divinity track (Master’s degree obtained in seminary) would still exist, but an alternate one-year program (in much more detail than the summer course of study that already exists in the United Methodist Church) would be designed for lay ministers who would not depend on the resources of the church to support their ministry. Reminiscent of the ministry of Saint Paul, these bi-vocational ministers would be provided a sustainable living by their day job, and they would minister to their flock as non-paid servants on the nights and weekends.

One issue for Charles Wesley during the Wesleyan revival was the question of how to appropriately support the lay assistants and workers. It was a perplexing and potentially divisive issue between John and Charles (Baker 1948: 84-85). This proposed structure would enable the church to reach out to socially depressed areas where the gospel has yet to be proclaimed. This new approach to ministry is similar to the rise of the storefront church movement that has become popular in recent years.

A Modern Example of Choosing Money Over the Poor

John Wesley was interested in spreading the gospel, especially to the poor. It is noteworthy that those “hearing Jesus gladly” were primarily from the poor of Galilee and Judea. The upper classes were more likely to be the enemies of Jesus, even though the disciples were themselves fairly affluent. In addition, it was the poor who responded to the preaching of John and Charles Wesley and their “uneducated,” generally not-rich helpers. Lady Huntington was a friend of the Wesleyan revival, an exception that proves the rule. Interestingly enough Kimbrough (2002: 117) observed, “recent sociological and anthropological studies indicate that Jesus attracted all segments of society. I cannot find one of his twelve who was poor. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were well-to-do if not wealthy.” It is important for our church leaders to understand the importance of working with and serving those less fortunate members of God’s kingdom. Hendricks and Hendricks (2015) commented on the “social work” with the poor of John Wesley, the noted evangelist, spiritual leader, and social reformer of 18th century England. They argue that Wesley was the first “social worker.”

During a time when preaching from the pulpit was standard, Wesley spent his life on horseback preaching in the city streets. He discussed the importance of interacting on a personal level with individuals in poverty, always placing their spiritual growth as the most important aspect of this interaction. He displayed an openness to interacting with the poor. Wesley says, “If you cannot relieve, do not grieve, the poor; give them soft words, if nothing else; abstain from either sour looks or soft words. Let them be glad to come, even though, they should go empty away. Put yourself in the place of every poor man; and deal with him as you would God should deal with you” (MacArthur 1936: 114). Today, we are called to reach out to others and spread the gospel in many non-traditional places, and we need to adopt a style similar to Wesley’s approach to dealing with the poor, both the economically and spiritually poor.

Hendricks and Hendricks (2015) discussed multiple reasons why John Wesley provided little attention to the Elizabethan Poor Law. One reason noted for Wesley’s lack of attention to the poor law of 18th century England with its mandatory taxation and its cold and distant delivery of relief to the poor, was that it did not resonate with Wesley’s “get to know the poor style.” In short, Wesley wanted the rich and the poor to build a relationship—especially he wanted the rich to get to know the poor. The Elizabethan Poor Law’s approach did not support this goal. Building relationship with

and among those “outside” the traditional church (and among those within the traditional church, which can no longer be assumed) is essential to the work of the Church.

The reluctance of the Church to reach out to others historically can be seen in the well-known sociological study of economic and class structure of contemporary *Christians, Millhands and Preachers*. This study examined the various levels of mill workers and their connection and the subsequent level of involvement with preachers. An introduction to Pope’s (1942: xx) work notes “Certainly the most striking of Pope’s findings is the extent to which the millhands were deserted by the preachers. The churches were inextricably bound to mill management by their finances if not by their ideology.” This study revealed the interesting overlap between religion and the economy. An argument can be made that today’s church is still dealing with this phenomenon. Many churches are tempted to cater to the most financially influential members, or those who are vested in the Church. Millennials are the new poor, not because they are “poor” but because many are burdened by debt or have not grown up in an environment where support of the church is a duty to God and a sign of faithfulness. This is another example of Methodism’s inability to minister to the less affluent class. Could this be one issue in the challenges of non-traditional forms of ministry and the lack of interest in meeting individuals where they are in society? Originally, Methodism grew from the poor to the rich. We need to learn from our history. These new forms of ministry must crossover and explore religion and the gospel in areas that are more comfortable for conversations to occur.

The Word Becoming Flesh has Many Meanings: The Third Place Concept

The structure of the cities of modern civilization has contributed to the challenge faced by the traditional church. In the New Testament most references to the church include references to a community, a collection of people living and working, and especially worshipping together. The “solitary saints” of the Middle Ages (who lived alone in places, or even on top of poles, came later) are not good examples of the early church. Modern civilization has been structured so that the people who work together often do not worship together. This reality is discussed at length under the concept of the great good place discussed by Ray Oldenburg (1989) in his book, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* needs to be examined.

The disappearance of the “Third Place” helps one understand the appeal of the non-traditional religious experience. The Third Place is the social surroundings separate from the two usual social environments of the home (first place) and the office (second place). Examples of third places would be environments such as cafes, clubs, public libraries, or parks. Oldenburg argues that third places are important for civil society, civic engagement, democracy, and establishing feelings of a sense of place, and the authors would also add belonging. This “Third Place” approach is important in discovering and creating this approach of cutting edge Christianity. This approach to Christianity proclaims the gospel to individuals unwilling or unable to participate in traditional worship.

This concept manifests in the growth in the storefront church movement and non-traditional approaches to ministry that are springing up on a daily basis. This new form of ministerial outreach requires meeting new and developing Christians in their homes, in their places of gathering and in their culture, and where they live. These “Third Places” are important to connecting the church to the larger society.

This approach is similar to the work of current day social workers who interact with others by working with the person in their natural environment. Zastrow (2017) discusses this understanding of social work encouraging home visits in order to see an individual in “totality” and to get a picture of all aspects of their life and environment. The authors had a conversation with an experienced minister who described how different children were when met in their homes. The typical discussion by social workers of the person in the environment often does not discuss the so-called “Third Places.” The modern, urban environment often does not create these special places. Overcoming this problem is one of the challenges of modern witnessing. Carter and Warren (2017: 15) noted that, “As United Methodists we are a connectional church. We believe that disciples of Jesus represent him not only in local churches but also in various forms of ministry outside the church. In this way, the world truly is our parish.”

Focused Interviews: Understanding the Movement Away from the Traditional Church

In the search to find what works, the authors of this paper participated in in-depth interviews with three individuals who were involved in some way with new approaches to the Christian mission and ministry. These “new ways” each seem to have some level of promise. The purpose of

these interviews was to help the authors better understand the phenomenon of the non-traditional church movement and, especially, to provide insight as to why these non-traditional churches seem to be growing while the traditional mainline Protestant churches are losing members.

Interview One

Dr. Marty Cauley, Director of Coaching and Content with New Faith Communities of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Cauley currently oversees 23 projects that have the long-term goal of establishing new churches, both in the traditional and non-traditional structure. Cauley posited reasons why many parishioners are leaning towards more non-traditional forms of the worship experience. (1) Rising interest in the anti-institutionalization approach to ministry. Large institutions, according to Cauley, are definitely “out of favor” and Methodists historically have rejoiced in being a “connectional church.” The connection probably had value as Asbury pushed the church across the Appalachian Mountains. The modern urban (and rural) citizen is not motivated by this connectional nature. The resulting structure has compromised the churches’ emphasis on outreach ministry. The new anti-institutionalization movement is a positive opportunity for the local church and for new previously unchurched individuals to move away from the barriers that have restricted participation and growth in many aspects of the church. Cauley noted that he has discovered an entrepreneurial spirit alive in many individuals who are forming new churches. Their desire is to form something new, fresh, and different. He said that many of the new churches that are being established could begin at the ground level without the weight of a negative history and without certain influential members dominating the conversation. This new start helps this group avoid the pitfalls that many churches experience in which a few outspoken individuals dominate the mission and life of the church.

Cauley also mentioned that in many new forms of ministry, startup churches have discovered that initial relationship with others are more important than the worship experience itself. These “new Christians” understand relationships, but they have not yet grown to appreciate the role and importance of worship. Cauley cites the example of a prospective, but inexperienced member, who visits the local church on Sunday morning

for 11 a.m. This person is often thrust into the worship experience without developing a relationship with others who are worshipping. Communal worship is a learned experience and not immediately understood or easily practiced by the new Christians. It only comes to be learned and appreciated through a developing relationship with mature Christians. Cauley stresses the importance of “forming the relationship first” and gradually introducing the concept of salvation and further church involvement (M. Cauley, personal communication, September 10, 2017).

Interview Two

The Reverend Luke Edwards, Associate Pastor of Boone United Methodist Church and Pastor of the King Street Church Campus.

Edwards was charged by the church he served to experiment and develop new and creative forms of ministry. The church responded by providing broad investigative opportunities for new forms of ministry. With an eye and concern toward outreach, Edwards identified a program called Fresh Expressions, a new experimental movement in American Methodism that originated in the Church of England. Worth noting is that 18th century Methodism, which originated as a renewal movement within the Church of England, was now providing within the Church of England a new approach to Christian witness. Methodism, as envisioned initially by Wesley, was not intended to separate from the Church of England, Wesley’s personal religious heritage. But the old wine skins could not contain the new wine. The Church of England did not, in general, welcome the innovative and non-standard approach of the Methodists.

After Wesley’s death, the separation was inevitable. But it is a joy for the authors now to recognize that Fresh Expressions, from “the old church” is bringing new hope to American Methodism. This movement has as its mission, “A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. It will come into being through principles of listening, service, contextual mission, and making disciples. It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context” (Carter & Warren 2017: 3-4).

The Fresh Expressions movement was started by the Church of England in 2004 in response to the Mission Shaped Church Report (2004)

as a way to change the decline in church attendance in England. Edwards cited some interesting statistics in reference to church attendance and faith building. He noted that 20% of the United States population attends church at least occasionally, 20% of the United States says they attend but very rarely attend, and 20% will go if invited. The remaining 40% would not attend church even if invited. So 40% of the United States population is not responding to traditional forms of church. In a missional response to these numbers, the Fresh Expressions movement aims to reach those individuals who would never consider coming to a traditional church building.

Edwards' congregation wanted to provide a Fresh Expression ministry to the individuals in the inner city of Boone, North Carolina (a college town in the Appalachian Mountains). The church hired Edwards as their new missions minister to reach individuals who likely would never have attended Boone United Methodist Church. Edwards developed a relationship with Elizabeth, a devout Christian who had become disenchanted with the organized church. The two organized a series of cookouts with individuals who frequented the downtown area of Boone, NC. Over time, various forms of Fresh Expressions emerged including a bar ministry, a prison ministry, and a single mom's group (L. Edwards, personal communication, September 12, 2017).

It appears that the Fresh Expressions form of outreach is making a difference in individuals' establishing a relationship with Jesus Christ. In 2013, the Church of England analyzed the impact of the Fresh Expressions experience in the *Report on Strand 3b: An Analysis of Fresh Expressions of Church and Church Plants Begun in the Period 1992-2001*. The report revealed some interesting findings about the success of the movement:

1. Forty percent of those who are now part of the Fresh Expressions of church were previously not at all part of any congregation.
2. Fresh Expressions of church have been engaging young people. On average at the Fresh Expressions form of church, 41% of the attendees are under 16. This is significantly higher than in the inherited church and is a promising beginning (page 6 of the report)

It is important to note that traditional forms of ministry (the traditional church) can coexist with the Third Place meeting environment. Collins (2015: 11) discusses the need for a "mixed economy" which includes the high-steeple, brick and mortar church with an extension ministry that can "come alongside but doesn't replace existing congregations."

*Interview Three**Anonymous member of a start-up church*

The third interviewee, who wished to remain anonymous, was selected because she had been an active member of a start-up church from the beginning of its life. She is an intellectually bright, middle-aged, highly motivated, moderately successful professional woman, with a deep interest in spiritual matters. In her life, she experienced a large number of challenging family issues. Her mother died when she was six years old, and she was raised by her father, who was a self-described atheist. Around the age of twelve she began attending Baptist and Pentecostal churches. She had a difficult medical issue with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma in her early 40's and relocated to Fayetteville, NC while her military-related husband remained in Hawaii. Strictly by chance, she chose to attend a start-up church at the local Fire Department and remained with this church through numerous building changes, growth, and restructuring. Kirkland (2016: 54) noted, "The primary function of the storefront church is simply to be the church, a community of Christ centered people, where the lost can find peace, shelter and hope." The storefront form of ministry was just what was needed for this woman who was looking for a support network and a stable group with which to interact.

Our interviewee stated that the storefront church approach was more comfortable to her as far as fitting in with others. She noted that the parishioners seemed more like her. Both rich and poor should be called to repentance. Another reason she mentioned for attending a start-up church when compared to a more established church was being able to take part and shape the ministry instead of being thrust into an already existing structure of politics, mainly from old, established, church decision makers. In this way she was an active instead of a passive ministry participant. One interesting idea she mentioned which concerned her was that the purpose of the church was not to entertain parishioners (as opposed to her observations of more established churches) but to increase their relationship to God and their connectedness to others (Anonymous, personal communication, September 13, 2017).

A Wesleyan Approach to our Current Dilemma

The life and ministry of John Wesley constitutes a startling and puzzling enigma. He was, by 18th century English standards, a faithful and conservative priest. He strived to do things "by the book." This commitment

to the established order is demonstrated in many ways but especially in his crude handling of his relationship to Sophie Hopkey, the “love of his young life.” As such, John Wesley was one of the least likely persons to travel untried and unapproved new paths. Nevertheless, in spite of his training and his natural inclinations, he became a major innovator when it came to proclaiming the Gospel. This commitment to “whatever works,” even if it violated his inclination to the generally approved and expected, is seen in his response to George Whitfield’s request to Wesley to replace Whitfield’s role as a field preacher. When Whitfield decided to give up his field preaching to the Kingswood miners to return to his ministry in America, he asked Wesley to continue the preaching in the field. Wesley’s description, in his own words, when he accepted Whitfield’s challenge was, “I consented to the more vile.” Wesley, the traditionalist, soon treated “the world as his parish” by preaching in the places assigned to other Anglican priests. Without the permission of the Bishop, he soon engaged- because he needed help- untrained “helpers and assistants.” He soon opened schools and printed material for the poor and finally “like the Bishop he was not” even ordained ministers to administer the Sacraments. In short, this solid “by the book” conservative saw the need and adopted “the means of Grace that worked.”

In order for ministry of the Christian community to be more effective in the coming years, the gospel must be taken to the streets instead of expecting individuals to attend traditional worship on Sundays. The marginalized in today’s society may be found in all classes and social contexts. The history of the Christian Church is seen clearly in the initial acceptance of the gospel by the marginalized of a society. The ultimate conversion of those in power in church history follows the involvement of the marginalized. The church must be mindful not to “price itself” or “institutionalize itself” out of being able to establish churches among the marginalized of society.

There are two examples of this reality that come immediately to mind. The earliest Christians, both the first followers of Jesus as well as those of a generation later who responded to the missionary ministry of Saint Paul were primarily poor and powerless, though several of the disciples of Jesus, certainly the Zebedee brothers and Matthew were likely wealthy. In fact, some of the earliest converts to Christianity were slaves, the poorest and least powerful persons in the Roman society.

The same pattern followed in the Methodist revival in the 18th century. It was initially the poor who responded to Wesley. Perhaps the most obvious example of Wesley's involvement with the poor was his interest in the coal miners at Kingswood who were among the poorest and least powerful persons in England. Duraisingh (2010: 24) notes, "Through the life of Jesus of Nazareth, we know that the natural habitat of the God-movement is always among the poor and dispossessed. A mission shaped church knows and is ready to sit at the margins of society."

This reality about the Church is another example that history as recorded by men and God's history in the Book of Life are different. In the human version of history, the presence in the church of the rich and powerful (consider the activity of the Emperor Constantine in 325 AD) is evidence of the "progress" of the Church. In history as seen from the perspective of the Book of Life, the presence of the poor and weak, the marginalized, is at least as important as the greatest among the church.

Conclusion: A Fresh Expression for Disciple Making

In Chapter 6 of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice and the Cheshire Cat are looking for a path forward:

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"
 "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.
 "I don't much care where—" said Alice.
 "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.
 "—so long as I get SOMEWHERE," Alice added as an explanation.
 "Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough." (Carroll 2000: 71-72).

This exchange, unfortunately, resembles recent conversations in the United Methodist Church. Most, if not all, lay and clergy in the denomination agree that declining membership in the United Methodist Church, fewer worshippers under 40, and the weakening identifiable relevance of the church to the everyday society, is a prescription for failure. The sense that "something is wrong" is not new. In fact, one or two, perhaps ten, persons in every modern generation of the United Methodist Church (like Wilke 1986, Kisker 2008, and Yrigoyen 2008) have been calling attention to this downward turn. And yet, like the billionaire who experiences one or two

losses that have minimal effect on her portfolio at-large, the Church has been content to leave the conversation to a few critics and to continue in a blissful state of guaranteed appointments and mortgage-free buildings, until now. Today, the conversation has risen to the level of crisis, and the denomination can no longer relegate it to the few, but the conversation belongs to the whole. Like the prompting question of Thomas who asked, “We don’t know where you are going, how can we know the way?” (John 14:5), a host of issues and crises have called the question that demands a response. Where *are* we going?

One thing is for certain: we are sure to go somewhere. Will that somewhere be the place God intends? Will the “People called Methodists” continue to be a force for the building of the kingdom of God and the transformation of society? Or will the United Methodist Church morph into an organization ineffective for the mission of disciple making? We are well to remember that God’s intention for the Church is not “to go somewhere,” but to go to a land overflowing with milk and honey, a place where people are being added to the numbers daily, a place where justice rolls down like waters and life like an ever-flowing stream, a place where the first shall be last and the last shall be first, a place defined by a carpenter on a mountainside who set forth the characteristics of a way of living called the kingdom of God, a place that lifts up the name of Jesus as the way, the Truth and the Life.

This is the place where we are going. In fact, this has been the destination of the people of God since God first called Abraham to pack up his family and go, to claim and proclaim the promise and love of God. Recall that Abraham encountered a few unexpected challenges along the journey. The same can be said for Moses, the prophets, David, Paul, even Jesus, the fully divine and fully human Son of God. And each of these leaders, with eyes fixed clearly on where they were going, constantly made conscious decisions about what was expendable and what was essential to God’s people and to the arrival at their destination.

Adaptive Leadership: The United Methodist Church’s Newest Buzzword, or a Genuine Avenue for Positive Change?

The latest buzzword among Methodist Church ranks is “adaptive leadership.” The concept itself is not new, but has migrated to the Church via the secular business world. Not the first time for such a migration (Collins & Porras 1994, Collins 2001, and Covey 2004) but this model arrives on the

denominational doorstep at a time of robust conversation about matters of change.

Adaptive Leadership is essentially a structure of leadership that was expanded by Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky in their 2009 book, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*. The Adaptive Leadership model is designed “to assist organizations and individuals in dealing with consequential changes in uncertain times when no clear answers are forthcoming. Adaptive leaders identify and deal with systemic change, using techniques that confront the status quo and identify adaptive and technical challenges” (Heifetz and Linsky 2009: 12-13). Adaptive leadership, according to Heifetz and Linsky, provides the support, skills and understanding needed to expertly distinguish between what is expendable and what is essential. After which certain methods will be used to innovate, ensuring that they will fit together with what is essential. As suggested by the name, the essence of adaptive leadership is to promote adaptability that allows the organization to flourish and take along its best history to help with future successes (Heifetz & Linsky 2009).

Burton-Edwards (2013) notes that no model of leadership (specifically, Adaptive Leadership) is going to produce constructive results for the United Methodist Church because, in his assessment, Jesus did not come to lead but to transform, to impose the kingdom of God, not through improved leadership skills but through authority. Certainly, Jesus brought the authority of being the Son of God to bear on every situation. Yet, at its core, Jesus’ invitation was to “Come, follow me,” placing Jesus squarely in the position of leader, in relationship with those who accepted his invitation to be “followers” or “disciples.”

Core leadership (the most common building blocks of leadership models) focuses on strategy, action, and results. Core leadership sounds much more like a spreadsheet formula for reaching an intended goal rather than an invitation to hope and transformation. When seen as a goal and not a starting point, core leadership propagates the myth that if we just work hard enough and smart enough, figure out trends and generate innovative ideas, we will succeed. In fact, core leadership should be assumed as a minimum standard of operation in effective leaders, in business as well as in the Church. But if the United Methodist Church is to be “yet alive” and “to serve the present age,” her leaders must be able to apply skills to a given context (i.e. this present age) to figure out the “how, when, and where” of

leadership in a given situation. Adaptive Leadership is core leadership at the next level, core leadership interacting with a given context. Inasmuch, the adaptive leadership model can become a kind of hermeneutic to help a new generation of church leaders to understand the servant leadership of Jesus.

Consider, for example, the following tenets of Adaptive Leadership as applied to developing new places for new people in the Church outlined by Bradberry and Greaves (2012):

1. *Emotional Intelligence* (EI) and *situational awareness* (SA)—Emotional intelligence is a set of skills that capture our awareness of our own emotions and the emotions of others and how we use this awareness to manage ourselves effectively and form quality relationships. Building quality relationships is critical to Christianity and to the work of the Church: the relationship of persons and God (through Jesus Christ) and the relation of persons and other persons. Paragraph 213 of *The Book of Discipline* provides a rubric (and a mandate) for local churches to constantly engage situational awareness and increase emotional intelligence:

Since every congregation is located in a community in some type of transition, every local church is encouraged to study their congregation's potential...This study shall include, but not be limited to: a) unique missional opportunities and needs of the community; b) present ministries of the congregation; c) number of leaders and style of leadership; d) growth potential of the surrounding community; e) fiscal and facility needs; f) distance from other United Methodist churches; g) number and size of churches of other denominations in the community; h) other items that may impact the church's ability to fulfill the mission of the Church as stated in Chapter One, Section I. [to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.]

Raising emotional intelligence and increasing situational awareness requires learning not only what people think, but what they feel, both those inside and outside the Church community. These also require discovering “where the people are” in any given community, and “why they are there.” Jesus asked the questions of situational awareness and emotional intelligence when he asked: “Who do people say that I am?” and “Who do you say that I am?”

2. *Organizational justice* (OJ) —Organizational justice speaks the truth. Effective, adaptive leaders know how to integrate what people think and feel, what they want to hear, and how they want to hear it (EI and SA) with the facts which makes people feel respected and valued. To bring the conversation of Christian faith to a bar, or a river, or a gym, need not lessen the power of the Gospel, rather such action has the potential to validate the persons who gather in those spaces. It is often easier to hear the truth (even the difficult truth) in your own space. Reminiscent of “family conversations” at the kitchen table, faith conversations in the Third Place take on a transparency and honesty sometime clouded by the “shoulds” of the sanctuary. Did Jesus speak the (difficult) truth to the woman at the well? “You have had five husbands and the one that you have now is not your husband.... This water that you draw will leave you thirsty again, but the water I give will well up to eternal life.” What was the response of the woman to this Truth spoken on her own turf? “Sir, give me that water, that I may not thirst again!”

3. *Character* - Leaders need not be perfect, only forthcoming. The biblical story is ripe with examples of flawed persons leading God’s people effectively. The Adaptive Leadership model presses the church leader to constantly rely on an integrity that holds beyond the boundaries of boundaries perceived (or portrayed) as holy/sacred space. At the same time, such integrity and character, imparted righteousness one would say, brings the holy to bear on the secular space transforming it, if even for the moment, into a sacred space all its own. Imagine the power of such an image for discipleship, bringing the holy to bear on every part of one’s life, and accountability in every space of one’s life.

4. *Development*- The moment leaders think they have nothing more to learn and have no obligation to help develop those they lead is the moment they ensure they’ll never know their true potential (Hunter 2012). Just as Wesley’s *ordo salutis* described salvation not as a single moment but a journey, as an “expecting to be made perfect in love in this life,” so Christian discipleship is a life-long journey. And the Church, if indeed we “are yet alive,” is a living, growing body that must continue to listen and learn and help develop those under its care to realize its potential to be instrumental in the transformation of the world.

Adaptive Leadership is a resource for the Church in the current context. Christian scripture provides story after story of God's people using what is at our disposal for the teaching of God's truth and the making of disciples. Jesus used loaves and fish and some hungry bellies, we use resources like adaptive leadership. The experience with the loaves and the fish did not immediately solve all of the problems Jesus faced with the disciples! In fact, just after Jesus multiplied scant food into an abundance, the disciples panicked on the water, afraid that they were going to die, forgetting in the moment the recently demonstrated fact that Jesus was stronger than the storm (Bradberry & Greaves 2012).

Likewise, while adaptive leadership has some tangible help to offer the United Methodist Church, it alone will not fix our problems. It is one tool, among many that can help us along this journey. Disciple making is a journey. Our success as the Church in this generation, like "all who follow Jesus all round the world," (United Methodist Church 558) is yet to be determined. Adaptive Leadership is one model for leadership, but its potential to be effective for the Church is dependent how willing local churches are to distinguish essentials from expendables in order to fulfill the denomination's mission (ergo the Church's mission) to "Make Disciples of Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World."

Our success in application of the Adaptive Leadership model (or any model) will be determined by our answers to these questions:

- What is the tangible evidence that we making disciples of Jesus Christ?
- What is the tangible evidence that the disciples the Church is making are transforming the world?
- What is expendable and what is essential in this work of disciple making?

The United Methodist Church will end up somewhere. But will that somewhere be the place where God is going? Jesus said it this way: "Narrow is the way that leads to life, and few find it" (Matthew 7:14). A number of models can increase the census of "the people called Methodists." Yet, at the end of the day, the numbers become irrelevant, if we are not making disciples. The calling of the Church is to make disciples, or in the words of Charles Wesley, "to serve the present age."

What does it mean to “serve the present age?” It means to bring the Gospel to bear on the hopelessness of a new generation. It means to make disciples. That we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation for the world is an essential, a non-negotiable. The where, when, and how that disciple making, we are learning, are expendable, or at least, malleable.

Discipleship is a journey, not a quick fix. It is constant adaptive leadership. What are the essentials, what are the expendables, and how do we address the current juncture in our journey in a way that honors the essentials and is willing to dispense with the expendables? These questions alone would make for robust conversation in most local United Methodist congregations and reveal much about how the effectiveness of our disciple making in the first 200 years of Methodism.

Fresh Expressions and the Third Place as Invitation

Fresh Expressions is a viable application of Adaptive Leadership, an effective way of engaging the Third Place that speaks to the how, when, and where of disciple making. Fresh Expressions is a tool of evangelism that gathers people around a common secular interest or in a secular place for the purpose of feeling included and welcomed. To say that these kinds of Fresh Expressions are necessary to making disciples just makes sense. Jesus certainly modeled this kind of hospitality, inclusion, and evangelism in his life. Consider, for example, the Third Places of the New Testament: the well where Jesus met the Samaritan woman, the wedding where Jesus turned water into wine, the Pharisee’s house where the woman anointed Jesus. Still, few in the Church, if any, would classify these spaces as places of worship. They were instead contexts for invitation.

Invitation is an essential. In the words of John Wesley, “Offer them Christ.” But invitation is only the beginning. When met with a response, invitation initiates a life-long journey, a “walk,” learning, growing in grace, accountability, becoming an agent of the kingdom of God and the transformation therein. Jesus met potential disciples not at the temple but at the Third Place of the lakeshore. However, he did not leave them there. Jesus issued an invitation, “Come, leave everything you have (the life you have known) and follow me where there is life in abundance.” Jesus then led these new “converts” to places of accountability and sacrifice, of learning and growing. He gave them new eyes through which to see the world and turned their lives upside down. And then he sent them out again, dependent on God and one another, not with an economy of

tangible resources, but with the power and authority of the Holy Spirit. Each moment in Jesus' life with the disciples was a teachable moment. Each moment was bathed in the waters of community and the realm of God. Following Jesus, the servant-leader, was life changing for this band of twelve, and then through these twelve, for the world.

What road will take us there?

And are we yet alive? Are we witnessing a life-change in those who are responding to the invitation of gathering such as Fresh Expressions? Are the communities in which Fresh Expression ministries gather experiencing transformation? Are we seeing people not only show up on Sunday morning (or Thursday night or whenever the local church's primary worship gathering happens) but are seeing people "leave everything" and follow Jesus? Are we witnessing converts integrating into the life of the Church, not of First Church Wherever, but integrating into the Body of Christ all around the world? Are we witnessing persons moving from the initial place of welcome (the Third place, gathered around a common secular interest with like-minded people) to a place of integration into the transformative message of the gospel, amid the diversity of the Church that includes "all who follow Jesus all around the world?" Are we witnessing growth in discipleship, change of worldview, changed lives with hearts so strangely warmed that they do, in fact, care where the Church and the world is going and therefore are committed to finding the way(s) in the current age that will get us there?

Without tangible evidence that people are moving from Fresh Expressions and Third Places to full integration in the worship and service life of the Church, then we've not made disciples, we have made "church people," only this time instead of being blissfully cloistered in a stone sanctuary, they are idyllically cosseted by the river, or in a bar. And with "churched people" but no disciples, these programs will be just that, "programs" to filed along with so many that have come before, neatly packaged, but now sold at clearance prices.

The Good News?

The good news in the Fresh Expressions and Third Places, as models of adaptive leadership, is that they restore the place of invitation to the Church. The purpose of community worship in the context of a Church building is not to be the primary place of invitation. In fact, worship's primary purpose is not invitation, but adoration of God. Discipleship's

purpose is formation. Invitation, Adoration, and Formation: when these three components are lived out together in full measure, the Church is a catalyst for the transformation of the world. The lynchpin in this process is invitation. Without invitation, there is no opportunity for response. Without response, there is no worship, and without worship there is no desire for discipleship. As we read in *The Message* (Romans 10:14), “But how can people call for help if they don’t know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven’t heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them unless someone is sent to do it?”

“To serve the present age” means to find a way of invitation that is effective in the present age. It does not mean to change the mission and message (essentials) of the Church, but to freely adapt evangelism to an ever-changing context to accomplish the Church’s mission. The good news is that we are free to change our methods, that Jesus gave us a model of going wherever and whenever (to the ends of the Earth) to “offer them Christ” along with the Divine promise that everywhere we go, Christ is with us, even unto the end of the age.

Fresh Expressions has the potential to bear fruit in the form of a church structure that Collins (2015: 11) describes as a “mixed economy” which includes the high-steeple, brick and mortar church, with an extension ministry that “come alongside but doesn’t replace existing congregations.” Such ministries, viewed as extensions of the church, are not life threatening but life giving. And life-giving ministry is the most powerful response to the question, “And are we yet alive?”

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Rebekah Clapp

Advocating for Dreamers: A Wesleyan Approach to U.S. Immigration Reform

Abstract:

This paper argues that Wesley's theology supports radical hospitality toward all U.S. immigrants, regardless of documentation. Specifically, the emphasis John Wesley placed on loving one's neighbor forces us to consider the immigrant's well being alongside our own. Additionally, his understanding of liberty calls for Christians to support human flourishing for all people. Further, Wesley's argument that all humanity is to be considered equal rejects any idea of superiority or supremacy as a justification for withholding hospitality. Finally, in John Wesley's daily spiritual practices, he emphasized care for society's most vulnerable members - who must, in contemporary times, include the immigrant. In John Wesley's writing and practice he demonstrated a Christian commitment to public engagement with complex structural realities; his comprehensive perspective of social holiness necessitates a consideration for the justice of the most vulnerable members of our society: the children of undocumented immigrants. This paper was originally presented at a Social Holiness Colloquium held from April 26-27, 2018 at Asbury Theological Seminary.

Keywords: immigration, undocumented immigrants, Dreamers, hospitality, Wesley

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Introduction

Within the political sphere of the United States today there is significant tension related to immigration policies, especially around the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program and the vulnerable state of its intended recipients. Many Christian scholars and churches have offered a response to this situation, using arguments from scripture and Christian tradition to extend hospitality to the stranger and to work for justice on behalf of this marginalized group. These arguments are an important contribution to the conversation; however, as a United Methodist with Wesleyan roots, I believe a distinctively Wesleyan approach to the current political situation around immigration would benefit Christians who share this theological heritage as they seek to live out their Wesleyan faith in the public sphere today.

The purpose of this paper is to offer a theological response rooted in Wesleyan thought to the political situation of DACA-recipients and undocumented immigrants who arrived as children, commonly referred to as Dreamers.¹ First, I will seek to outline the current political and socio-cultural situation. Then, I will provide a review of current theological responses to immigration reform. Next, I will construct the theological basis for a Wesleyan response to the situation. Finally, I will present a practical approach grounded in Wesleyan theology for the church to engage this issue. I will argue that a Wesleyan theological approach to DACA-recipients in the United States involves a response of Christian hospitality and public advocacy for immigration reform that is grounded in perfect love.

Socio-cultural Situation

In order to offer an effective theological response, it is important to provide an orientation to the political and social situation of the DACA program within the context of undocumented immigration in the United States. This section will begin by painting broad strokes of global migration and the situation of immigration in the United States, which will set the scene for an explanation of the history and impact of DACA and will conclude with an overview of the current political situation in the months since the program's initial rescinding.

Migration in the twenty-first century is a global phenomenon influencing nations worldwide, as increasing numbers of people are becoming displaced and living outside of their places of origin. Though migration has been a common theme throughout history, it has become

prominent in this century, with an estimated 240 million international migrants in the world today (Martinez 2017:73). Many factors influence the international movement of people, including: conflict, war, violence, natural disasters, climate change, and desires for social and economic advancement through work and education (Tira 2016: 22). Migrants may be refugees or asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking, or immigrants with varying degrees of documentation or legal status.

The United States is one of the largest receiving nations of migrants. It receives more migrants from the global South than anyone else, primarily from Central America (including Mexico). More than fifty percent of Central American immigrants in the United States are undocumented (Maruskin 2012). The number of undocumented immigrants in the United States is estimated at 11 to 12 million (Kosnac 2014: 2). The issue of the unlawful presence of immigrants has recently increased in prominence since President Donald Trump took office, due to his vocal anti-immigration, America first platform; though, it has been a source of political tension for decades.

Despite political division on the topic of immigration and the appropriate response to undocumented persons residing in the United States, a significant majority of U.S. citizens believes there should be a pathway made available to undocumented immigrants who entered the United States as minors, by no volition of their own. According to Pew Research, 72% of Americans believe that irregular immigrants who came as children should be allowed to stay. It is out of this conviction that the DACA program was birthed. For nearly two decades, bipartisan legislators have been working to pass legislation that would create a pathway to citizenship for childhood arrivals. The legislation with the greatest potential to make a change was the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. Introduced in 2001, the DREAM Act was to provide a pathway to citizenship for undocumented persons who arrived as minors and obtained a college education or entered the military (Kosnac 2014: 3). Since the DREAM Act failed to be passed for over a decade, in 2012 the Obama administration issued a temporary reprieve to this population in the form of the DACA program (Kosnac 2014: xi).

The DACA program was established in 2012 to offer a temporary quasi-legal status to undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as minors. While there is a significant process involved in obtaining DACA, its recipients are awarded lawful presence for a two-year period,

which is renewable, and they are given a social security number and work authorization (Armenta 2017: 39). In order to be eligible for DACA, an undocumented immigrant must have arrived in the United States before the age of 16, have been residing in country for 5 consecutive years, and have completed or be in the process of obtaining a high school education or GED-equivalent. It is estimated that nearly two million undocumented persons meet these requirements, yet only 800,000 have received DACA (Kosnac 2014: 5). There are a number of barriers for the immigrant community in applying for this benefit: first, it reveals the person to the government, placing them at risk, if DACA were ever to be repealed; second, it requires significant documentation to prove consecutive residency for five years, as a minor; finally, the application and legal fees are substantial (Gonzales 2014: 6). So, many eligible persons do not receive DACA; to say nothing of the many undocumented childhood arrivals who do not fit within the strict eligibility guidelines.

Those who do receive DACA still have a number of limitations to face in American society. DACA does not provide a pathway to citizenship; so, its recipients, while protected from deportation for a temporary period, do not have full rights. They are unable to participate fully in public life; for example, they cannot vote and are ineligible to serve in many governmental positions. Further, though they pay into social security, they will not benefit from it. Also, they are not eligible to receive federal funding for higher education, though DACA does open up other funding sources to them. Another important limitation is the impact that the situations of their undocumented family members and close community connections have on their personal lives. While DACA-recipients are given a temporary reprieve, issues of deportation continue to impact them as they fear for their relatives' safety and well-being.

Despite the limitations of DACA, the benefits it provides to the young adults who receive it empower them to move more freely in mainstream society, by giving them the ability to attend college, receive access to some financial support, and be legally employed. The benefits of DACA-recipients have positively impacted the overall society, as well. The majority of DACA-recipients have been able to receive new employment as a result of DACA and nearly half of them have increased their income. This has positively impacted the United States' economy (Kosnac 2014: 3). While DACA has provided benefits both to its recipients and to the overall society, it has been only a partial solution.

The temporary reprieve of the DACA program has been truncated by the Trump administration's decision to rescind the program. President Trump announced DACA's repeal on September 5, 2017 in order to encourage Congress to find a legislative solution to the situation of undocumented childhood arrivals (Hoffman 2017: 1). However, in the midst of the Congress' failure to find a solution to DACA over the course of the following six months, the Federal Courts intervened on behalf of those already holding DACA-status, granting them the right to continued application renewal.² While the court's intervention has provided a stop gap for current recipients, the rescinding of the program has placed those whose renewal applications are pending in a tenuous, fearful situation; further it has made it impossible for other undocumented childhood arrivals to take advantage of the DACA program. Still as yet, the government has not offered an alternative solution to the plight of this vulnerable community.

Dreamers, or undocumented childhood arrivals, are among the most vulnerable members of United States society. DACA, though a partial benefit for those who hold it, does not grant legal status and can be terminated at any time, at which point the DACA-recipient is at risk of deportation. For young adults who have lived in the United States since childhood, came here by no choice of their own, and have lived as contributing members of a society they call their own even though it does not accept them as full members, deportation is life-threatening. This vulnerable population is in need of comprehensive immigration reform in order for them to flourish and continue to be a benefit to American society.

Approaching a Wesleyan Theology of Immigration

In response to the situation of immigrants in the United States, many theologians have offered biblical and theological arguments in support of welcoming the stranger and seeking immigration reform. However, there are not arguments being made from distinctly Wesleyan perspectives. The following section will review prominent voices responding theologically to issues of immigration before constructing a Wesleyan immigration theology built upon the foundation of John Wesley's theological commitments and his public example of faith.

M. Daniel Carroll R. is a contemporary theologian who has done extensive scholarly work in the biblical theology of immigration. He engages the entire biblical narrative in order to support a Christian position

of charity and openness toward immigrants. Carroll cites Old Testament law, the teachings of Jesus, and the theological principles of God's love and the image of God in humanity, in order to construct his argument. For Carroll a properly biblical response begins with the Christian reception of immigrants and extends to a legislative welcome, as well.

In his book *Christians at the Border*, Carroll is responding to Christians who use particular biblical references to support their anti-immigrant stance. He notes that often people holding this position cite Romans 13, focusing on the issue of immigrants' legal standing in relationship to the God-ordained authorities of a nation. Carroll believes that this approach is in error, as an appropriate theological response to immigration "should arise from a set of beliefs and commitments" which are found not in proof texting individual verses of the Bible, but in the comprehensive narrative of the scriptures (Carroll 2013: 122).

For Carroll the revelation of Scriptures toward immigrants compels Christians to respond in love and welcome. Beginning with the Old Testament, he highlights that God's law for Israel included the appropriate response toward sojourners or immigrants, which was to meet their needs. The Old Testament law considers immigrants as vulnerable and disadvantaged people in need of justice. Carroll continues his argument, focusing on Jesus' teachings in the New Testament. He relates the situation of immigrants to the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which Jesus teaches that we are to love our neighbors, and that our neighbors are distinctly "other" from us. Overall Carroll argues that the narrative of scripture supports compassionate laws toward vulnerable persons and love extended to the outsider in the practice of hospitality.

Theologian Ched Myers follows in the vein of Carroll as he also uses arguments from the Bible to support a welcoming approach and a reform of policy toward immigrants. Myers' use of scripture differs from Carroll's however, in that he focuses on themes of removing division, deconstructing segregation, celebrating diversity, and living into God's intent for the human community. Myers sees God's desire for humanity as being a community of discipleship and communion, which cannot happen when there is disenfranchisement and exclusion, which is the reality of the immigrant population today (Myers 2012: 105). In order for the church to live into God's vision, it is necessary that they address the social and political systems that cause the marginalization of immigrants.

In one chapter of his book *Our God is Undocumented*, Myers reflects on Isaiah and Luke's perspectives of God's intent for the human community. From Myers' point of view, Isaiah makes arguments for ethical boundaries rather than enforcing divisions based on people's status. So, individuals who were historically outsiders in the cultic life of Israel have access to the community by virtue of their ethics rather than their place in society. Myers believes this perspective is reiterated by Jesus in Luke who sides with outsiders and seeks to challenge the exclusionary practices of the elite (2012: 103). Jesus' solidarity with the marginalized is again highlighted by Myers in his reflections on Mark in which Jesus models a ministry of inclusion and reconciliation, calling out the inequality and injustice of contemporary religious practices. Myers argues that Jesus' treatment toward the "others" of his day should inform the church's practices of solidarity toward immigrants who are our contemporary "others."

Carroll and Myers are two contemporary voices in Christian theology that argue that the church should be receptive toward and work for justice on behalf of the marginalized community of immigrants in our society today. They and many other theologians use the narrative of scripture and the theological values that are displayed in it to make their case. The arguments they make from scripture could be received by many Christian traditions, but are not distinctively associated with a particular theological expression. In what follows, I propose to offer a more targeted theological response to the situation of undocumented immigrants, which is not merely "Christian" or "scriptural," but is grounded in Wesleyan commitments.

While Wesley did not address issues of migration directly, his foundational theological commitments paired with his personal and public engagement on issues relating to vulnerable persons, allow us to construct a distinctively Wesleyan approach to contemporary U.S. immigration reform, specifically in our reception of and policy toward undocumented childhood arrivals. Wesley, like the aforementioned contemporary theologians, would place a high value on scripture and what it has to say in response to this issue, but a properly Wesleyan response, while beginning with scripture, would extend beyond it. This high view of scripture, along with a commitment to social holiness, and a perspective of sanctification as perfect love, are three theological commitments that provide underpinnings to my argument and are foundational for Wesleyan theology.

For Wesley, the witness of scripture was central to his theology. Wesleyan theology proclaims that scripture contains all that is necessary

for salvation and that the Bible in its entire substance provides the basis for the Christian faith. For Wesley, reading and meditating upon scripture was a daily task and an important means of grace through which God's Spirit worked in the life of the Christian. So, in constructing a Wesleyan approach to immigration reform, scripture must provide the foundation. We have seen this employed in the arguments by contemporary theologians; however, Wesley's use of scripture is focused more on its transformational impact. The transformative nature of scripture plays an important role in the holiness and sanctification in the life of individual believers and the Christian community.

Holiness is a central theme in Wesleyan theology, vital both to individuals and to community as we are being transformed to be more Christlike in our life of faith. Wesley is famously quoted on the importance of social holiness in the Christian community, "The gospel of Christ knows of...no holiness but social holiness," (Wesley 1739: viii). For Wesley this means that the Christian faith is not practiced individually but must be lived out in community. The impact of the gospel is such that Christians are called to live holy lives, not only based upon the individual's piety, but that of the community. The Christian faith, for Wesley, is necessarily public and the Christian community should present a public witness of faith as together they live out the values they find in scripture.

What Wesley expects of the Christian community is also expected of the individual Christian: living a life of holiness and becoming more like Jesus Christ. This is the process of sanctification, of moving onto perfection. Continuing from Wesley's statement on social holiness, he goes on to say, "Faith working by love is the ... height of Christian perfection. This commandment have we from Christ, that he who loves God, love his brother also; and that we manifest our love by doing good unto all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith," (Wesley 1739: viii-ix). Wesley's understanding of Christian perfection, then, was not that the Christian would be without any fault or error, but rather it is based upon the greatest commandment in scripture: to love. So, for Wesley, the Christian who is made perfect in love must "love every [hu]man as [their] own soul, as Christ loved [them]," (Wesley 1958: 413). Wesley's perspective of Christian perfection is grounded in a deep commitment to scripture and has important implications for the Christian community's public witness, as Christian love is lived out.

Wesley's theological commitments to scripture, social holiness, and the sanctifying process of being made perfect in love influenced the ways in which he lived out his faith and the messages he preached. Wesley's theology could be observed in his way of life. The sermons he preached and the publications he authored were reflective of his personal faith commitments, as he sought to live a life of Christian perfection in his relationship with God and with other Christians in society. Three distinctives of Wesley's approach, which rise out of his theological commitments, include his emphasis on face-to-face relationships, his commitment to working with the vulnerable, and his engagement of the political sphere. From Wesley's example and writing on these areas we will construct our Wesleyan approach to immigration reform.

Wesley's theological commitments led him to be intentional in his relationships, placing high value on fostering personal connections in his ministry of sharing the gospel. For Wesley, the transformative power of the gospel was most effectively shared in relating with people face-to-face. The witness of scripture also informed Wesley of precisely the type of people Christians were to be intentional about relating to: the most vulnerable members of society. Just as Wesley read and meditated upon scripture in his daily life, he also spent time relating to vulnerable persons in face-to-face relationships, which he saw as another means of grace and an important part of his transformative journey to perfect love.

In his sermon "On Visiting the Sick" he speaks of fostering relationships with society's most vulnerable, marginalized members as a universal Christian task and an important means of grace. Wesley refers to Matthew 25 in which Jesus teaches about the final judgment. The standard by which humanity is to be judged, according to scripture, is based upon behavior toward the "least of these," which include: the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, the prisoner, and the stranger (Matthew 25:34ff). For the purposes of Wesley's sermon he focuses on only the sick, as he finds them to be accessible for all and yet ignored by most. However, Wesley is not suggesting that these other categories of vulnerable persons be ignored; in fact, Wesley would argue that it is the universal duty of Christians to respond as Christ to all vulnerable persons, regardless of the category of their marginalization. As we established in our review of theological arguments in response to the issue of immigration, the biblical references to "stranger" fit our contemporary understanding of migrants and immigrants.

So, while Wesley focuses on the sick in his sermon, it would be appropriate to apply the teachings from this sermon to our treatment of and interaction with immigrants, as with the other vulnerable persons mentioned by Jesus in this scripture text.

Wesley details in his sermon what visiting the sick implies, how it is to be done, and who should visit them. He highlights the importance of engaging with the sick face-to-face as a means of grace. For Wesley this interaction is transformational for those who open their hearts to the vulnerable. He points out that: "One great reason why the rich, in general, have so little sympathy for the poor, is, because they so seldom visit them," (Wesley 1958: 119). By this he implies that in spending time with vulnerable or marginalized groups in society, we are able to be made aware of their circumstances and suffering in a tangible way, our hearts are opened to them, and compassion follows. It is very easy to ignore the plight of people who suffer when we are not engaged in personal face-to-face interactions with them on a regular basis. Wesley emphasizes that the piety of the vulnerable does not weigh in on the responsibility of Christians to respond to their duty to offer relationship: "whether they are good or bad, whether they fear God or not," (whether they have legal status or not) the message of Christ is that we are to care for them in their circumstance of need, (1958: 118). Wesley believes that applying this scripture to our lives is essential for all Christians who desire to enter into Christ's kingdom, because by offering relationship to the vulnerable, we invite Christ into our lives.

Just as John Wesley's theological commitments drove him to engage in personal relationships with the vulnerable, they also compelled him to engage the public through advocacy on behalf of marginalized and vulnerable peoples. In 1774, John Wesley published *Thoughts upon Slavery*, a booklet calling upon political decision-makers to bring an end to institutional slavery in Great Britain. This work of advocacy serves as an example for Wesleyan political engagement today on behalf of vulnerable peoples who are subject to unmerciful and unjust political systems, such as DACA-recipients and other undocumented childhood arrivals. While the circumstances of the enslaved Africans in eighteenth century England differ greatly from those of undocumented childhood arrivals in the United States today, Wesley's convictions for universal values of justice and mercy toward a vulnerable people group in society can be extended beyond the context to which he wrote.

John Wesley begins his response to slavery in Great Britain by appealing to the shared humanity between slaves and members of British society. He goes into great detail overviewing the atrocities being committed toward the enslaved population: removal from their country, separation from family and friends, and reduction to being treated as less than human. Then he asks his readers whether this was the intention of the Creator for humanity. In reading Wesley's account we can draw some analogies between contemporary immigrants who have been displaced due to economic, natural, and political forces and those who were enslaved during Wesley's time: cultural dislocation, mistreatment, abuse, poor labor conditions, and separation from families. Wesley's response to the atrocities of his day was to engage the decision-makers by advocating on behalf of enslaved persons, appealing to their sacred worth as fellow bearers of God's image, and arguing for them to be treated with mercy and justice.

As he continues in his appeal for justice and mercy, Wesley takes the time to consider the popular arguments of his day in maintaining and supporting the institution of slavery. He notes that many appeal to the law's authorization for slavery to defend their position. Wesley is dissatisfied with this reasoning, declaring that human law does not have the power to change evil into good. He remarks that regardless of the legal system that is in place, injustice and cruelty are indefensible and the treatment of the enslaved population is irreconcilable with the Christian values of mercy and justice.

Wesley concludes his pamphlet reminding his readers of the virtue of love, which is the motivating factor in his authoring this publication. It is out of love for the vulnerable peoples being oppressed as well as love for their oppressors that Wesley writes. It is the love of God that compels Wesley's message of advocating for justice and mercy on behalf of the vulnerable. And because of his love for the oppressors, he reminds his readers of the ways of God's justice and mercy: "[God] shall have judgment without mercy [toward those] that showed no mercy," (Wesley 1958: 77). He calls his readers to act with a heart of compassion, to understand the pain they are causing their fellow humans, and to make a change for liberty. Just as Wesley's love for God and humanity compel him to speak on behalf of the vulnerable, he calls others to extend mercy and act for justice, so that society may be transformed.

A Wesleyan Response to DACA-Recipients

We have already begun to construct a Wesleyan response to the current situation of immigration in the United States as we have explored the ways in which Wesley's theological commitments were displayed in his writings and daily life. In light of Wesley's commitment to face-to-face relationships, working with vulnerable persons, and engaging the public to advocate for justice we now must consider what this means for our response to the vulnerable members of our society today, namely DACA-recipients who have been placed at risk with the program's repeal and other Dreamers. A Wesleyan response to the repeal of DACA and those affected by it should be characterized by hospitality and public engagement.

Wesley's commitment to face-to-face relationships should inspire Christians and churches of a Wesleyan heritage to extend hospitality to Dreamers. The value Wesley places on face-to-face relationships is demonstrated in his sermon "On Visiting the Sick" which we addressed earlier. In this sermon he refers to Matthew 25 to provide groundwork for his argument. Although Wesley focuses on only one of the categories of persons listed in this text, he makes it clear that the duty of Christians is not limited to visiting the sick. We also find within this text an expectation from Jesus to welcome the stranger, and from here we can establish our response to offer hospitality to those affected by DACA's repeal.

Hospitality is an ancient Christian tradition that can be observed in John Wesley's life as well as the life of the church since its earliest days. As Wesley was compelled to regularly visit the sick, the poor, and prisoners in his own ministry, so Christians throughout history have engaged in these acts of hospitality towards persons in need in society, especially toward the stranger. While the biblical understanding of stranger can be understood in contemporary times to refer to immigrants, refugees, and our own Dreamers, it is important to recognize the word at face value as well. A stranger is someone you do not know. However, when extending hospitality and welcome, you come to know the stranger, and here we see the value of face-to-face relationships, where the stranger can become part of the community.

In order for Dreamers to truly become a part of the community, hospitality expressed through face-to-face relationships is a necessary first step. In doing so, we welcome the transformative power of Jesus Christ into the relationship and into our community, for whenever we welcome the stranger, we welcome Christ. The welcome implied by hospitality is

to provide for basic needs, offer protection, and foster a connection with the community (Pohl 1999: 17). When hospitality is offered to its fullest potential, by connecting the stranger with the community, their status as a stranger is removed, they are no longer the “DACA-recipient,” the “Dreamer,” the “undocumented immigrant,” but they become members, receiving the rights and privileges of the community (Yong 2008: 110). Offering hospitality extends the community’s boundaries, as personal relationships transform the stranger into a member.

As we consider this call to hospitality, issues of boundaries and the reality of limitations must be addressed. While there are some who make theological arguments for open borders, there are practical concerns that must be considered before going so far. While Wesley recognized the universal duty of all Christians to follow Christ’s call to provide for many categories of vulnerable persons, he chose to emphasize visiting the sick, because there is the reality of a limited capacity for individuals to engage in face-to-face relationships with all people. There is also a limitation upon the capacity of nations, and so boundaries are put in place. Personal, communal, and national boundaries exist for many good reasons, such as security and identity (Pohl 2006: 97). However, that does not give license for Christians to exclude those in need or fail to perform their duty to offer welcome. It simply implies that intentionality is necessary as we extend hospitality.

One way to be intentional in our offering of hospitality toward the stranger is to focus specifically on Dreamers, especially as we consider the role of the nation in offering welcome, as well. The majority perspective toward Dreamers in the United States is one of receptivity, which means that issues of security and national identity are not of major concern in their reception. And while Christians should be hospitable toward all immigrants, regardless of their circumstances, if we want to see transformation in society, we must be intentional in our witness. Ultimately, though, Christians offering hospitality is not a sufficient or comprehensive response to the situation of undocumented immigrants in the United States, whether DACA-recipients or not, so if we want to see the needs of this vulnerable people group fully met, we must begin where we can make a difference. This intentional approach of hospitality must also recognize the vulnerable social location of those to whom we offer welcome.

Wesley’s example of working with the vulnerable compels Christians today to intentionally interact with the marginalized Dreamers in

our society and offer them hospitality as expressed in Christ's perfect love. The Wesleyan commitment to being sanctified is to be made perfect in our love toward God and humankind. As we turn to scripture to understand what Christ's expectations of our love are, we see a particular emphasis on offering love and care to our most vulnerable neighbors. The hospitality that Christ expects us to offer is one that intentionally receives the oppressed and marginalized (Yong 2008: 103). And as we have established, Dreamers are one of these vulnerable groups. Additionally, Wesley calls us to offer this community particular love in his statement on social holiness and perfect love, in which he emphasizes the special priority of love toward those who are "members of the household of faith," (Wesley 1739). Of note, the majority of immigrants coming to the United States are Christians and therefore, members with us of the household of faith.

Dreamers are members of our community and society who don't fully belong and therefore lack some of the basic support necessary for human flourishing. Without access to the rights offered to full members of society, they do not have the ability to sustain themselves, to gain access to important resources, or to thrive. With the DACA program, some of these obstacles were removed from their path and they were able to access educational and financial resources previously withheld from them; however, with DACA's repeal they return to their vulnerable status and are at risk of deportation and therefore losing what little support and community that is left to them.

Our Christian duty and our Wesleyan heritage obligates us to extend welcome and support to these vulnerable persons who are dependent upon us for their livelihoods. As we study scripture, we learn that the qualities of God's love are expressed through the people of faith in tangible demonstrations of care toward society's vulnerable members: the widows, the orphans, the poor, and the immigrants. If we are to live into Christ's call of perfect love, we must offer care through personal, face-to-face relationships to provide them access to and membership within the Christian community, if not also the broader society. Christ's love also must extend beyond personal relationships and beyond the boundaries of the Christian community to address the injustices of society.

Wesley models this in his engagement with the public on behalf of the oppressed and his example calls the church today to advocate for Dreamers. Hospitality on its own can make a difference in the life of individual Dreamers, but if the political system remains as it is, their

vulnerable situation is perpetuated. As United States' society increasingly focuses on maintaining strong boundaries for reasons of security and identity, the voices of the vulnerable are overpowered (Pohl 2006: 82). The priority of providing safety and community to Dreamers has lessened substantially and will continue to do so unless influential voices begin to reshape the policies in favor of the vulnerable. This is the responsibility of the Christian, whose commitment to holiness within their personal life and the life of Christian community should also extend to the broader society out of a desire to see God's justice realized and Christ's kingdom of perfect love lived out.

Wesley used public engagement to advocate on behalf of slaves and Wesleyan Christians today should follow his lead of advocacy on behalf of Dreamers. Wesley was intentional in using his position of influence to speak to the public and to political decision-makers in order to bring about a just and merciful society (Field 2015: 2). Out of his love for God and for humanity, especially its vulnerable members, he addressed the unjust political systems of his day. By engaging the public sphere, Wesley is prophetic, as he advocates for a vision that, if realized, would create a more just society, in line with the values of Christ's kingdom.

As Wesleyan Christians advocate for Dreamers today, they, too, must speak prophetically out of a desire to see the transformational impact of God's vision of justice and mercy. Advocacy is an important aspect of Christian public engagement which involves using the positions, power, and privileges that are held by the church and its members in order to speak and act on behalf of society's vulnerable members whose voices are overpowered, excluded, or ignored. It is also essential that Christians who are engaged in public advocacy to stand in solidarity with those for whom they speak. For this reason, our Wesleyan foundation of face-to-face relationships is so important. When Christians stand in solidarity with vulnerable peoples they also create platforms for their silenced voices to be heard. Creating space for the voices of the vulnerable is a significant step toward society's transformation.

There exist a number of practical concerns that create barriers to engaging Dreamers in this Wesleyan approach. For Christians who understand the socio-cultural reality, who agree that Dreamers are in a vulnerable situation, and who believe it is their duty to respond in love to offer hospitality and advocacy, there still can be difficulties in actually putting this into practice. Perhaps this is why John Wesley focused on

visiting the sick when he taught about the universal duty of Christians to care for the vulnerable, as sick persons are an identifiable and accessible category to care for. Questions of where and how to find Dreamers in order to welcome them, or what to do in advocating can keep Christians from acting at all. While applying a Wesleyan approach to DACA-recipients does come with its challenges, there are many practical responses Christians and Christian communities can undertake.

First, to engage in intentional face-to-face relationships and offer hospitality, Christians can open up their churches and their gathering places to immigrant communities. By publicly promoting their church as welcoming to immigrants, they send a message that their community is a safe place. Further, Christians should cultivate a hospitable theology amongst their community, so that when Dreamers do come, they feel welcomed. Finally, Christians can make the effort to go to where the Dreamers are. Due to the current political situation, many Dreamers are engaged in political protests, rallies, public panels, and gatherings, to stand up for their rights and express their desire to be included as full members in the broader society. So, for Christians who do not already have relationships with Dreamers or know them personally, they can seek them out at an event and begin to offer support.

In addition to forming relationships that offer hospitality, Christians have a responsibility to engage the public sphere on behalf of the Dreamers. This can be approached in much the same way as offering hospitality. When a church makes a public statement of welcome and hospitality toward Dreamers, they express to the broader society their position on the subject. From this, churches can also allow their space to be utilized by Dreamers and those advocating for them. Churches may decide to offer their buildings as a sanctuary, if individual Dreamers are under threat of deportation since their status of lawful presence has been revoked. Christians can also engage the political process through writing letters or making phone calls to their political representatives. Finally, Christians can leave their church buildings and go and stand in solidarity with Dreamers as they make public demonstrations for their rights.

Conclusion

The repeal of the DACA program has placed the already vulnerable Dreamers at further risk, necessitating a response from people of faith. Based on the commitments of Wesleyan theology, I have constructed an

approach to this socio-cultural situation that calls Christians of a Wesleyan heritage to respond in love by extending hospitality to and engaging in public advocacy on behalf of Dreamers. Practically applying this approach is only a partial response to the larger issues of U.S. immigration policy and the factors causing global migration and the displacement of people worldwide. By focusing on Dreamers, my case is made more palatable and practical, as society is more receptive toward Dreamers than to the broader immigrant community and there is a limited scope of the expansion of United States' boundaries to include the immigrant population. However, Dreamers are members of families and support networks who have even more limited options in relationship to legal status. For Dreamers the reception of their immigrant parents, siblings, and neighbors impacts their own ability to thrive in society, as well. It is my hope that extending hospitality to and seeking the societal transformation on behalf of Dreamers is only the beginning of a comprehensive immigration reform that is imbued with values of justice and mercy. I believe that the theological heritage of Wesley continues to offer foundations for Christians today to respond to the injustices in society and to engage the public sphere as they hope for a world transformed by Christ's perfect love.

End Notes

¹ The term "Dreamers" originated with the DREAM Act, which failed to pass the legislative process but birthed the DACA-program. This term is commonly used to refer to the population of undocumented childhood arrivals and is inclusive of those persons who are or have been DACA-recipients and those eligible for DACA who may have been rejected from the program or not applied.

² For more information on this visit: <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-response-january-2018-preliminary-injunction>.

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Jonathan A. Powers

Ecclesia Semper Sanctificanda:
*Historic Models of Catechesis and the Cultivation of
Social Holiness*

Abstract:

This study aims to show how the maintenance of holy life and love *in* the church requires intentional and continual cultivation *by* the church. If the church is to be continually sanctified then it must intentionally invest in the sanctification of its members. The article examines three historic examples of catechesis in order to exhibit models whereby the church has taken seriously the task of forming disciples who display holiness of heart and life. This article looks at the *Didache* and *On the Apostolic Tradition*, as well as John Wesley's use of societies, class meetings, and band meetings to encourage sanctification within the catechesis process. Finally, this paper offers a few thoughts on the critical need for the implementation of similar catechetical models in the church today. This paper was originally presented at a Social Holiness Colloquium held from April 26-27, 2018 at Asbury Theological Seminary.

Keywords: sanctification, catechesis, John Wesley, *Didache*, *On the Apostolic Tradition*

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Introduction

In 1674, the minister Jodocus van Lodenstein coined the Latin phrase, "*ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*." For those not fluent in Latin, translated into English van Lodenstein's statement asserts, "the church reformed must continually be reformed."¹ Over the years, van Lodenstein's words have been interpreted a number of ways, mostly incorrectly; thus, it is helpful to note what van Lodenstein *did not* mean by the phrase in order to properly understand what he *did* intend. Van Lodenstein's purpose for calling the church to continual reformation was not to suggest that constant adaptations, adjustments, or improvements must be made to the church's doctrine, worship, or government. Matters of external reform, which he desired to maintain, had already been accomplished by Reformers in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Furthermore, van Lodenstein was not advocating for any kind of continuous social progress to ensue within the church. Instead, van Lodenstein's primary concern was for the internal component of religion, i.e. the heart. He wanted to ensure the church did not lose sight of the need for the constant reformation of individual's lives; thus, for the church reformed to continually be reformed, van Lodenstein believed the church must attend to the cultivation of human hearts and lives.²

It is van Lodenstein's notion of the church continually being reformed through the constant reformation of individual's lives that I wish to explore, only with a slight twist. Rather than claiming the church must continually be *reformed* through the cultivation of its members, I want to suggest that the church must continually be *sanctified* by cultivating social holiness; thus, I have entitled my study "*Ecclesia Semper Sanctificanda*," which translated into English means, "the church must be continually sanctified."³ The central claim of my study is that the maintenance of holy life and love *in* the church requires intentional and continual cultivation *by* the church. To put it another way, the church must be continually sanctified by intentionally investing in the sanctification of its members.

In my attempt to explore dynamics of the cultivation of social holiness within the ecclesial community, I have chosen to examine models of catechesis extant in the history of the church. Since a myriad of catechetical examples throughout the church's history could (and possibly should) be considered, for the sake of brevity, I have limited the current study to a look at three specific models, namely the *Didache*, Hippolytus of Rome's *On the Apostolic Tradition*, and John Wesley's societies, classes, and bands.

The reasons for my choosing these three models are twofold: 1) the models chosen depict the earliest demonstrations of catechesis in the church in general and in the Wesleyan tradition in particular; 2) held together, the three models reveal important principles of catechesis necessary for the lifelong cultivation of sanctification in both new and longstanding disciples.⁴ I begin my study with an examination of the *Didache* and *On the Apostolic Tradition*, commenting on the ancient church's devotion to the cultivation of holy life and love through a time of pre-baptismal catechesis. From there I turn to John Wesley's society/class/band model as an alternative catechesis, noting how Wesley's system was a practical outworking of his conviction that social holiness signifies growth in community. Finally, I conclude by offering remarks on the critical need for the implementation of similar catechetical models in the church today. Before moving into my examination of historic models of catechesis, however, it is beneficial to say a few words about the concept of social holiness in Wesleyan thought.

Social Holiness in Wesleyan Theology

One of the paramount features of the Wesleyan tradition is its doctrine of Christian perfection. John Wesley expresses his thoughts on sanctification in a letter penned in 1771 to a Mr. Walter Churchey:

Entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, is neither more nor less than pure love; love expelling sin, and governing both the heart and life of a child of God. The Refiner's fire purges out all that is contrary to love, and that many times by a pleasing smart. Leave all this to Him that does all things well, and that loves you better than you do yourself.⁵

For the Wesleys, Christian perfection, i.e. holiness, relates to the state of perfect, holy love, which is obtainable in this life for every believer through grace by the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. The work of Christ's death and resurrection makes it possible for the sinner to not only be saved by grace but also for him/her to be restored to the image of God and made perfect in holy love of God and neighbor. Simply put, the sanctifying grace of God at work in a Christian's life allows a person to both grow in and attain holy love of God and others.

It is important that the work of sanctification is kept in view of the larger activity of God's grace at work in the life of the Christian. The justifying grace of God in the new birth marks a dynamic change that takes

place in an individual's life, resulting in a distinct quality of life that one could not achieve on one's own, namely a life freed from the power of sin. It is in the moment of justification that the process of sanctification begins, ushering in growth in holiness of desire, action, intention, and love. While the process of sanctification is always ongoing, Wesley believed it is possible to achieve the state of Christian perfection (i.e. entire sanctification) in this life. It is at the point of Christian perfection that the Christian believer is fully delivered from the power of outward and inward sin and is made pure in heart, loving God with heart, soul, and mind and loving neighbor as one's self. The work of God in the Christian's heart brings cleansing of sin and the strength to overcome temptation to sin. Likewise, it empowers the believer for obedience and service to Christ's commands and gives him/her a pure, holy love for God and neighbor. Kenneth Collins gives a beautiful image of Christian perfection in his book *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*:

The creature, once steeped in sin, now reflects the goodness of the Creator in a remarkable way...Christian perfection, then, is another term for holy love. It is holy in that believers so marked by this grace are free from the impurities and the drag of sin. It is loving in that believers now love God as the goal of their being, and they love their neighbors as they should.⁶

Because Wesley describes perfection and holiness in terms of pure and perfect love, perfection and holiness must be understood in a social and relational way. In other words, there is a necessary social and relational feature to the ongoing process of sanctification. The primary principle underlying John Wesley's concept of "social holiness" is that holy love needs others for cultivation. There is no division between personal and social piety, which is why in his fourth discourse on the Sermon on the Mount Wesley condemns solitary religion, i.e. religion that exists "without living and conversing with other men."⁷ He writes, "Christianity is essentially a social religion; to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it. When I say, this is essentially a social religion, I mean not only that it cannot subsist so well, but that it cannot subsist at all, without society."⁸ Likewise, in his preface to the 1739 edition of *Sacred Hymns and Poems*, Wesley pens the following words:

“Holy Solitaries” is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than Holy Adulterers. The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness. Faith working by love, is the length and breadth and depth and height of Christian perfection. This commandment have we from Christ, that he who love God, love his brother also: And that we manifest our Love, by doing good to all men; especially to them that are of the household of faith. And in truth, whoever loveth his brethren not in word only, but as Christ loved him, cannot but be zealous of good works. He feels in his soul a burning, restless desire, of spending and being spent for them.⁹

In the preface, Wesley counters an individualized and privatized notion of the Christian faith by speaking to the necessity for Christian fellowship. He sets forth the idea that one cannot know holy love disconnected from other Christians in the church; instead, Christians need one another for the cultivation of holiness. It is only within Christian community that holiness of heart and life is realized and actualized. As Kevin Watson and Scott Kisker state, “...we need each other in order to experience the kind of life that Jesus intends for us to have...,” thus, “... [social holiness is] the context in which the pursuit of holiness [is] possible.”¹⁰

Models of Catechesis

Since Christian faith and life are not known, understood, and lived instantaneously as if by a magical act, the cultivation of holy life and love has always been a crucial component of Christian discipleship. In the earliest days of Christianity, the church developed a method of instruction and spiritual formation in preparation for baptism through a process known as the catechumenate. As the church spread across the Mediterranean and pagan adults began to convert to Christianity, Christian leaders faced the challenge of maintaining purity of the Christian faith in light of cultural diversity, social changes, and governmental pressures. Through the catechumenate, one was able to discover what it means to be a baptized Christian, i.e. one who is identified with Christ, who is part of Christ’s ecclesial body and kingdom, and who is expected to exhibit Christ-likeness in the world. Every individual who wished to join the church was expected to participate in the catechumenate. Though the structures and forms of the catechumenate varied in different times and locations in the

early centuries of the church, the purpose was always the same—formation into an unmistakable Christian way of life and love.

Didache

Sometime within the first few decades following Christ's life on earth, a composition emerged known as the *Didache*, also called the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. Claimed by a number of scholars to originally be a Jewish work used for the instruction of Gentile proselytes to Judaism, the *Didache* was adapted sometime in the first century as a distinct Christian catechesis, detailing ecclesial practices for the cultivation of holiness in those who wished to be part of the church.¹¹ The *Didache* is thus a significant historical document inasmuch as it allows the contemporary reader to peer into the content and customs of Christian discipleship at the close of the apostolic age.

The text of the *Didache* can be broken into four main sections, each focused on a major theme: 1) teachings on Christian ethics; 2) explanation of Christian rituals; 3) description of the ecclesial organization; 4) a concluding statement on the second coming of Christ. Though there is much to be gleaned from careful study of the entirety of the *Didache*, my comments here are brief. For the purposes of the current study, there are two aspects of the *Didache* I believe particularly exemplify the ancient church's devotion to the cultivation of sanctification of its members: first, the manner by which the instruction of the *Didache* promotes love for God and neighbor as the primary rule of Christian life; and second, the way the eschatological vision of Christ's church outlined in the document synthesizes ecclesial life and the pursuit of personal holiness.

As a composite of foundational Christian teachings used for the formation of those preparing for baptism and membership in the early church, the *Didache* consists of instruction derived directly from the words of Jesus Christ recorded in the synoptic Gospel accounts. It is therefore important to note that one significant component of catechesis in the early centuries of the church was Christian education on Christ's teachings and commands. The *Didache* begins by identifying the pathways and blockades of holy living. In particular, the first section of the *Didache* focuses on pathways of righteousness, i.e. aspects of Christian ethics and personal integrity essential to a life of holiness. It opens with the declaration, "There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between these two ways."¹² The document then proceeds to sets forth love

for God and neighbor as the primary rule of Christian life, referencing material from the Sermon on the Mount and pointing to Jesus and his teachings as the preeminent constitution of holy life and love.¹³

Another catechetical procedure seen in the *Didache* is a focus on Christian practices. The *Didache* continues its instruction noting how holiness is to be manifest in and through the church particularly as its members “deny themselves for the sake of God and humanity” and learn to be “sacrificially altruistic.”¹⁴ An essential social aspect of holiness is thus seen in the *Didache* as the document names ecclesial practices such as tithing, fasting, Christian fellowship, charity, confession, and hospitality as means of cultivating holy living.¹⁵ (Interestingly, this list is not too unlike what Wesley names as means of grace.) There are a couple of noteworthy observations to make at this point. First, as opposed to individualistic approaches to spiritual discipline, the *Didache* encourages spiritual practices to take place within, or at least along with the Christian community. Secondly, the *Didache* is clear that it is not the practices themselves that make one holy, but rather it is obedience to Christ that cultivates the fruit of holy life and holy love. In its description of each of the ecclesial practices previously named, the *Didache* provides both a generalized statement about the practice to be done and an explanation for the practice based on Jesus’ life and teachings, namely Christ’s command to love one another as he has loved. For instance, when the document advises readers to give all their first fruits to the prophets or to the poor, it claims this is to be done “in accordance with [Christ’s] commandment.”¹⁶ Likewise, the *Didache* states that believers ought to gather together for fellowship and perform acts of charity, “just as you find in the Gospel of our Lord,”¹⁷ and to show hospitality and to welcome everyone, “in accordance with the rule of the gospel.”¹⁸ It is important to note, then, that though the *Didache* encourages a number of worthwhile spiritual practices, holiness is based in a person’s reflection of Gospel-Life and Gospel-Love.

The *Didache* promotes not only a set of practices that are to be done within or alongside the ecclesial community, it also addresses the cultivation of a distinct Christian ethos, especially one that preserves Christian purity in the midst of a pagan society. For example, the third chapter of the *Didache* urges the catechumen toward a pure life and encourages him/her to “flee from evil of every kind, and from everything resembling it.”¹⁹ The document cautions, “See that no one leads you astray from this way of the teaching, for such a person teaches you without regard

for God. For if you are able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect."²⁰ Accordingly, the *Didache* details moral expectations for Christian life, such as urging the person to not be "jealous, nor quarrelsome, nor of hot temper; for out of all these murders are engendered."²¹ A number of the ethical principles outlined in the *Didache* are taken straight from the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount; however, a number of others address cultural vices, encouraging a Christian ethos that stands in stark contrast to specific social norms. For example, chapter three of the document considers how Christians are to maintain a life of chastity amidst a culture of rampant sexual promiscuity. It states, "My child, be not a lustful one; for lust leads the way to fornication; neither a filthy talker, nor of lofty eye; for out of all these adulteries are engendered."²² Chapter five directly addresses practices and dispositions that are antithetical to the Christian life. It states:

[The] way of death is this: first of all, it is evil and completely cursed; murders, adulteries, lusts, fornications, thefts, idolatries, magic arts, sorceries, robberies, false testimonies, hypocrisy, duplicity, deceit, arrogance, malice, stubbornness, greed, foul speech, jealousy, audacity, pride, boastfulness. It is the way of prosecutors of good people, of those hating truth, loving a lie, not knowing the reward of righteousness, not adhering to what is good or to righteous judgment, being on the alert not for what is good but for what is evil, from whom gentleness and patience are far away, loving worthless things, pursuing reward, having no mercy for the poor, not working on behalf of the oppressed, not knowing him who made them, murderers of children, corrupters of God's creation, turning away from someone in need, oppressing the afflicted, advocates of the wealthy, lawless judges of the poor, utterly sinful.²³

The *Didache* includes many similar pointed instructions on ethical behavior since such guidance is necessary for the catechumen to grow in true Christian faith and character. It is expected of every catechumen to exhibit Christian character based in unmistakable Christ-like behavior and love; thus, since holy love for God and others is the core principle that underpins and permeates sanctified life in the ecclesial community, sanctified ways of life in the world need cultivation.

Another interesting quality of the *Didache* is the way it synthesizes ecclesial life with the pursuit of personal holiness. To appreciate this synthesis, it is crucial to understand the eschatological mindset of the early

Christian Church. There existed in the early centuries of the church what Martin Werner calls an “eschatological sense of imminence.”²⁴ Werner’s claim alludes to the notion in early Christianity that Jesus would return to earth to establish his kingdom within their own lifetime. It was therefore essential to the early church that its members maintain a holy life until Christ’s second coming so he would return to find a pure bride. The eschatological outlook is prevalent in the prayer of thanksgiving prescribed in the *Didache* to be said proceeding the weekly Eucharist meal: “Remember, Lord, Your Church, to deliver it from all evil and to make it perfect in Your love, and gather it from the four winds, sanctified for Your kingdom which You have prepared for it.” Of significance is the way the prayer details the ongoing character of the church in light of the eschatological vision. The church is called to be “sanctified” for life in God’s Kingdom. The prayer thus not only points to an eschatological reality but also solidifies the ecclesial and personal intention of the *Didache*: sanctification. Since the eschatological vision of the early church was that Christ’s return would be imminent, the church felt a deep-seated need to be about the continual work of sanctifying itself. Correspondingly, chapter four of the document gives the instruction, “In church you shall confess your transgressions,”²⁵ and chapter fifteen admonishes the ecclesial community to “correct one another, not in anger but in peace.”²⁶ Moreover, the final chapter of the *Didache* commands the church to “Gather together frequently, seeking the things that benefit your souls, for all the time you have believed will be of no use to you if you are not found perfect in the last time.”²⁷ The church therefore dedicated itself to the maintenance of holy life and love in order to be found blameless at the return of Christ.

As a final note, it should be acknowledged that the *Didache* is itself an example of how the eschatological vision of the early church synthesized ecclesial life and the pursuit of personal holiness. Accepting the *Didache* as a model of early church catechesis, we are given a glimpse of how the church gave intentional investment to the cultivation of holiness in its members. Contemporary Christian sociologist John S. Knox reflects: “What can be surmised (and with a fair amount of confidence) is that *The Didache* aided a great number of people in the early church (and perhaps even today) to focus, through liturgy and moral practice, on what it means to be a Christian. Faith was not just a feeling of spirituality; it required a great deal of effort and respect in its expression within the church and in the world.”²⁸

In general, catechesis is indicative of the principle that for new disciples to be made, current disciples must invest and participate in the disciple-making process. The catechumenate is thus a reciprocal relationship whereby catechesis is equally formative for the whole community of faith when proper investment is made. The *Didache* stands as an example of how intentional teaching and worship allows the church to commit itself to the sanctification process, entering into spiritual practices for the persistence of holy life and love.

On the Apostolic Tradition

The second ancient model of catechesis examined in my study is *On the Apostolic Tradition*, written by Hippolytus of Rome around 217 A.D. Indicative of practices already established in the church by the early third century, Hippolytus compiled *On the Apostolic Tradition* as a manual for church leaders.²⁹ The handbook provides a detailed account of ecclesial rites and procedures including thorough instruction on how to conduct the catechumenate. Chapters 15 through 21 of the *Apostolic Tradition* specifically focus on the proceedings of the catechumenate, stipulating a method for the church to invest in the discipleship of catechumens in preparation for baptism. Undoubtedly, Hippolytus's instructions make it clear that the goal of the catechumenate is to help people come to faith in Jesus Christ and learn to live holy lives; thus, Hippolytus displays fervent concern that catechumens' motives for membership in the church are pure and that they are committed to sanctification.

Hippolytus begins his instruction on the catechumenate with an explanation of how to handle neophytes, i.e. those who are beginning to inquire about the Christian faith. He writes:

Those who come to hear the word for the first time should first be brought to the teachers in the house, before the people come in. And they should enquire concerning the reason why they have turned to the faith. And those who brought them shall bear witness whether they have the ability to hear the word.³⁰

To be part of the catechumenate, according to Hippolytus, a person had to submit to an initial vetting by the church. Unquestionably, the church had high expectations for the catechumen, ensuring the person was serious about and committed to the Christian faith. Not only did the individual need a sponsor who would vouch for them and their suitability for the

catechumenate, but he/she also had to enter into discernment with and vetting by the church. This discernment and vetting process was a means of evaluating the motivation underlying a person's desire to become a Christian and his/her commitment to sanctification. Accordingly, Hippolytus continues his instruction by detailing a long series of questions that examine the lifestyle of the neophyte. William Harmless gives a good summary of the questions:

Did these new inquirers have a mistress? Were they slaves trying to please a master? Were they charioteers, gladiators, sculptors of idols, actors, brothel-keepers, theater producers, city magistrates – in other words, anyone connected with the pervasive apparatus of paganism, its idolatry, its violence, its impurity?³¹

The purpose for such intense examination was to reveal any characteristic in the person's life that stood in contrast to Christ-likeness. As any unholy behaviors became manifest through the interrogation, Hippolytus' command is that the person must "cease or be rejected" from the catechumenate.³² Hippolytus understood that to be a Christian is to no longer identify with the life of sin but instead to be distinguished by new life in Christ; thus, repentance of sin is a necessary antecedent to holiness. It was therefore expected of the neophyte to make a firm commitment to re-orientation of life and behavior if he/she was to enter the church. Repentance and willingness for change was not something that would eventually occur in the course of catechesis; instead, a commitment to the sanctifying process needed to be a present resolve within the catechumen at all times.³³ It was the role of the church, therefore, to discern and purge any impure motives, behaviors, and people.

It is undeniable that *On the Apostolic Tradition* elucidates the high standard the ancient church had for its adherents to demonstrate a distinct Christian way of life and love. There was notable expectation for those in the church to exemplify holiness. To reiterate what I have already stated, such holiness does not come naturally, it must be cultivated. The standards outlined for the catechumenate in the *Apostolic Tradition* are therefore quite strict precisely because the church believed commitment to Christ-like life and love demanded steadfast cultivation. Catechesis was the process of the Christian beginning to understand him/her self in identity with Christ and in new relationship with the world. Such re-orientation took time. This is why after a catechumen passed the initial interview and vetting

Hippolytus instructs, "Catechumens should hear the word for three years."

³⁴ In preparation for re-birth in baptism, the catechumenate served as a time of intentional instruction and formation, inciting knowledge of and strengthening commitment to the Christian life. The catechumenate was more than an educational process, however; the final goal of catechesis was the cultivation of holy Christian life. To finish the above quote regarding the length of catechesis, Hippolytus writes, "Catechumens should hear the word for three years. But if a man is keen and preserves well in the matter, the length of time should not be considered but his manner alone should be considered."³⁵ Certainly, instruction is a key part of the catechetical process as the standard time outlined for learning the content of the faith was three years; nevertheless, Hippolytus points to the fact that it is ultimately the life that the individual exhibits that is the true proof of conversion. In other words, the goal of the catechumenate was the cultivation of holy life and love. During the entire period of their catechetical instruction, therefore, catechumens were carefully examined and scrutinized concerning their moral life, particularly at the point they became candidates for baptism.³⁶ Regarding the catechumen's preparation for baptism, Hippolytus dictates:

From the time at which [the catechumens] are set apart, place hands upon them daily so that they are exorcised. When the day approaches on which they are to be baptized, let the bishop exorcise each one of them, so that he will be certain whether each has been purified. If there are any who are not purified, they shall be set apart. They have not heard the Word in faith, for the foreign spirit remained with...them.

Though there is some debate over Hippolytus' meaning of the word "exorcism" here, it is generally agreed upon that his central focus concerns the purging of evil from the catechumen, especially evil desire from the heart. In preparation for baptism, the ancient church believed such an intense time of exorcism was necessary because there is no place for evil desire within the heart of the Christian. Evil desires lead to sinful behaviors, whereas true faith produces holy desire, which results in righteous action. Subsequently, once the three-year probation time concluded and catechumens were deemed ready for baptism, Hippolytus prescribes yet one further interrogation: "Have they honored the widows? Have they visited the sick? Have they done every good work?" Although Hippolytus and the early church certainly valued doctrinal knowledge and theological

proficiency, the true proof of conversion was seen in a lived-out faith displayed through charitable practices. Moreover, holy life and love were expected to persist after baptism; thus, Hippolytus instructs the newly baptized Christian to “hasten to do good works and to please God.”³⁷

On the Apostolic Tradition depicts the cultivation of social holiness by highlighting the church’s intentional investment in catechumens in order to form them in the faith they confess. Since the purpose of catechesis is to make holy disciples of Jesus Christ, for such discipleship to take place, earnest commitment to change must be evident. Sanctification is not a passive process and catechesis should not be lackadaisical. *On the Apostolic Tradition* therefore serves as a good reminder that complete re-orientation of life, behavior, and love takes persistent devotion of catechumens and catechists alike.

Early Methodism

At this point, I have exclusively addressed pre-baptismal models of catechesis in the ancient church. Turning attention now to the early Methodist movement, I wish to examine Wesley’s discipleship structure of societies, classes, and bands as an alternative model of catechesis. It is my belief that the values undergirding Wesley’s society/class/band system contain principles similar to ancient approaches to catechesis – John Wesley simply (and suitably) developed a model for his own socio-historic context.³⁸

One of John Wesley’s most enduring legacies is his emphasis on small group formation. In fact, it has been claimed that Wesley’s insistence on small groups was an essential component to the growth of the eighteenth-century British revivals.³⁹ In the early years of his ministry in England, John Wesley came to the stark realization that holiness of heart and life did not characterize the “Christians” he met day-to-day. Furthermore, Wesley began to discover that very few of his fellow Christians in the Church of England had a proper understanding of scripture, theology, and doctrine. Convinced something needed to be done to spark renewal within the Church of England, John Wesley established a system of small groups as a framework to help people grow in holiness of heart and life.

First, Wesley arranged societies, which were structured as a gathering of people from a particular region or parish who met periodically for Bible study, prayer, mutual encouragement, and preaching. Usually the gatherings were held during the week in order for members to attend services

in their local parish churches. In societies, leaders taught key Methodist doctrines as one of the aims of the gathering was to present scriptural truth in a clear and compelling manner. Within the Methodist societies, smaller groups called bands and classes met. Every member of a society was also a member of a class meeting and/or band meeting. Classes provided an entry-level experience of social holiness for the early Methodists and were mixed regarding age, spiritual maturity, gender, marital status, and social standing.⁴⁰ The primary focus of the class meeting centered on behavioral change through examination of the status of one's soul and his/her life with God. Growth in perfect love was the ultimate goal. Band meetings, however, were for those who desired to grow in love, holiness, and purity of intention. The bands consisted of 4 to 6 members of the same sex and social status. In the band meeting, members "sought to improve their attitudes, emotions, feelings, intentions, and affections."⁴¹ Bands committed to the regular confession of sin in order to grow in holiness of heart and life. Members were accountable to one another regarding life and sin, they prayed for one other, and encouraged one another toward love, good works, and holy living. Kevin Watson claims that the band meeting "was the engine of holiness in early Methodism."⁴² Wesley realized that essential to sanctification was the grace of God and the care of others. The band meeting thus provided an ideal environment for people to grow in social holiness.

John Wesley firmly believed in the sanctifying work of God, therefore he desired to see dedication to an altered life in those who wished to be part of the Methodist movement. Echoing Hippolytus, Wesley writes in his "Plain Account of the Methodist Societies": "There is only one condition previously required in those who desire admission into this Society, a desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins."⁴³ Society members were thus expected to show dedication to repentance of sin and commitment to holiness. If one truly desired to "flee from the wrath to come," Wesley believed it would be exhibited through a re-orientation of life. Wesley writes, "...wherever this desire is fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation."⁴⁴ Specifically, Wesley believed the fruit of the desire for salvation was made manifest through what he called the "General Rules," i.e. do no harm, do good, and attend upon the ordinances of God.⁴⁵ In other words, growth in sanctification produced fruit of holy love.

Every Methodist was expected to keep the three general rules. Once a person was accepted as a member of a Methodist society, he/she was placed in a class in order to submit to the continual examination of life and confirm his/her commitment to growth in holiness. Every quarter, all members of Methodist societies who showcased proper Christian living were issued a ticket allowing them entry into the society meeting. Accountability in the smaller band and class meetings became the means of discerning proper from improper persons. Wesley reflects:

In a while some of these informed me they found such and such an one did not live as he ought... I called together all the *Leaders* of the *Classes*...and desired that each would make particular inquiry into the behavior of those whom he saw weekly. They did so. Many disorderly walkers were detected. Some turned from the evil of their ways. Some were put away from us.⁴⁶

Undeniably, John Wesley sought to make disciples in the way of life that holy love demands. Though he believed it was not necessary for a Christian to sin, he recognized that Christians often did sin after coming to the faith. His concern was that unconfessed and unrepentant sin would fester and devolve into more devastating sin. For this reason, if someone was unwilling to submit to the examination of life in a class or band meeting, or if his/her life did not reflect growth in holiness, the person was removed from the Methodist society.

Because such earnest commitment to holiness requires constant examination and cultivation, Wesley set leaders in place to foster growth in class meetings. The class leader was a crucial position in the early Methodist movement as he/she had the role of being the spiritual leader of the people in the class. The leader kept track of attendance and visited anyone who missed the weekly gathering. Additionally, the class leader fostered discussion, modeled vulnerability, and provided encouragement and support to those in the group as it was needed. In essence, the class leader cultivated growth in social holiness. Kevin Watson reflects on the nature of the class meetings:

The phrase that best captures what the Methodists believed was so important about the class meeting was “watching over one another in love.” Early Methodists were asked to invite others into their lives and to be willing to enter deeply into the lives of other people so that together they would grow in grace. They were

committed to the idea that the Christian life is a journey of growth in grace, or sanctification. And they believed that they needed one another in order to persevere on this journey.⁴⁷

Wesley was convinced the class and band meetings were “the sinews” that held together the Methodist societies.⁴⁸ As Lester Ruth once quipped, “In early Methodism, faithfulness to Christ was judged by the smallest gatherings rather than the largest.”⁴⁹ For Wesley, the band and class model was so important for growth in holy life and love that he believed their decline in practice would result in the diminishment of Methodism itself. In his “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” Wesley urges, “Never omit meeting your class or band...These are the very sinews of our society; and whatever weakens, or tends to weaken, our regard for these, or our exactness in attending them, strikes at the very root of our community.”⁵⁰

The early Methodist small group structure is exemplary of the cultivation of social holiness through continual and intentional investment in discipleship. As I stated earlier, for new disciples to be made, current disciples must invest and participate in the disciple-making process. Disciples making disciples who encouraged one another toward scriptural holiness was expected in the early Methodist societies, classes, and bands. The devotion of the early Methodists to one another in these groups established reciprocal relationships in the cultivation of social holiness. For example, John Wesley made extensive use of lay preachers who were wholly devoted to the work of preaching and visitation. These lay pastors met weekly in Class and Band meetings, confessing sin and urging one another toward growth in holiness. The same lay pastors dedicated themselves to visiting their parishioners, caring for the poor, and leading society meetings. Consequentially, society members (both men and women) became leaders of schools, ran orphanages, visited the sick, and evangelized in local poorhouses. Simply put, through mutual care for one other, holy life and love begat holy life and love.

Conclusion

Throughout my study, it has been my aim to show how the maintenance of holy life and love *in* the church requires intentional and continual cultivation *by* the church. If the church is to be continually sanctified then it must intentionally invest in the sanctification of its

members. I have therefore examined three historic examples of catechesis in my presentation in order to exhibit models whereby the church has taken seriously the task of forming disciples who display holiness of heart and life. In conclusion, I want to offer a few thoughts on the critical need for the implementation of similar catechetical models in the church today.

Located in an ever-evolving and quickly progressing culture, the church of the twenty-first century faces a number of challenges that can easily tempt it to compromise its integrity. One of the most pressing of these challenges in the American church is the transition to a secular age. As Charles Taylor argues, Christianity has not only been displaced as the default belief system in the Western world, it has also been belligerently disputed by a variety of alternatives.⁵¹ Taylor notes that Christianity is merely *an option*, and for many a questionable one. Even the church itself has trouble agreeing on how to address prominent cultural matters such as sex, marriage, gender, immigration, race, etc. Given realities such as the fragmentation of culture, the polarization of politics, and the fracturing of denominations, it is unsurprising that the world has ceased to see the church as a sanctified and sanctifying body.

Undoubtedly, catechesis is needed in the church today. The time is ripe for both church leaders and laity to get serious about the work of the lifelong cultivation of holiness. But in a secular age, what should catechesis look like? In a general sense, I believe it should look like it always has, namely the intentional formation of belief and behavior oriented in Christ-like life and love. Since there are a number of methods, models, and approaches that might be employed to accomplish such a goal, I am wary of dictating a specific rubric of catechesis as the single golden standard. Instead, as I conclude, I want to highlight six principles I believe are necessary for the lifelong cultivation of sanctification through catechesis. Whether focused on new converts or longstanding disciples, the following principles are relevant to any concentration on discipleship in the church.

1. Commit to repentance

First, one of the primary goals of catechesis should be repentance. Since the goal of catechesis is a transformed life sanctified by the grace of God, such conversion cannot occur without repentance. A common mantra in today's culture is that each person is sufficient "just the way they are," but this could not be further from the truth of the Gospel. Though each person certainly has inherent value, no one is sufficient within his/her own self because everyone is born into the sinful nature. The sin present in our

lives blocks our relationship with God, harms us, and harms others;⁵² thus, we need the grace of God, the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit at work in us to completely reorient us in holy life and love. Approaches to catechesis should therefore expect and assert commitment to total transformation of heart and life.

2. *Address sin*

Secondly and similarly, catechesis should include a focus on sin. Because we are all born into the sinful nature and sin separates us from God and from one another, sanctification requires the eradication of sin, including both wrongful actions and evil desires. Catechesis should then help us acknowledge our sin, teach us to confess our sin, and encourage us toward change. Furthermore, the natural result of an accent on sin is a better understanding of forgiveness and grace. Not only do we encounter the great love of God as we wrestle with sin, but we also experience the tender care of the Christian community. Consequentially, the acknowledgment and confession of sin helps the church learn to grow as a community of love and forgiveness.

3. *Emphasize deliverance*

Third, accompanying attention to the eradication of sin is the need for emphasis on healing and deliverance. Specifically, catechesis should emphasize deliverance through the intentional purgation of evil in the heart, mind, and life of the disciple. *On the Apostolic Tradition* details how the purgation of sin and evil was a crucial phase of the pre-baptismal process in the ancient church. The practice offers today's church a reminder that the atoning work of Christ attended by the Holy Spirit in an individual's life brings not only freedom from the guilt of sin but also freedom for holy life and love. Exorcism of evil results in purity of desire in the heart of the disciple while bringing healing and wholeness to the life of the disciple. Catechesis must therefore emphasize deliverance from spiritual forces of evil and wickedness and freedom for holiness.

4. *Impart a Christian ethos*

Fourth, catechesis should impart a distinct Christian ethos, especially one that preserves Christian purity of behavior and love in the midst of a secular society. Of course, an ethos is not something meant to be merely known and accepted but is a moral principle expected to be lived; thus, a focus on Christian behavior is necessary, especially concerning how Christian life stands in distinct contrast to secular life in the world. For disciples old and new to maintain a Christian ethos in the midst

of immense secularism, the constant examination of life is needed. As the *Didache* notes, gathering together frequently and correcting one another in peace are primary ingredients of growth in Christian perfection through social holiness.⁵³ Proper models of catechesis must then work toward instilling a distinct Christian ethos in disciples through mutual admonition of obedience to Christ-like ways of life and love.

5. *Incorporate practices of communal discipline*

Fifth, models of catechesis should incorporate practices of communal discipline. One foundational facet of communal discipline is learning the content of the faith with one another. It is important for disciples both old and new to commit to growth in knowledge of scripture and belief of the Triune God. Another feature of communal discipline is mutual commitment and adherence to Christian practices, i.e. communal means of grace. A striking component of the previously examined historic models of catechesis was how the whole church committed itself to the sanctification process by joining together in spiritual practices. It was important for the church to enter together into discipline for the persistence of holy life and love. The accounts demonstrate how the church of the past understood that growth in holiness of heart and life occurs in community. In more recent years the church has increasingly emphasized individualistic approaches to practices of spiritual discipline; however, practices such as prayer, fasting, and almsgiving serve as formative disciplines that bind the community together in the pursuit of life with God and each other. It is important then for the contemporary church to consider how such practices can be incorporated in a more ecclesial manner today.

6. *Cultivate devotion to one another*

Finally, since the underlying concept of social holiness is that growth in perfect love requires others, catechesis should seek to foster Christian devotion to one another. Through catechesis, we should learn how to continually “watch over one another in love.” In many ways, this final point is the buttress for the other three principles. One cannot know holy love disconnected from other Christians. It is only by the work and grace of God within Christian community that holiness of heart and life is realized and actualized. To reiterate once again, the maintenance of holy life and love *in* the church requires deliberate and persistent cultivation *by* the church. Simply put, whether new or longtime disciples, we must invest in each other’s growth in holiness. Sanctification is not passive and catechesis should not be lackadaisical. If the world is to behold a sanctified

church, continual and intentional dedication to sanctification must be given to its members.

End Notes

¹ W. Robert Godfrey, "Semper Reformanda in its Historical Context," *Tabletalk Magazine*, November 1, 2014, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/semper-reformanda-its-historical-context/>.

² *Ibid.*

³ In 1947, the Swiss Reformed theologian Karl Barth adapted van Lodenstein's axiom in order to popularize an ecclesiological conviction extant among a number of theologians regarding the need for the church to continually re-examine itself in order to maintain purity of doctrine and practice. A move away from a focus on religion of the heart, Barth's paraphrase declares, "*ecclesia semper reformanda*," which translated into English means, "the church must continually be reformed." My phrasing is a further adaptation of Barth's.

⁴ Additionally, I have chosen to extrapolate on the *Didache* and Hippolytus' *On the Apostolic Tradition* because they are the most prominent sources that outline catechetical instruction from the first two centuries of the church.

⁵ Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 12:432.

⁶ Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 302-303.

⁷ Jackson, *The Works of John Wesley*, 5:296.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ John Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (repr., London: William Strahan, 1739), viii-ix.

¹⁰ Kevin M. Watson and Scott T. Kisker, *The Band Meeting: Rediscovering Relational Discipleship in Transformational Community* (Franklin: Seedbed, 2017), 13.

¹¹ The exact dating of the *Didache* is unknown, as is the location from where it originated. Scholars such as William A. Jurgens believe it was first developed and used in Syria by Christians around 140 A.D. See "Didache," in *Faith of the Early Fathers*, ed. William A. Jurgens (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1970), 1. Jewish affinities agree on an earlier date, noting its development around 50-70 A.D. See Aaron Milavec, *The Didache: Faith, Hope, and Life of the Earliest Christian Communities, 50-70 C.E.* (New York, NY: Newman Press, 2003), 12-45. In general, the dating and purpose of the *Didache* is a topic of much controversy. See Jonathan A. Draper, *The Didache in Modern Research* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 212-22;

Hubb van de Sandt and David Flusser, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and Its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 273-291.

¹² J.B Lightfoot and J.R. Harmer eds., "The Didache or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," in *The Apostolic Fathers* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 251. Note: Translated into English, *Didache* means "the two ways."

¹³ The teachings at the beginning of the *Didache* are based on a summary of Jesus' response to the Pharisee in Mathew, i.e.: And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets." (Matt 22:37-40 NASB)

¹⁴ John S. Knox, "The Didache: A Moral and Liturgical Document of Instruction," *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, May 25, 2016, <https://www.ancient.eu/article/904/>.

¹⁵ See Lightfoot & Harmer, "Didache," 250 - 267.

¹⁶ Lightfoot & J.R. Harmer, "Didache," 267.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 263.

¹⁹ Ibid., 253.

²⁰ Ibid., 257.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Martin Werner, *The Formation of Christian Dogma: An Historical Study of its Problem* (A & C: New York, 1957), 22.

²⁵ Lightfoot & J.R. Harmer, "Didache," 257.

²⁶ Ibid., 267.

²⁷ Ibid., 269.

²⁸ Knox, "The Didache: A Moral and Liturgical Document of Instruction."

²⁹ There is dispute whether *On the Apostolic Tradition* is descrip-

tive of actual practices of the early third century or if it is Hippolytus' prescribed preference for how the church should conduct practices. Another disputed question is how much of the work was actually written by Hippolytus. See Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson, and L. Edward Phillips, *Apostolic Tradition: Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Mineapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 2-5.

³⁰ Hippolytus, *On the Apostolic Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 97-98.

³¹ William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 41.

³² Hippolytus, *Apostolic*, 100.

³³ Harmless, *Catechumenate*, 41.

³⁴ Hippolytus, *Apostolic*, 103.

³⁵ Hippolytus, *Apostolic*, 103.

³⁶ James White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 46.

³⁷ Hippolytus, *Apostolic*, 113.

³⁸ Since paedobaptism was the normative practice in the Church of England in John Wesley's day, one would be hard-pressed to find many people living in England who were not baptized as infants, pre-baptismal catechesis was not practiced.

³⁹ Kevin M. Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience* (Franklin: Seedbed, 2014), 20.

⁴⁰ Watson and Kisker, *The Band Meeting*, 14.

⁴¹ Mark A. Maddix, "John Wesley's Small Groups: Models of Christian Community," *Holiness Today*, November/December 2009, <http://www.holinesstoday.org/john-wesley-small-groups-christian-community>.

⁴² Watson and Kisker, *The Band Meeting*, 86.

⁴³ John Wesley, "A Plain Account of the People called Methodist in a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Perronet, Vicar of Shoreham in Kent," vol. 9 of *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Rupert E. Davies (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 257.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 260-261.

⁴⁷ Watson, *Class Meeting*, 26.

⁴⁸ John Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," in *Works*, Jackson, 11:433.

⁴⁹ Lester Ruth (Research Professor of Christian Worship at Duke Divinity School) in discussion with the author, March 2009.

⁵⁰ Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," 11:433.

⁵¹ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 20.

⁵² Watson and Kisker, *The Band Meeting*, 44.

⁵³ Lightfoot & J.R. Harmer, "Didache," 257, 267.

Edward T. Wright

*Thus Sayeth the Matthean Lord:
Exploring the Intersection of the Quest for the
Historical Jesus and the Proclamation of the
Biblical Jesus*

Abstract:

The themes of Biblical Studies and mission meet in a significant way at the intersection of the quest for the historical Jesus (an aspect of biblical studies) and the proclamation of the biblical Jesus (an aspect of the mission of the Church). This intersection undoubtedly occurs in the context we currently find ourselves, the evangelical seminary setting. This paper explores a passage, Matthew 4:1–11, that has both significant theological content but also some rather difficult historical issues. When confronted with this type of problem, is it possible to navigate the passage in such a way that the historical Jesus and the theological Christ remain recognizable to one another? How can we best teach this passage, and others like it, to our students who will subsequently be preaching it in their own churches? The hope is that the conclusions set forth in this paper will provide a way forward, but also open up a discussion that will yield even more acute directives for those forced to handle this issue in the future. This paper was presented at the Asbury Advanced Research Program Interdisciplinary Colloquium for 2017 on Biblical Studies and the Mission of the Church.

Keywords: historical Jesus, theological Christ, temptation narrative, biblical studies, Christology

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Introduction

In the process of doing research for this project I came across an interesting essay by James Carleton Paget titled, “The Religious Authority of Albert Schweitzer’s Jesus.”¹ In it he portrays a Schweitzer who appears to have quite divergent approaches when it comes to how he understands and relates to the figure of Jesus. Schweitzer understood Jesus to be a man, nothing more, void of the divine status so often attributed him in the Gospels; Jesus’s “thoroughgoing eschatology” was ill-conceived and ultimately wrong; and Schweitzer even thought that Jesus’s existence was not of central importance to the Christian faith. He writes, “Modern Christianity must always reckon with the possibility of having to abandon the historical figure of Jesus. Hence it must not artificially increase his importance by referring all theological knowledge to him and developing a christocentric religion: the Lord may always be a mere element in religion, but should never be considered its foundation.”² Yet, in spite of this, Schweitzer relates to Jesus in a seemingly entirely different fashion. It is no secret the length of time he spent serving those in need through medical missions under the direction of the Paris Missionary Society. In 1905, very near to the time he published *Von Remairus zu Wrede*, he writes this to the then director of the Society prior to embarking on the mission, “I have become ever simpler, more and more a child and I have begun to realize increasingly clearly that the only truth and the only happiness lie in serving Jesus Christ there where he needs us.”³ Additionally, in correspondence with his wife around that same time, he writes the following upon spending some time gazing at what is known as the Christ-Medal, “I look at this so often, this medal ... It is remarkable to look at a man and to know that one is his slave.”⁴

Schweitzer, in my opinion, is an outlier. This may be an obvious statement given his two PhDs and his MD, published works in philosophy, music composition, and theology, the fact that he started and maintained a hospital in Africa, and won the Nobel Peace Prize. But, those are not the things I have in mind when I say “outlier” in this specific context. What I mean here is that, as a historian he felt it is his duty to reduce, if not remove altogether, much of what he assumed to be theological overlay that had come to encase the historical Jesus, but as a Christ-follower, no matter how liberal his leanings, he felt the need to serve that same reductionist version of Jesus with an obedience that rivals, if not surpasses, many in the pews of our more “conservative” churches. This, in my opinion, is not the norm. I venture to say that those without the philosophical aptitude of a

Schweitzer are not necessarily capable of crafting a worldview that features a Christianity in which Jesus has such little historical representation and value, yet simultaneously places him on a pedestal as one to emulate and serve. The reality is that, for the average person in the pew, the portrait of Jesus that the individual has created, or at least had created for them, and the extent to which that portrait reflects what they consider to be historical reality is often directly related to the authoritative place Jesus holds in that person's life.

Is authority really dependent upon historicity? Are the two actually intertwined in the minds of those who attend the churches and the seminaries that we are collectively leading? The answer to both of these questions, at least on some level, is yes. I recognize that this partly an assumption, but the assumption is based on personal experience. Throughout my academic journey, specifically over the past few years in the course of pursuing my Ph.D., I have had times where portions of the biblical Jesus were discarded because I was unsure of the historical veracity of a given text. To borrow a phrase from Schweitzer, some of Jesus's greatest sayings were left "lying in a corner like explosive shells from which the charges [had] been removed."⁵ The result was an impotent Jesus with little force behind some of his most discomfiting ethical imperatives or intended mind-altering teachings. In a purely academic environment maybe this is of little consequence, but this is not the context in which I find myself currently or will most likely find myself after graduation. To be perfectly honest, it matters to me whether or not Jesus said this or did that. It has implications for how I live my life both personally and professionally. I have yet to craft, nor do I care to craft, a philosophical system where Jesus remains an inspirational and authoritative figure in my life if the extant witnesses to him are shown to be of little historical value, especially to the extent which Schweitzer deemed them. I venture to say that some of you feel the same way. This is why I believe that those of us teaching and/or aspiring to teach in an evangelical seminary setting should look closely at and try to understand the connection between the historical Jesus and the theological Christ. We sit in a very unique and somewhat difficult position when it comes to exploring/understanding this connection. Faculty at an institution like ours are often involved in the proclamation of Jesus just as much as they are in the instruction or teaching of the historical figure. They can be found preaching Jesus on Sunday and teaching Jesus on Monday to students who then, subsequently, preach Jesus

on Sunday. There is a constant interaction between the lectern and the pulpit and our understanding of that interaction affects not only us, but the students we are responsible for.

The questions that I wish to address in the pages that follow are these: How do you have a foot in both camps, i.e., as one who works as a historian and contributes to the discussion on the historical Jesus *and* one who faithfully proclaims the whole Bible for the whole world and teaches others to do the same? how do you do it with intellectual honesty and integrity all while maintaining an appropriate level of congruency between the two? What are some best practices? There are issues that arise when doing both simultaneously that seem irreconcilable, can you handle these in such a way that the historical Jesus and theological Christ still remain recognizable to one another? In an effort to better illustrate my point I have decided to walk you through a test-case. In the pages that follow we will explore the “The Temptation of Jesus” in its various forms with an eye towards the version in Matthew 4:1-11. We will look at the passage from a variety of angles, but primarily our interest will be in assessing the historical reliability of the text. The reason for choosing this passage is because it has some obvious historical issues, but, it also has had a profound impact on my spiritual life. This will become clearer in the pages that follow.

The Temptation of Jesus: A Test Case

As one of the first episodes relating Jesus’s persona to the modern reader of the Gospels, the Matthean temptation narrative is one of considerable familiarity and importance. An antagonist with substantial power and influence is introduced, battle lines are drawn, and Jesus’s characteristic wit and wisdom are on full display. The passage itself stands at an important place in the structure of the First Gospel; has an integral role in the depiction of who Jesus was as understood by Matthew; and still has the ability to serve as a powerful corrective for the modern reader.⁶

From a structural standpoint, the pericope serves as one of the final units in a section that is aimed at clearly communicating to the reader the identity of Jesus as perceived by the author.⁷ It both brings to a culmination a section by illustrating one of its main thrusts and foreshadows other events in the Gospel which will eventually harken back to it. Regarding its culminating role, within this first section, and prior to the temptation narrative, Matthew refers to Jesus either directly or indirectly as “the Messiah,” “Son of David,”

“Son of Abraham,” “Immanuel,” “King of the Jews,” “Ruler,” “shepherd,” “Lord,” and “My beloved Son.” While the many other titles have serious theological implications, the “Son” language appears to be the primary way in which Matthew desires to depict Jesus. Both Kingsbury and Bauer draw attention to the “Son” language and its importance for understanding Matthew’s Christology. Kingsbury points out that by God calling Jesus, “My beloved Son,” in 3:17, it serves as “God’s declaration ... of how he ‘thinks’ about Jesus. *This is the normative understanding of Jesus against which all other understandings are to be measured.*”⁸ The temptation narrative plays an important role in further demonstrating just *how* Jesus is God’s Son. Bauer notes that the temptation narrative is a clear illustration of what divine Sonship is supposed to look like. He writes, “Jesus is tempted by Satan, yet he refuses to yield to these temptations, so that he is the Son who perfectly obeys the will of his Father.”⁹ Kingsbury says essentially the same, i.e., that in the temptation narrative we find a story about Jesus that is intended to show that he is the son par excellence, who both knows and does the Father’s will.¹⁰

Benno Przybylski also points out that various elements of the temptation narrative foreshadow other events in the Gospel and the challenge that Satan issues to Jesus regarding him needing to prove that he was the Son of God is ultimately answered in the remainder of the Gospel. He writes,

Through the use of the technique of foreshadowing, Matthew draws attention to three events in his gospel which provide answers to the three temptations. The devil’s challenge, “If you are the Son of God” (Mt 4:3,6), is met. The feedings [foreshadowed by the initial temptation to turn stones into bread], the transfiguration [foreshadowed by Jesus’s baptism and the second temptation] and Jesus’ last appearance [the reference here is to the words of Jesus in Matt 28:18 which were foreshadowed by the third temptation] show that Jesus is indeed the Son of God.¹¹

As demonstrated, 4:1–11 plays two important roles as it both concludes an initial section of the Gospel aimed at illuminating who Jesus was while also pointing forward to events that would further demonstrate just how Jesus exemplified the lofty titles attributed to him.

Characterization is an fundamental component of biography and can be achieved in a variety of ways, both directly and indirectly. Authors

of ancient biographies would reveal the character of their subject by both recording their words and deeds or explicitly stating something about the subject in an authorial comment.¹² From a biographical standpoint, the pericope is one of the initial, yet essential, pieces of Matthew's construction of Jesus's character. We meet a Jesus who is subservient to the Spirit, dependent upon the Word of God, filled with wisdom, unwilling to test his Father because he is sincere in his faith in his promises, and unwavering in his allegiances. He is a model by which we should all try to emulate. The quintessential elements of Jesus's character are found here, at the outset, only to be expounded upon throughout the remainder of Matthew's work. It is what we would expect to find in an ancient biography, a genre which aims to reveal the nature of an individual primarily through their words and deeds.

Finally, from this reader's standpoint, what exists here in these eleven verses is a powerful corrective for the modern Christian. Countless times I have returned to this passage to be redirected away from worldly pursuits and back to the sole dependence upon the Word of God. It is far too easy to get entangled in the modern day value system that exalts physical possessions, health, and influence as the "must-haves" for the current season. Reading Jesus's words, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God," (Matt 4:4, NASB) has been and will continue to be a powerful imperative in my individual spiritual life.¹³ Furthermore, to witness Jesus calmly and collectedly face the tempter and come away from it intact, the same tempter who has often left me defeated and with seemingly irreparable damage, gives me hope that at some point in this unending war with that same entity I will be able to do the same.

The Historical Dilemma

Considering the passage, albeit briefly, from a structural, generic, and even spiritual perspective shows the inherent value of the pericope in understanding who Jesus was in the eyes of Matthew as well as how he can influence or direct the human soul in its earthly endeavors. The fact that Matt 4:1–11 is rich with theological truths about our Lord is undeniable. His words, while directed towards the devil, are of immense worth to the modern hearer who is engaged in a conflict with that same adversary.

Having said that, equally as important and necessary given the purpose of this paper is evaluating the pericope from a historical standpoint.

As most of you know, determining the historical reliability of a single passage can be a tricky task. NT scholars are not entirely in agreement as to the best way to go about this, especially if the material is singularly attested. When there is multiple attestation, however, scholars are more likely to be in agreement regarding the historical reliability of that piece of the tradition. Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, two historians whose focus is solely outside of the New Testament, go so far as saying that if two sources agree on something, historians can “consider it a historical fact.”¹⁴

With this in mind, the obvious initial step is to determine whether or not any of the tradition in the temptation narrative is found in multiple sources. Of course, this requires a working hypothesis regarding the order in which the Gospels were written and the sources each evangelist used when writing his Gospel. While there are a number of opinions on this matter, the one that I find to have the most explanatory power is the Two-Source Hypothesis, though it is not without its own issues.¹⁵ For those unfamiliar, this theory postulates that Mark wrote his Gospel first, while Matthew and Luke, writing independently of one another, wrote their Gospels using Mark and the hypothetical source Q. This seems to be borne out by what we find in the temptation narrative where Mark provides a brief treatment of the episode and Matthew has an expanded version that appears to rely on both Mark and an additional source, the latter of which is also shared by Luke. Because Matthew is using Mark and Q, and the two are independent of one another, the question then is whether there is any overlap between his two sources.¹⁶ Surprisingly, this is one of the places in the Jesus tradition where there is overlap between Mark and Q.¹⁷ Because of this we are in the unique situation of actually having multiply attested material. The following table displays the Markan and Q material side by side so that one can easily see which aspects of the temptation narrative are found in both sources.

Table 1: *The Temptation Narrative in Mark and Q*

Mark 1:12–13	Q 4:1–4, 9–12, 5–8, 13
<p>¹² Immediately the Spirit impelled Him <i>to go out</i> into the wilderness. ¹³ And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.</p>	<p>1 And Jesus was led[intro]the wilderness by the Spirit 2[to be]tempted by the devil. And «he ate nothing» for forty days; he became hungry. 3 And the devil told him: If you are God's Son, order that these stones become loaves. 4 And Jesus answered[him]:It is written; A person is not to live only from bread. 9 [The devil] took him along to Jerusalem and put him on the tip of the temple and told him: If you are God's Son, throw yourself down. 10 For it is written: He will command his angels about you, 11 and on their hands they will bear you, so that you do not strike your foot against a stone. 12 And Jesus[in reply]told him: It is written: Do not put to the test the Lord your God. 5 And the devil took him along to a[very high]mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor, 6 and told him: All these I will give you, 7 if you bow down before me. 8 And[in reply]Jesus told him: It is written: Bow down to the Lord your God, and serve only him. 13 And the devil left him.¹⁸</p>

The following list highlights the material that is shared by Mark and Q:

- Jesus's experience in the wilderness was initiated in some capacity by the Spirit.
- The duration of the wilderness excursion was at least forty days.
- Temptation by an adversary occurred.

There is not a tremendous amount of shared material between the two sources, but it would be irresponsible as a historian to say that *nothing* happened.¹⁹ Without too much pushback, one could claim that at some point early in his ministry Jesus had an experience in the wilderness that was lengthy in duration and involved the supernatural to a great extent. Those who argue that the supernatural aspect of the event could not have happened because of it being just that are not being more precise in their historical judgments, just starting with different presuppositions. There are also some significant differences between the two versions:

- For Mark, the temptation took place during the forty days or for the duration of the forty days Jesus was in the wilderness, not after.
- The angels minister to Jesus in Mark, while in Q Jesus rejects their assistance in the midst of one of the Devil's temptations.
- In Mark the tempter is Satan, in Q it is the devil.
- In Mark Jesus was with the wild beasts, while there is no mention of that in Q.

Upon close examination it would appear that the differences between Mark and Q are an indication that Mark was shaping the tradition for theological purposes rather than historical. Scholars have been quick to point out the parallels between the Markan temptation narrative and both the canonical and non-canonical tradition about Adam. Dale Allison explores this in an essay on the historical nature of the temptation narrative, he writes:

In paradise Adam lived in peace with the animals and was guarded by and/or honored by angels. There too he was fed by angels or (according to another tradition) ate the food of angels, manna. But after succumbing to the temptation of the serpent he was cast out (the verb is ἐξέβαλεν in Gen 3:24 LXX).

This sequence of events is turned upside down in Mark. Jesus is first cast out [ἐκβαλλει in Mark 1:12].

Then he is tempted. Then he gains companionship with the animals and the service of angels (which probably includes being fed by them, as in 1 Kings 19:5–8).²⁰

It would appear then, as noted above, that these are theologically motivated changes. Changes that we will come to see are an entirely different sort than what the author of Q has done to the tradition he received.

With regards to the portion of the tradition that is unique to Q, it has proven to be far more difficult to assess regarding its historicity. This material falls under the “singularly attested” category mentioned above. In addition to the Q material one also has to assess the redactions Matthew has made to both his sources. This too is singularly attested material and difficult to assess. The following table displays Matthew’s text alongside both Mark and Q for easy comparison.

Table 2: *The Temptation Narrative in the Matthew, Mark, and Q*

Matthew 4:1–11	Mark 1:12–13
<p>1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.' " 5 Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.' " 7 Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.' " 8 Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; 9 and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.' " 11 Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and began to minister to Him.</p>	<p>12 Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. 13 And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.</p>

Q 4:1-4, 9-12, 5-8, 13

1 And Jesus was led [into] the wilderness by the Spirit 2 [to be] tempted by the devil. And «he ate nothing» for forty days; .. he became hungry.

3 And the devil told him: If you are God's Son, order that these stones become loaves.

4 And Jesus answered [him]: It is written; A person is not to live only from bread.

9 [The devil] took him along to Jerusalem and put him on the tip of the temple and told him: If you are God's Son, throw yourself down.

10 For it is written: He will command his angels about you,

11 and on their hands they will bear you, so that you do not strike your foot against a stone.

12 And Jesus [in reply] told him: It is written: Do not put to the test the Lord your God.

5 And the devil took him along to a [very high] mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor, 6 and told him: All these I will give you, 7 if you bow down before me.

8 And [in reply] Jesus told him: It is written: Bow down to the Lord your God, and serve only him.

13 And the devil left him.

The following list summarizes what is unique to both Q and Matthew. The first six bullet points represent the former, the last two bullet points the latter. I have also labeled each bullet point with the address in both Q and Matthew for quick reference:

- Jesus fasted during his forty days in the wilderness and he became hungry afterwards (Q 4:2).
- Jesus’s adversary initially asks him to prove that he is the Son of God by turning stones into bread (Q 4:3).
- Jesus responds to his adversary’s initial challenge by quoting Deut 8:3 (Q 4:4).
- Jesus’s adversary then leads him to the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem and asks him to yet again prove that he is the Son of God, this time by throwing himself off the top and hoping that God sends his angels to keep him from harming himself. Here, the devil refers to Psalm 91:11–12. In his response, Jesus quotes Deut 6:16 (Q 4:9–12).
- Jesus is then tempted with the opportunity to gain immediate sovereignty over all the kingdoms of the world if he simply bows down to the devil. Jesus responds, in both Matthew and Luke, by quoting Deut 6:13a (Q 4:5–8).
- The devil leaves following the three attempts at tempting Jesus (Q 4:13).
- Matthew provides an extended quotation of Deut 8:3, “but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4).
- Other minor verbal disagreements between Matthew and his sources throughout, but nothing of consequence.

Matthew has followed his sources, especially Q, incredibly closely, only departing from Q in 4:4 where he extends the Deut 8:3 quotation to include, “but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” There are minor verbal disagreements throughout, but nothing of consequence. Interestingly, he concludes his retelling of the temptations by incorporating a statement provided by Mark (regarding the angels) showing fully his reliance upon the two sources. Matthew’s near total replication of his sources simplifies our task, in a sense, in that it limits the amount of singularly attested material we have to assess. However, we are still uncertain about the historicity of a large portion of the temptation

narrative and the assessments made by scholars interested in the passage are not favorable. Furthermore, it really is the main thrust of the temptation narrative that is called into question, or at least unverifiable, and that is most unfortunate considering the observations we have made regarding its inherent value. While it is beneficial on some level to know that Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted and ultimately came through that event, it is the parley between him and the devil that is of the most value for the modern reader.

One of the questions that immediately comes to mind regarding this additional material in Q is why was it not included in Mark if it actually occurred? Mark has no issue with highlighting the adversarial relationship between Jesus and Satan (3:22–7; 8:33), so if what we have in Q is the event in its entirety, and if Mark had knowledge of what actually happened, say from Peter, why does he leave so much out?²¹ Furthermore, Mark provides two other episodes that appear to indicate that “demons and unclean spirits [had] supernatural knowledge of Jesus being the ‘Son of God’.”²² It would seem like a back and forth with Satan about this very thing would undoubtedly have been included if thought to have happened. Of course, if Mark had no knowledge of the additional details found in Q, then the exclusion of that material is certainly not an indictment against its historicity. Technically, neither is Mark’s exclusion of the material even if he *did* have access to it and decided not to include it. It does, however, seem odd given the additional places in his Gospel where he highlights similar themes found in the longer Q version.

That aside, there are additional aspects of the longer version of the temptation narrative that are a cause for concern regarding its historicity. These include the hyperbolic nature of a particular element of the story; the fact that there are known stories that feature a religious founder/hero experiencing a period of trial in early adulthood or at the outset of his career; and the literary design of the narrative that appears to be, much like the shorter Markan version, shaping the tradition for theological purposes rather than historical. These will be addressed in the order they are listed here.

With regards to the first, this was pointed out very early on by patristic interpreters. Origen points out that Matt 4:8 (Q 4:5), which records that the devil took Jesus to a place where they could both observe “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory,” is certainly not meant to be taken literally (*De princ.* 4.16). Theodore of Mopsuestia says the same,

“as to the phrase ‘he showed him,’ it is clear that he did not show him this in substance and reality, since it is impossible to find a mountain so high that from it someone who wishes can see the whole world” (Fragment 22).²³ Even modern commentators, like Craig Blomberg, recognize the impracticability of this mountain top experience. He also points out the unlikelihood of Jesus trekking all the way to Jerusalem in 4:5 given the weakened state he found himself in following a forty day fast.²⁴ Much like Theodore of Mopsuestia (see n22), Blomberg still allows for the possibility that these were actual experiences of Jesus, just more visionary in nature. An additional possibility is that there was a physical location that they travelled to, but it did not provide a view of *all* the kingdoms, just “a good representative sampling of the nearer kingdoms.”²⁵ In this instance, the language Q has used, and subsequently Matthew and Luke, to describe the event is intentionally hyperbolic but still has its basis in an actual event. This is clearly within the bounds of how we use language today.

The second point mentioned above is one I find to be interesting, but ultimately it has proven difficult to determine its exact impact or relevance. Dale Allison has compiled a number of examples from antiquity that, in his words, are “fictitious narratives about heroes and religious founders [that] tend to exhibit certain recurring patterns, and among them is the trial that takes place shortly after entering manhood and/or near the beginning of an adult vocation.”²⁶ He points to the Buddhist tale about Gautama’s battle against Mara, Zoroaster’s encounter with a demon in the wilderness, Gregory Thaumaturgus’s clash with the devil early in his career, Oedipus’s conflict with the Sphinx, Perseus’s battle with a dragon, and Abraham’s supposed confrontation with Azazel on Mt. Horeb.²⁷ As Allison points out, “who would want to defend the historicity of the stories just referred to ... or posit a factual nucleus behind [them]?”²⁸

If we had to single one out that might have had some influence it would probably have to be the tale about Abraham and Azazel on Horeb. Scholars date the composition of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* to ca. 75–150 CE.²⁹ This is past the time of writing for both Mark and Q, but the possibility that the tradition was passed along orally prior to its fixture in the written tradition should not be dismissed. As Allison goes on to note, within this story we find two elements incredibly similar to what we have in the temptation narrative, a forty-day fast and the assistance of angels (*Apoc. Abr.* 9:1–13:14).³⁰ Other than these two elements the correspondence is minimal, but those two are significant.

While it is worthwhile to note these parallel stories and explore their contents, it is ultimately too difficult to determine the extent of the awareness, if any, that the author of Q or Mark had of these other ancient tales. One cannot say with any definitiveness if they were even aware of these parallels and if they exerted any influence over the authors in their inclusion or crafting of the temptation narrative. To make any kind of judgement about the historicity of the temptation narrative based on these parallels would be reckless. Is it possible that this pseudepigraphon existed as oral tradition around the time Q was written and it influenced the author to write a similar tale, although much shorter, about Jesus? Yes. Can we say that that was the case with any degree of certainty? No.

Finally, the last aspect that I am going to mention is the seemingly obvious connection between the temptation narrative and portions of Israel's story while they were in the wilderness. The fact that the "son" language, Jesus's temptations, Jesus's responses to those temptations, the duration of the time he spent in the wilderness, etc. map so well with what happened to Israel in the wilderness is, at least in this author's opinion, a cause for concern regarding the historicity of this material. Gibson, following scholars like Dupont, Gerhardsson, and Thompson who came before him, provides his reader with the following list which states the primary ways the temptation narrative and the description of Israel's time in the wilderness, as it is recounted in Deut 6–8, correspond with each other:

1. the basic themes of the Deuteronomistic story (i.e. being led by the [*sic*] God, the wilderness, 'hunger', temptation/testing of God's Son, the necessity of obedience to God's word) are repeated and are given places of prominence in the Q account;
2. the wording of the introduction of the Q account (i.e., Matt 4:1–2// Luke 4:1–2) is reminiscent of that of Deut 8:2 both in the Hebrew and the LXX version of that text;
3. Jesus' temptations are parallel with those to which Israel was subjected according to Deuteronomy 6–8;
4. all of Jesus' responses to the Devil's petitions are derived from this unit of the Deuteronomistic text (Deut 8:2–3; 6:16; 6:13); and
5. the fact that though they appear in Q in reverse order from their sequence in Deuteronomy 6–8, Jesus' quotations from this passage nevertheless correspond to the order of the events to which they refer as recorded in the Old Testament (provision of manna in

the wilderness [Exod. 16], the testing at Massah [Exod 17], the worship of the golden calf [Exod. 32].³¹

As E. P. Sanders has pointed out, with the undeniable correspondence between what we find in Q (and subsequently in Matthew and Luke) and what we find in portions of the OT (Exodus and Deuteronomy) we are left with wondering whether it was Jesus or the early Christians who created the correlations.³² The unfortunate reality is that we cannot know the answer to that question. Much like the last issue regarding the parallel stories, we are left asking a similar set of questions: Is it possible that the longer version of the temptation narrative represents a historical event that was intentionally set-up to resemble other events in Israel's history? Yes. Is it also possible that the author of Q constructed the temptation narrative in such a way as to show how Jesus is a faithful and obedient son and these manufactured responses to similar temptations that Israel encountered in the wilderness prove that? The answer is also yes. Given the sheer number of correspondences between what we find in Q and Deut 6–8 and portions of Exodus it would appear that the latter is the more likely scenario.

In sum, when it comes to evaluating Matt 4:1-11 for its historical reliability much of what we can say, because he so closely follows his sources, is directly reliant upon our evaluation of those sources. In the process of that evaluation we find a number of issues that call into question the reliability of certain portions of the text. There is, at least in this author's opinion, a historical core that cannot be dismissed. *Something* happened in the wilderness between Jesus and his main adversary. Having said that, beyond the shared material highlighted above there can be no certainty with regards to the reliability of the remaining material. It appears as if the author of Mark and the author of Q took the tradition they received and went about shaping it in different ways to meet their own theological ends. This resulted in one version mimicking to an extent the Adamic tradition and the other that of Israel in the wilderness. In addition, the decision by Mark to not include the extended portion of the temptation narrative is a major red flag. As already noted above, if what we have in Q is what actually happened one would think that Mark would have been familiar with those details if receiving his tradition from Peter (many recognize this as a possibility given the early Church tradition regarding Markan authorship). Given that and the fact that many of the themes in the longer

portion in Q are also present in Mark, the decision to exclude that material is a difficult one to resolve.

Conclusion

The relationship between biblical studies and the mission of the church is no more on display in both our setting and with regards to this particular topic than anywhere else. We find ourselves in a unique position where we can be teaching both a class on the historical Jesus and on the Gospel of Matthew in the same semester, and those who partake in each are often directly responsible for the teaching of and preaching to those who faithfully attend our churches. In some instances, like the one above, we find ourselves in the difficult position of having to navigate passages that are fraught with difficulties and do it in such a way as to not fracture the relationship between the historical Jesus and the theological Christ. There is no escaping the reality that the two can often appear at odds with one another, or at least at times the historical Jesus can appear drab or without the same color and texture that we find in the portraits painted for us by the evangelists. How do we teach these passages? How do we preach these passages? How do we make sure that our students do the same in a way that is in line with the succinct, yet powerful mission of our institution ... the whole Bible for the whole world? These are the questions that I admittedly do not have all the answers to, but without a doubt will continue to search for. The desire is to have a foot in both camps, both the historical and the theological, but to do it with intellectual honesty, showing an awareness of the issues but not diminishing the theological impact of the text we all hold so dear.

With regards to Matthew 4:1–11 there are a few additional notes I can add that will go towards answering those questions posed above. As I have already noted on at least two occasions there is a historical core that is undoubtedly present in the temptation narrative, but I also believe that the additional material, while not historical in the truest sense of the word, is in fact rooted in the historical Jesus. Nils Dahl provides what I believe to be the correct justification for this position when he writes, “the fact that the word or occurrence found a place within the tradition about Jesus indicates that it agreed with the total picture as it existed within the circle of the disciples.”³³ When examining the larger canonical context of the temptation narrative one can clearly see that the words and actions of Jesus in the temptation narrative are not without their parallels in other

passages. Jesus does and says similar things throughout Matthew and the other Gospels that ultimately substantiate the claim that despite not being a historical event, what is provided in the temptation narrative is consistent with the presentations of the historical figure we find elsewhere. The following list provides multiple points of contact between the temptation narrative and the Jesus tradition we find in other Gospels:

1. Q 4:1-13 and Mark 1:12-13 describe a situation in which Jesus was ultimately victorious over Satan. This is found in numerous other places throughout the Gospels as Jesus is consistently depicted as one who was a successful exorcist.
2. The initial temptation is for Jesus to perform a miracle in the turning of a stone into bread to relieve his personal hunger. It is assumed here by Satan that Jesus was able to perform miracles. This certainly coheres with the greater portion of Jesus tradition as it is clear that he both saw himself as a miracle worker and performed them on numerous occasions.
3. Jesus's refusal to perform miracles in the temptation narrative is also consistent with other passages in the Jesus tradition (see Q 11:29-30; Mark 8:11-13).
4. Jesus quotes scripture throughout the temptation narrative. The tradition is flush with examples of Jesus showing his awareness and use of scripture in a variety of situations.
5. There is no doubt that Jesus places great faith in God in the temptation narrative. He does not succumb to the temptations because he knows that God will provide for him in the way he sees fit and in his timing. There are a number of other places in the tradition that feature Jesus showing great faith that God will take care of him (Q 11:3, 9-13, 12:24).
6. Jesus turns down Satan's offer to make him king in the temptation narrative. We find a similar instance in John 6 indicating that it is likely that Jesus faced a similar experience in his life to what is found in Matt 4:8-9.³⁴

Hopefully, what the above points demonstrate is that when dealing with a passage where there are decided historical issues, finding points of contact with other Jesus tradition is a viable way to move forward. We do not want to ignore the historical issues, but we are not overstating

our claim when we say that the temptation narrative is not depicting a Jesus altogether unfamiliar to his earliest followers. The theological shaping of the tradition by the authors who handled the Jesus tradition early on is not devoid of historical reminiscences. We can teach and preach the passage with the confidence that the author was utilizing his editorial brilliance in an effort to demonstrate the true character of Jesus as he, along with the others closest to him, had experienced it.

End Notes

¹ James Carleton Paget, "The Religious Authority of Albert Schweitzer's Jesus," in *Scripture's Doctrine and Theology's Bible: How the New Testament Shapes Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Alan J. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 75–90.

² Quote taken from Paget, "Schweitzer," 84, but can also be found in Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, ed. John Bowden, trans. W. Montgomery et al., 1st complete ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 402.

³ Paget, "Schweitzer," 78. Paget notes that this particular statement is found in a letter from Schweitzer to Alfred Boegner, the director of the Paris Missionary Society.

⁴ Paget, "Schweitzer," 78.

⁵ Schweitzer, *Quest*, 480.

⁶ I will use "Matthew" in reference to the author of the Gospel freely, but this is not a claim as to who actually authored the Gospel. The authorship question as it relates to the First Gospel is fairly complicated and the percentage chance that Matthew authored the Gospel in its entirety is fairly low.

⁷ I am aware of the fact that "structure" in Matthew's Gospel is entirely dependent upon the method of the individual seeking to determine it. I have chosen to follow the conclusions of David R. Bauer in his work *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, JSNTS 31, Biblical and Literature Series 15 (Sheffield: Almond Press; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988). Bauer assesses the structure of Matthew's Gospel in a more thorough way than previous attempts by looking at a variety of features in the work.

⁸ Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Figure of Jesus in Matthew's Story: A Literary-Critical Probe," *JSNT* 21 (1984): 3-36 (emphasis mine).

⁹ Bauer, *Structure*, 143.

¹⁰ Kingsbury, "Figure," 11.

¹¹ Benno Przybylski, "The Role of Matthew 3:13–4:11 in the Structure and Theology of the Gospel of Matthew," *BTB* 4 (1974) 222–35.

¹² Thomas Hägg, *The Art of Biography in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5.

¹³ All English translations of the Synoptic material will be from the NASB.

¹⁴ Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 70. See also, F. C. Burkitt, *The Gospel History and Its Transmission*, 3d ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1911). Burkitt was the first to advocate for the use of the criterion of multiple attestation in historical Jesus research. I agree with his assessment that those instances of multiple attestation in the Jesus tradition are probably the most reliable (147). His work used the criterion to make judgments about Jesus's sayings but it certainly can be used to make judgments regarding other material as well.

¹⁵ For a helpful examination of the various source theories and an endorsement of the Two-Source Hypothesis, see Robert H. Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001).

¹⁶ I understand Mark and Q to be independent of one another. There is considerable debate on this very issue and in regards to this very text. Jeffrey B. Gibson provides a thorough treatment of the overlap and independence of both Mark and Q as it relates to the temptation narrative; see *Temptations of Jesus in Early Christianity*, JSNTS 112 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 37–41. I am following his conclusions here although I do not agree with him that the Markan and Q version of the temptation narrative derives from a shared source. There is zero evidence of this apart from the fact that they share a core of similar material. We are already making decisions based on one hypothetical source, no need to invent yet another.

¹⁷ For additional places where scholars think this occurs see Christopher M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 31.

¹⁸ James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q: Synopsis Including the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, Mark and Thomas with English, German, and French Translations of Q and Thomas*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis; Leuven: Fortress Press; Peeters, 2000), 22–40. The hypothetical nature of Q complicates matters and that cannot be overstated. In the critical edition used above scholars have worked to isolate what they believe to be the essential Q minus any of the redactional elements attached by Matthew or Luke. It is not perfect, but it is the best attempt at reproducing Q so far and for that reason will have to

do in a discussion such as this. One just needs to recognize the hypothetical nature of the source and the imperfections undoubtedly present in any attempt at reproducing it.

¹⁹ Again, one could argue that Mark and Q were ultimately aware of or working with a shared source. There is zero evidence of this and there are far more places where the two sources depart from one another than there are shared pieces of the Jesus tradition. One would think that if they were working with a shared source it would be the opposite.

²⁰ Dale C. Allison, Jr., "Behind the Temptations of Jesus: Q 4:1–13 and Mark 1:12–13," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Boston: Brill, 2002), 195–213. The above quote can be confusing if one does not consult Allison's footnotes, see pp 196–99 and all notes therein. He parses out which points are present in the non-canonical tradition and which are part of the OT.

²¹ Peter's influence on the Gospel of Mark is a real possibility given the early Church tradition regarding the authorship of the work.

²² Petr Pokorny, "The Temptation Stories and Their Intention," *NTS* 20 (1974): 115–27. Pokorny points to Mark 3:11 and 1:24.

²³ The Theodore of Mopsuestia quote was taken from Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Matthew 1–13*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament 1A (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 62. Theodore would argue however that the event did take place, it was made possible by the devil having the capability to show Jesus some sort of imaginary image that they could both view rather than having to be in a physical location to do so.

²⁴ Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 85n81.

²⁵ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 141. Keener points to OT passages such as Gen 13:14–15 and Deut 34:1–4 where individuals were in high places that allowed them to observe numerous places at once.

²⁶ Dale C. Allison, Jr., "Behind the Temptations of Jesus: Q 4:1–13 and Mark 1:12–13," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Boston: Brill, 2002), 195–213.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

²⁸ *Ibid.* In addition to Allison's parallels, Gibson lists some others that are worth exploring; see Gibson, *Temptations*, 84–5.

²⁹ R. Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume One, Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016), 683.

³⁰ Allison, Jr., "Temptations," 205n44.

³¹ Gibson, *Temptations*, 85. While Gibson's summary of what previous scholars have found is helpful, it is Gerhardsson's work that has proven to be the one most other scholars are forced to interact with; see *The Testing of God's Son (Matt 4:1-11 & Par): An Analysis of Early Christian Midrash, Chapters 1-4*, CB-NTS 2 (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1966).

³² E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Press, 1993), 112.

³³ N. A. Dahl, *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974), 67. I originally came across this quote in the essay by Dale Allison that I have been interacting with throughout this paper; see Allison, Jr., "Temptations," 207-8.

³⁴ Allison, Jr., "Temptations," 207-11.

Sochanngam Shirik

African Christians or Christian Africans: Byang H. Kato and his Contextual Theology

Abstract:

Byang Henry Kato, a promising African Christian leader, passed away in 1975 at only 39 years of age. In spite of his brief career, he has left his imprint on the pages of African Christian history. He is not without his supporters and critics alike. It appears that while his critics have misunderstood him in some aspects, his supporters also have not paid enough attention to his theological conviction and articulation. While this article aims at clarifying some of Kato's conviction, it also informs readers how, regardless of context and time, others can appreciate, learn, and even adopt some aspects of his contextual model. The writer, an Asian living more than forty years apart from Kato, argues that Kato was indeed an evangelical leader whose theological conviction and model cannot be confined merely to a past era.

Keywords: Byang H. Kato, Contextualization, African theology, Culture, Hermeneutics, Kwame Bediako

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Introduction

That Byang Henry Kato was a man of the Bible and the Church, even his critics accept. That he was also a man of vision, many affirm. That he was a man of a particular context, who faced specific challenges in a particular manner, even some of his sympathizers admit. However, that he was an evangelical Christian whose theological understanding arose from deeply held convictions about the Bible, the world, and humanity that are very much consonant with the fundamental evangelical ethos, his critics deny, and some of his sympathizers misunderstand. On the one hand, people like Njoya Timothy Murere (1976: 62) have fiercely reacted to Kato's theological stand, questioning Kato's motive to privilege assistance from the West by being apathetic to his own culture. It was reported "One theologian reputedly threatened legal action over certain passages in his book" (Bowers 1980: 86). He was accused of preserving the neo-colonial interests (Bowers 1980: 86). Kwame Bediako (1997: 431) calls Kato's position a "radical Biblicism" emerging from "outdated assumptions" and he also charges that his position "would seem to be more problematic than, perhaps, has been realized in Evangelical circles" (Bediako 2011: 414). On the other hand, Yusufu Tukari (2001: 135-139), Paul Bowers (1980: 84-87), Keith Ferdinando (2004: 169-174), Timothy Palmer (2004: 3-20), and Tite Tienou (2007: 218-220) have come to defend Kato and argued that Kato was truly committed to contextualizing Christianity to the African Context. In his review of Kato's first book, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, in 1980, Bowers (1980: 85-86) observed, "*Pitfalls* represents the first sustained effort by an African evangelical to engage in the theological issues being debated in Africa by African theologians . . . Kato's book must be recognized as a highly significant 'maiden effort' within the wider general debate in Africa."

However, except for Ferdinando (2007: 121-143) and maybe Palmer, the rest have been very brief and even nuanced in their defense of Kato. Turaki (2001: 134), in discussing the theological legacy of Kato, made a brief positive comment on Bediako's contribution to the debate of salvation in African traditional religions and moves on leaving one to speculate whether Bediako's interpretation of Kato might be right. Tienou (2007: 218), while defending Kato, mentions that Kato is not "*the* representative of evangelical type of theology in Africa" . . . because "Kato's successors in Africa have moved on with the times in their thinking and preoccupations." Bowers (1980: 85), in his review mentioned above,

indicates that given time Kato might have modified his position.¹ All of them have some validity in their claims. My point here is not to suggest that they are wrong or that they should have dedicated their time defending Kato; however, I am pointing out that compared to the criticism hurled against Kato, their responses seem to be insufficient. Ironically, it is Kato's critic, Bediako, who has dedicated more time and energy engaging with his ideas. Among other places, Bediako (2011: 386-425) devotes one entire chapter to Kato in his most elaborate work, *Theology and Identity*. Bediako, pulling together many of Kato's works, demonstrates his knowledge of Kato's position. While both Kato's critics and supporters have valid points, they, except for Ferdinando, do not satisfactorily deal with Kato's view and thus inadvertently overlook that for Kato certain things are non-negotiable and that his overall theological framework is very much in line with the evangelical ethos.

This paper looks at Kato's available corpus of writings to see how he approached Christianity in relation to African traditional cultures and religions, focusing on his method of contextualization. I argue that Kato's understanding of Christianity was driven by his conviction that the essential message of Christianity can, and should, be universally understood and constructed. It should then be adequately communicated using contextual forms; therefore, acceptance or rejection of his contextual approach must consider this aspect. To put things in a clearer perspective, I will look briefly at his life, focusing on his personal and theological journey and the impact he made. I will then investigate how Kato interpreted Christianity from and to his particular context, scrutinizing some important elements of his theological framework. I will conclude by making some additional observations and drawing some missional applications for the contemporary Christianity.

Kato's Personal and Theological Journey

Three things stand out as I investigate Byang Kato's life and ministry: he was a man passionate about the scripture, he was a man given to the need of the church and the people, and he was a man who battled with specific challenges of a particular time in a particular manner. This section will proceed to look at the following sequence.

A Man of the Book

Even Kato's critics do not overlook his passion for the Bible. Kwame Bediako (2011: 413), one of his ablest contemporary critics, credits him thus, "Byang Kato's persistent affirmation of the centrality of the Bible for the theological enterprise in the Church in Africa must surely be reckoned to have been his most important contribution to modern African Christian thought." Kato's love for the Word of God began at an early age. Coming to Christ at the age of twelve, in 1948, from a family committed to the traditional religion (De la Haye 1986: 17-20), Kato treasured his newfound faith and God's Word. He began to earnestly study and find ways to share his faith with others (De la Haye 1986: 22). It would not be a stretch to speculate that Kato's testimony was instrumental in the conversion of his parents later. His passion drove him to study the Bible through correspondence in Igbaja Bible College and later, at the age of 18, to become a helper to a missionary (De la Haye 1986: 23). This trajectory would take him to places all over the world to learn, preach, and teach God's Word. This same love for the Word led him to the love of his life, Jummai Gandu, who was also deeply in love with the scripture. Kato and Jummai not only brought up their children to love the Bible, but they would also spend the rest of their lives living by and feeding thousands of others the Word of God. The feeding of five thousand in Luke 7:1-17 was the last passage Kato read with his family before he drowned on December 19, 1975, while resting for his next mission of preaching the Word (De la Haye 1986: 91). The news of his premature death shocked the world. Bruce Nicholls called him "a skilled biblical exegete, theologian and apologist" (Bremner 1996: 144). Yusufu Tukari (2001: 152) described him thus: "He had a very high view of scriptures and he studied the Bible regularly. For him the Bible was authoritative over the whole of life and everything in life was captive to the Word of God." His friend and co-laborer in the Lord, Rev. Gottfried Osei-Mensah, solemnly yet victoriously proclaimed: "I know of no other young man in Africa today who was as clear a thinker, biblically and theologically, as Byang Kato, at the same time, had the heart of an evangelist" (De la Haye 1986: 102). Indeed Kato was a man of the Word who was also given to the need of the world.

A Man of the People/Church

Byang Kato's love for the Word drove him to be a committed servant-leader of the church and the people in various capacities. He served as the general secretary of the Evangelical Church Winning All (then Evangelical Church of West Africa-ECWA), an organization, which Philip Jenkins (2012: 45) describes as "a thriving and respectable denomination," and "the most important church you've never heard of." He also served as the general secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), formerly known as Associations of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar (AEAM). At the same time, he also was active in a lesser-known position as a member of a deacon board in his home church (De la Haye 1986: 81). While a student in London and Dallas, he and his family were active in hosting fellow countrymen, friends, and anyone they were able to serve. A fellow Nigerian, Ebenezer O. Olsleye, who was converted through the witness of Kato in London testifies, "Through Byang's preaching, a number of English people found Christ" (De la Haye 1986: 41). While at Dallas Theological Seminary, the Katos founded a Good News Club where they would invite children to come and learn about Jesus (De la Haye 1986: 66-67). There was never a dull moment with Kato when it came to serving the Lord and others. While keeping busy with all of his studies and ministries, he also excelled in his studies, receiving many awards, both in academics and for his character (De la Haye 1986: 67-68). As a student, in a context far removed from home, what Kato accomplished in terms of his relationship, ministry, and academics is indeed commendable. Kato's commitment to serve others and the church transcends time, place, and social boundaries. Today, the prestigious university African International University (then Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology-NEGST) and Bangui Evangelical School of Theology (BEST), whose establishments are linked to the vision that Kato bequeathed to his successors² serve many Christians and non-Christians alike.

Kato was tired, at times discouraged, but never without hope. He knew that serving others is serving Christ. For him, all these physical sufferings, hardships and even attacks on his character were known to his God (De la Haye 1986: 87) and in the grand scheme of things, temporary. It has been speculated that in his service for others, he burned himself out and that this sheer exhaustion may have been linked to his death (Bowers 2009: 11).

A Man of the Context

Kato responded to the needs and challenges of his time in ways he understood to be most biblical. He was a man of untiring energy who exerted positive influences and harvested bountiful results in whatever he did. From his beginning as a Boys' Brigade leader to his culmination as the General Secretary of AEA, Kato made many positive contributions. It is reported that when he took the position in 1973 at AEA, its "image was very negative" but his entry into his diary after two years shows how the image had shifted (Bremann 1996: 145). AEA's membership also increased from seven national bodies in 1973 to 16 in 1975, an increase of more than 100 percent (De la Haye 1986: 89). My feeble attempt to write about him also demonstrates that his influence is still very alive today. By the time he died at 39, he had given numerous lectures, preached many sermons, written many articles and a book, and influenced many Christians worldwide including Francis Schaeffer who after hearing of Kato's early demise, responded, "I literally wept. I do not cry easily, but the loss for Africa and the Lord's work seemed so great" (Bremann 1996: 102-103). Many today can identify with the lament of Schaeffer.

Any leader, especially of Kato's caliber and influence, fighting for something is bound to have opponents. Opponents could be people, social structures, or ideas. In Kato's case, it is the idea. In the context of Africa in particular and the ecumenical circles in general, he saw the problems of theological liberalism as the most significant challenge. He fought it fiercely, yet biblically. However, humans are bound to imbibe the limitation of the context. Kato was also not immaculate in his approach. He had his flaws. Some see him as hostile to ideas with which he disagreed (Shaw 1996: 278), others consider his approach as too Western (Njoya 1976: 60) and faulty (Paratt 1995: 63). I indicated earlier that Paul Bowers (1980: 85), a great admirer of Kato, wrote that Kato's book, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, was not without limitations, and that Kato was already in the process of revising some of those ideas at his death. Timothy Palmer points out how Kato was not entirely accurate in his assessment of Mbiti's position. Palmer (2004: 12-13) notes, according to Mbiti's testimony, that Kato apologized to the former for attacking him unjustifiably and promised to rewrite the relevant sections of the book. The place for mystery, ambiguity, paradox, and tensions are mostly absent in his writings.³ However, he did not claim to be perfect either. Besides, his limitations do not necessarily invalidate his accomplishments.

Kato's Interpretation of Christianity From and To African Context

Mark Shaw (1996: 278) introduced Kato as “The founding father of modern African evangelical theology.” As an evangelical Christian, Kato stood for what he thought was biblical. His evangelical passion is one thing that set him apart, but it is from this same passion that he has gained the greatest criticism from his critics. In this section, we will discuss how Kato understood Christianity from his context and tried to contextualize into his context.

Kato's Interpretation of Christianity as a Universal Religion

Kato was very much involved in the debate surrounding the term contextualization in the early 1970s. The Theological Education Fund (TEF), an agency associated with the WCC, coined the term *contextualization* to emphasize the importance of taking into account the local context in developing theology (Prince 2017: 40). Whereas indigenization, the commonly used term in the context of gospel propagation, emphasizes the need of universal theological articulation and applying in a context, contextualization came to highlight the need of theologizing in context (Prince 2017: 38). In other words, contextualization of theology came to be differentiated from theologization in context. The latter emphasizes the need for developing contextual theologies rather than applying the so-called universal or biblical theology (Pachau: 2018: chapter 5). While the introduction of the neologism was a reaction against the concept associated with the term indigenization, contextualization was also met with resistance especially from the conservative circle. The International Congress of World Evangelism (ICWE), in which Kato presented a paper and was also elected to the committee at the 1974 gathering (De la Haye 1986: 116) distanced itself from the TEF's use of contextualization. In his presentation, he incorporated the term but limited it merely to the forms of expression of the gospel (Kato 1975: 1217). While respecting and propagating the need of integrating African cultural forms in contextualization, he argues that our aim must first be to construct a biblical theology and then contextualize such a theology to a given context.

Kato believed that Christianity is first and foremost a universal religion and only after that a local religion. According to him, regardless of context, the content of theology must remain the same; the change should only be in its expression (Kato 1975b: 5). He reasoned, “Evangelical Christians know of only one theology—Biblical theology as opposed to

many contextual theologies—though it may be expressed in the context of each cultural milieu” (Kato 1985: 12). Hence, contextualization “is an effort to express the never changing Word of God [The Christian Theology] in ever changing modes of relevance” (Kato 1985: 12). The unchanging message of Christian faith must be communicated using native language, idiom, and concepts (Kato 1980: 38). For him, “the use of sources other than scriptures as in equal standing with the revealed Word of God” in formulating African theology was unacceptable (Kato 1973: 3). In expressing the truth of the scripture in a particular context, one must use local and traditional concepts, but those concepts follow, never precede the Bible. Hence, his assertion, “Let African Christians be Christian *Africans!*” (Bowers 1980: 84). Reactions have been different: some agree, others disagree, and a few misunderstand and disagree.

Kato’s Interpretation of Christianity as an African Religion

Kato was concerned as much as his critics that Christianity should be made an African religion. At the beginning of his book *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, he asserts, “The noble desire to indigenize Christianity in Africa must not be forsaken. An indigenous theology is a necessity” (Kato 1975d: 16). On the topic of *Christianity as an African Religion*, he affirms, “It is my conviction that Christianity is truly an African Religion” (Kato 1980: 33). He then explains, “Christianity is truly an African religion and Africans should be made to feel so. Christian doctrines should be expressed in terms that Africans can understand, where such has not been the case . . . Let Christianity truly find its home in Africa by adopting local hymnology, using native language, idiom and concepts to express the unchanging faith” (Kato 1980: 37-38). Kato truly believed that “Christianity is an African religion to its African adherents, just as it is European to the European, American to the American or Asian to the Asian followers of Christ” (Kato 1980: 37). Kato wanted to make Christianity truly an indigenous religion but not the way some of his critics envisioned.

Assessing Kato’s Understanding of Christianity

First, the most important thing in assessing Kato’s position is to avoid anachronism. Kato lived and wrote during a period when the evangelicals, in general, were skeptical of the term contextualization because of its origin from, and association with, the ecumenical circle (Prince 2017: 37) as noted earlier. Even though evangelicals would later

more openly embrace the term, the period during which Kato lived was dominated more by a reaction and less by acceptance. However, whereas some evangelicals after Kato would continue to debate whether the term contextualization is even necessary (Prince 2017: 43-44), Kato was already using it, albeit in his understanding. Like his fellow evangelicals, he thought he was battling with some real threats to the purity of the gospel rather than picking on some minor issues; he genuinely considered the gospel to be at risk. Most of his defenses of the gospel and criticisms of others are in the context of either denying the uniqueness of Christ or the Bible. When such criticism is taken out of context, they could very well be misread. We may disagree with him, but we can identify with his desire to preserve the sanctity of the gospel. Kato must be read within this context to avoid anachronistic historical analysis.

Second, we should also acknowledge that affirming Kato's core conviction, as consonant with the evangelical ethos, does not necessarily mean there are no ambiguities in his writings. The fact that most of his writings accessible to the public come from his last stage of life (1972-1975), many of which are published posthumously, makes it difficult to analyze any theological development in his thoughts and writings. I suggest that one of his harshest criticisms comes because of this ambiguity. For example, Kato did not get the chance to successfully clarify how biblical theology can be constructed by disassociating from the past traditions and beliefs of Africa. He assumes rather than proves that biblical theology can be constructed without using the existing African mental framework, which necessarily includes not just the cultural, but also the religious understanding of reality. At several points, he states the need for "biblical theology" (among others, Kato 1974; 1975b: 1203; 1977: 47) without clarifying what that entails. At one point, he referred to the African traditional religions as pagan and argued that no pagan practices, without distinguishing between the good and the bad element, should be borrowed to add to Christianity (Kato 1980: 33). He even expressed his doubt "whether theology can actually be localized" (Kato 1973: 4). Of course, those affirmations are made within a particular context and as such cannot be read independently, for there are also other places where he recognizes the importance of redeeming and channeling cultural elements for the good of the gospel. He states, "Jesus Christ wants to redeem the good values found in African culture for the spreading of the gospel in this great continent. Let us not shut Him out by dismissing the fact of the presence of such values in African culture"

(Kato 1975a: 36). In another place, he affirms, “Whatever would reflect the glory of Christ in His Church in Africa and make the African feel that ‘this is my faith,’ [sic] should be promoted. If there are any alien beliefs and/or practices mingled with Christianity, the answer is not to throw away the baby with the bath water” (Kato 1980: 37). Perhaps, he was naïve to expect African Christians to buy his idea of a Biblical Theology without qualifications and possibly he could be faulted for not synthesizing the aspect of particularism and universalism more coherently, but he cannot be blamed for being apathetic to the African culture by emphasizing only one side of his argument.

Third, he is not an outlier regarding contextual theology. If we assess his overall body of writings, he is more consistent than others credit him. For instance, today upholding the tension between indigenizing and pilgrim principle (Walls 1996: 7-9) is considered praiseworthy. Kato was aware of such tensions, even though owing to his particular contextual challenges he veered towards the pilgrim principle. He did reject the term “African theology” and the idea of doing theology as conceived by many of his African counterparts. However, he states,

In rejecting the term African Theology, we are not denying the fact that there is a need for expression of theology in the context of Africa. African theologians need to and can contribute to the further understanding of Biblical theology for the benefit of the universal body of Christ. There are certain issues peculiar to Africa where only African theologians may be able to speak effectively. (Kato 1974: 2)

His rejection of “African theology” is therefore not necessarily a rejection of the need for articulating theology from the African context. For him, Christians have only one authoritative Bible, and all Christians must read and theologize together. Such an aspiration for biblical theology was consonant with the larger biblical theology movement that was prevalent in North America during Kato’s time, even though today the term has been expanded (Mead 2007: 42-59).

Fourth, Kato’s insistence that there must first be biblical theology before it can be conveyed using local cultural forms comes from his understanding of the Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word (Kato 1975c: 1216). For him, inerrancy means that the content of the Bible is without any error and it cannot be changed. The biblical cultures were used only as

vehicles to convey God's eternal truth; therefore, regardless of the change of culture and time, the content of the Bible remains the same (Kato 1975a: 49). He argues that this content is "revealed propositionally and must be declared accordingly" (1975c Kato: 1216) for "Inerrant authoritative scripture can alone give us reliable facts about Jesus Christ's and man's relationship to him." (Kato 1985: 12). It is with the content of the scripture that biblical theology must be constructed. It would not be unfounded to assert that people like John F. Walvoord who was the president of Dallas Theological Seminary when Kato was a student, Charles Ryrie who endorsed Kato's book and was also the Dean of Doctoral Studies and Chairman of Systematic Theology during Kato's period, Francis Schaffer and other American evangelical conservative theologians, who championed the doctrine of inerrancy, had a substantial impact on Kato during his formative period. In this aspect, he had absorbed an evangelical understanding of God's Word as proposition (Kato 1985: 12). For Kato, not just the ideas but also the words of the Bible are inspired. Such a conviction forced him to remain steadfast so that even though a mustard seed is not found in Africa, instead of substituting a local grain for it, the original term has to be retained and the meaning explained (Kato 1985: 24). One can debate the validity of retaining the forms in this context, but the point is, that for Kato, every Word of God is inspired and, therefore, inerrant and authoritative (Kato 1985: 12).

Given Kato's position on inerrancy, it is understandable that he prioritized the textual accuracy more than the contextual relevance. He insisted, "Instead of employing terms that would water down the gospel, the congregations should be taught the original meaning of the term" (Kato 1985: 24). Such an approach is typical of those who subscribe to the concept of unlimited inerrancy. While the limited inerrantist like Clark H. Pinnock (cf. Pinnock and Callen 2009: 264) and others believe that the perfect accuracy of the text is not necessary for the Bible to be considered a reliable source for Christian faith, the unlimited inerrantist like Kato believe that not just the narrative, but also every single word in the Bible is accurate. He reasons, "But how can I know for sure about Jesus Christ in an errant Bible?" (Kato 1985: 12). Therefore, for evangelicals in the camp of Kato, retaining the basic structure and content of the biblical text is crucial since the meaning lays *in* the inspired texts, not "beneath, above, beyond the actual words of the Bible" (Hesselgrave 2006: 247). Millard J. Erickson (1987: 233) observes, inerrantists tend to place "a particularly high value

upon retaining the basic content in the process of giving various expressions to the message” of the gospel. Those who affirm the doctrine are likely to adhere more strictly not only to the biblical categories but also to the words of the scripture in translation, interpretation, and theologization.

Kato’s conviction about the Bible as propositional truth has led Bediako to incorrectly label his position “Theology as Bibliology” (Bediako 2011: 386) or “radical Biblicism.” (Bediako 1997: 431). Bediako (1996: 33) argues that biblical affirmations “are not given as fixed data,” or “the truth of the biblical revelation is the truth, *not of assertion but of recognition.*” Bediako here is reacting, and rightly so, to the modern fundamentalist claim of the Bible as storage-of-data book where the assertion of propositional truth becomes the primary aim. He explains thus, “The truth of biblical revelation, therefore, is not just truth to be “believed in” as by mere intellectual or mental assent; it is truth to be ‘participated in’” (Bediako 1996: 33). Even though evangelicals have debated over the precise understanding of scripture as a proposition, they have, more or less, unanimously acknowledged that the primary purpose of the scripture is not the assertion of propositional truth or that the Bible can merely be understood in terms of propositional truth (Collins 2005: 41-45; Vanhoozer 2005: 86-91).⁴ It is also true that not all evangelicals subscribe to the doctrine of inerrancy, as Kato understood it (Mohler *et al.* 2013). Michael Bird (2013: 145-146), an Australian theologian, argues that even though inerrancy possesses a certain utility in the “battle for the Bible” in the North American context, it is not an essential facet of faith for global evangelicalism as the majority of world Christians have always upheld the inspiration, authority, and high view of the Bible even in the absence of such nomenclature. Oliver D. Crisp (2015), a British theologian, asserts that the fixation with the doctrine of inerrancy “was never really an issue for British evangelicalism.” It is understandable; therefore, that Kato was criticized for importing this ‘problematic’ doctrine to the African context (Bediako 2011: 398-399), even though I do not think that the idea behind inerrancy is merely an American construct. I, as an Asian Christian, can subscribe to the concept of inerrancy without fighting for the terminology. But that topic is beyond the scope of this paper. The point here is that Kato is criticized for equating “the content of Bible and the content of theology” (Bediako 2011: 400). This accusation is legitimate, and Kato might have accepted this because according to him, biblical theology is to be constructed with the content of the Bible. However, Kato’s affirmation does not necessarily

imply that one cannot use cultural and philosophical concepts to convey the content. He appears to be objecting to the construction of theology through the means of synthesizing the African traditional religions and Christianity. Kato affirmed that there should be only one biblical theology and that everyone must contribute in its formation, but nowhere have I come across him saying that, therefore, we must not use linguistic and cultural forms to construct this theology.

On the contrary, just before Kato (1985: 12) affirms “theology itself in its essence must be left alone” he also asserts “Africans need to formulate theological concepts in the language of Africa.” Disagreement on the matter of inerrancy and biblical theology is understandable, but it is an in-house evangelical debate. However, Bediako ignores the fact that even though evangelicals have affirmed that the Bible is more than propositional truth, they have not affirmed it less. After all, we know the truth of the Bible through the written propositional text. Bediako’s objection to Kato’s proposal comes in part because of his (Bediako’s) conviction that the proposition of the scripture neither possesses a fixed data nor is revelation to be found in the theological propositions, but in Jesus (Bediako 1996: 33, 34). In one sense, Bediako is right, because, for Kato, theology must be constructed from the Bible as the authoritative source and then only expressed using relevant forms. However, to equate such position to bibliology in a rather pejorative manner is unsatisfactory. In fact, even the 16th-century Reformers, whom Kato claimed to follow, were driven by the conviction of *Sola Scriptura*. By it, they do not mean the Bible alone, but the Bible as the supreme authority (Vanhoozer 2016: 111-117). No one calls his or her theology, bibliology. Bediako, however, has a point in that Kato did not clarify how biblical theology can be constructed with the biblical content by interacting with the existing African mental framework. Regardless, what Bediako sees as limitations, others see as Kato’s greatest strength. Yusufu Turaki (2001: 152) acclaims Kato’s accomplishment thus, “His primary tool for doing theology was Bible; he never made the Bible secondary in his theological tools. May God grant us the wisdom, grace and enablement to profit from his example.” Kato’s conviction about the Bible as the inerrant Word of God drove him to the belief that there must be a biblical theology around which Christians of all nations can relate.

Fifth, Kato’s unwillingness to approach African traditional religions with an open-ended mindset should be understood from his understanding of the relationship between special and general revelation. In his Master

of Sacred Theology thesis, *Limitations of Natural Revelation*, he argues that although general revelation reveals the existence of God, it is not sufficient for a redemptive purpose (Kato 1971: 61-72). It is insufficient mainly because the purpose for which it was given (Kato 1971: 70). He argued the general revelation was to point to the creator but never meant to be redemptive. It is also inadequate to be redemptive because of human sin due to the Fall. Due to human sin and the resulting curse from God, humans are in a spiritual state of total depravity where they are unable to perform any meritorious act towards their salvation (Kato 1971: 64-66). In other words, "Humanity does not live in neutrality. Since the original fall, the total race of Adam has been condemned to death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23)" (Kato 1975: 180). Therefore, humans need special revelation, now given through the scripture, without which they are lost (Kato 1971: 72). Hence, every element of African traditional religion and culture must be judged through the lens of this special revelation (Kato 1975d: 182).

Bediako (2011: 387) indicts that Kato's overtly negative and fundamentally unsympathetic attitude towards non-Christian religions, including his own religious past, prevented him from adequately assessing other religions. He was displeased that Kato would give only a secondary place to the study of African traditional religions compared to the inductive study of God's Word (Bediako 2011: 387, n. 8). It is true that Kato lumped all other religions under the category of the unsaved group and dismissed it as unimportant to spend too much time and energy studying them, but he also exhorted that they be investigated carefully (Kato 1975d: 183). However, Bediako (2011: 388) faults Kato for overlooking the "convergence between Jaba religious ideas and Biblical teaching." According to him, Kato's presupposition of the radical divergence between Christianity and Jaba religion forces him to diminish the biblical concept of sin as personal by ignoring the social dimension, which in fact is the view of the Bible and that of the Jabas. Bediako contends that had Kato recognized this social dimension, he would have understood that the Jaba's view of sin converges with the scripture.

It is true that Kato did not give as much emphasis to the social dimension of sin as he did to the individual or the spiritual. Kato, on many occasions, emphasized the spiritual over the material/physical (Kato 1985: 15-17; 1977: 44; 1980: 38; 1975a: 41). When the editor of *Christianity Today* queried him about the concerns of AEAM, Kato (1975b: 5) unapologetically responded, "While we appreciate the emphasis on social

concern and political liberation today, we of the AEAM do not view that as our primary occupation. Rather, our emphasis is on evangelism and church development basically in the spiritual realm." However, in the context from which Bediako quotes (Kato 1975d: 42) Kato is in fact not minimizing the societal aspect of sin; he is maximizing the personal aspect of sin. He is pointing out the absence of this personal dimension in Jaba society. He clarifies, "But sin against society is only a minor manifestation of the basic sin of rebellion against God . . . Jaba's wrong conception of sin results in a wrong view of salvation. If anti-social act [sic] is all there is to sin, salvation can be procured by satisfying social demands" (Kato 1975d: 42). Kato's point is that though Jaba's conception of the Supreme Being (and Africans in general) and morality can be attributed to the "vestiges of *Imago Dei* imprinted in the original creation," their understanding is distorted without the special revelation (Kato 1975d: 42-45). Kato's view of the limitations of natural revelation prevents him from an open-ended approach to the traditional religion or any other religion.

Sixth, another area which will enable us to understand Kato's theological framework is concerning his view on the continuity and discontinuity between the African traditional culture and religion and Christianity. This aspect of Kato's thought appears to be ambiguous, if not problematic. However, reading him in the light of his overall literature helps clarify the haziness. We have pointed out that Kato argued for the development of biblical theology without really showing how exactly it could be done within the existing African mental framework. Bediako (2011: 391) capitalizes on this ambiguity in Kato's thought and blames him for confirming the earlier missionary perception of Africa as a "*tabula rasa* on which a wholly new religious psychology was somehow to be imprinted." He continues, "Kato was convinced that the religious past had no significance for African Christian self-consciousness except as darkness in relation to light." Since, in the previous sentence, Bediako was not quoting Kato's words, and as the source from which Bediako cites cannot be accessed⁵ at the moment, our judgment, to a certain degree, is premature. Nevertheless, in the light of what Kato has stated elsewhere, that to which we have referred earlier, it is unlikely that Kato would deny incorporating neutral elements of African traditional religion and culture to construct Christian theology. It is true that he rejects the term African Theology and when speaking of incorporating the positive elements of African tradition, he only refers to culture, not once (as far as I can find)

to religion. For instance, after arguing that religion is part and parcel of culture (Kato 1977: 13-31), he concludes, "Christians should be willing to go along in adapting African culture [not religion] as long as it does not conflict with the scriptures. When such conflict does arise, such as worship of pagan gods, wearing of indecent clothing, Christians must choose to obey God rather than men" (Kato 1977: 131). It is evident that religion is part of the culture for him, yet he was cautious not to mention religion. This is understandable not only because of the likelihood of conflating the two, but also because of his perception of the syncretistic tendency of African Christianity (Kato 1985: 25-30). The kind of African theology he rejects is not the kind of theology that is done today by upholding scripture as the norming norm (Kato 1975d: 53-67). He might not have precisely sorted out the elements of continuity between the African traditional religion and Christianity, but his theological framework gives room for such continuity since he himself argued that general revelation functions as a pointer, a schoolmaster, that ultimately must lead to Christ (Kato 1971: 70-71).

There are others who support Kato's emphasis on the element of discontinuity between African traditional religion and Christianity without necessarily denying the aspect of continuity. Keith Ferdinando (2004: 171-172) has not only unapologetically defended Kato in this case, but also critiqued that Bediako allows more continuity between the African traditional religion and Christianity than needed (Ferdinando 2007: 123-143). He points out that "Bediako tends in fact to assume what needs to be proved," ironically falling guilty of his accusation against Kato (Ferdinando 2007: 131 n. 42). He goes on to charge, "To establish with sufficient plausibility the continuity between Christianity and African traditional religion required by his overall approach, Bediako would need to demonstrate more effectively the presence within African traditional religion of a 'positive tradition'...." (Ferdinando 2007: 130). By 'positive tradition,' Ferdinando (2007: 126) is referring to Bediako's argument that Christ was somehow positively working in the African traditional religion in such a way that Christian identity can be rooted in African religious past. This assumption, according to Ferdinando (2007: 125), is faulty and "there are strong grounds, biblically and philosophically, and with an equally long pedigree, for resisting an approach of this nature." Similarly, Bernard van den Toren points out that Bediako seemed to have concluded that the only way to incorporate African religious tradition is to integrate it positively as part of the saving activity of God. This assumption, according to van den Toren

(1997: 230), is flawed. He argues, “past experiences can also be integrated negatively in my present identity if I discover afterwards that I have walked in the dark and chosen the wrong way... It may be the case that we discover Jesus Christ to be the answer for our deepest longings, but at the same time we discover that we have tried to evade God’s caring presence in our lives.” The point here is that rejection of traditional religion does not default to building a Christian consciousness from scratch. Kato’s argument was not that Christian theology should be built on a blank slate; rather, his point was that “The Bible must remain the basic source of Christian theology” (Kato 1985: 12). Kato can be faulted for lack of precision and clarity in his theology, but not for being apathetic to the local tradition.

Seventh and lastly, Kato’s understanding of Christianity would be incomplete without considering the intersection of culture, religion, and scripture in his thought. His treatment of culture and religion is not without some ambiguity, but his overall message is clear. For him, even though “religion is the heart of culture” (Kato 1975a: 11) not all religious beliefs and practices are part of a culture (Kato 2004: 132). Therefore a Muslim can be an African Muslim and a Christian an African Christian (Kato 1975a: 11). However, since religion occupies a pivotal place in culture, “a change in religion necessitates a re-adjustment in culture.” He goes a step further and argues, “Not all the so-called African Culture is *de facto* culture. So much in the guise of culture is actually idolatry” (Kato 2004: 132). Therefore, he contends,

Certain practices not in accord with the teachings of these religions [referring to Islam and Christianity] will have to be dropped. To adjust one aspect of culture, or to refuse a change in any one aspect, does not, however, mean that the whole culture is, or is not, adhered to. Just because a person does not engage in tribal dancing or does not wear African clothes does not mean that he is throwing away his culture as a whole. (Kato 1975a: 11)

Kato seems to be saying that one does not have to continue embracing all religious and cultural beliefs and practices to be genuinely African. Crediting the idea to Donald R. Jacobs, though the language resembles Clifford Geertz (1973:5), Kato (1973: 13-31) pictures culture as a cobweb, a sort of concentric circles in the middle of which is the philosophical level followed by mythical level, value level, and formal level. These levels overlap yet the center, which is the philosophical level, is the hardest to alter (Kato

1973: 14-15). Even though Kato puts religious beliefs and practices under the mythical level, it is the philosophical level that motivates and stirs the religious practices. When a person's heart is changed through conversion to Christ, s/he assumes a new philosophy of life and the reverberating effect touches the rest of the circles (Kato 1973: 30-31).

For Kato (1985: 18), this new philosophy of life cannot come from general revelation (in African traditional religion or any other religion), but only from special revelation (Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit based on the Bible). This does not mean that God is limited in power to use general revelation for saving purposes, but that humans are corrupted and blinded due to sin (Kato 1985: 18-19). It is here, therefore, the gospel takes an irreplaceable role in redeeming humankind. For even though "Christ is universally available to all men everywhere at any time... its effectiveness applies *only to those who receive the offer* [italics original]" (Kato 1975d: 181).

From the larger corpus of Kato's writings, it is clear that for him, all beliefs and practices must be subjected to the scrutiny of the Bible. He was pushing back against the theological trend that manifested the following features: "the use of sources other than the scriptures as in equal standing with the revealed Word of God, the possibility of salvation in African traditional religions, and a strong emphasis on things African for their own sake" (Kato 1985: 11-12). He was not without his challenges, his opponents, and his limitations; yet he soared above them and made an impact as a brave soldier of Christ, an astute student of the Word, and faithful Christian of a particular era.

Observations and Missional Applications

In my reading, Kato is profoundly evangelical in its true sense of the term. We have noted in the beginning that even his critics recognize Kato's high regard for the Bible. Until the moment of his death, Kato was given to the cause of the gospel and the unity of the church. His criticism of others and skepticism of the larger ecumenical movement, especially the WCC, must be considered in the context of the trajectory that his contemporary theologians and the other Ecumenical movements were moving toward during the 60s and 70s. It is equally true that some of the harsh criticisms of Kato's ideology were prompted by resentment against

colonialism (e.g., Timothy Murere Njoya's criticism). Timothy Palmer (2004: 5-10) has given a rather elaborate picture of how, in the 1960s and early 1970s, "the cultural revolution was taking a decidedly anti-Christian appearance." Kato assuredly recognized this (Kato 1976: 144-146; 1975a: 22-23). Ferdinando notes that such observed danger explains the passion and urgency in Kato's polemics (Ferdinando 2004: 170-171). Bowers (1980:87) observed, and Gehman (1987: 71) affirmed that during Kato's period the theological trajectory was moving towards an emphasis on being authentically African rather than authentically biblical. Tukari (2001: 134) points out that "The primary objective of Kato's Theological Corpus vis-à-vis that of his opponents was to develop a biblical foundation for proclaiming Jesus as the only valid, authentic and unique Saviour of the whole world and Mediator between God and man." In the interview by *Christianity Today*, Kato testified, "there is no clear evidence that the money [the WCC channeled to Africa to buy food] is not used for arms" (Kato 1975b: 1204). Therefore, Kato's polemic about Christianity must also be considered within the larger framework of this context. His interpretations may not align with certain segments of Christianity or even segments of Evangelicalism, but he is no less evangelical, if not more, than any of his sympathizers and critics alike.

Of the ten point proposals in safeguarding biblical Christianity in Africa that Kato suggested, one is the need of exegeting the Word of God (Kato 1975d: 182-183). Prince (2017: 50) observes, "Throughout the 1970s, the importance of the Bible to contextualization had been more affirmed than demonstrated." Perhaps Kato could be considered an exception as he attempted to demonstrate biblically and theologically that Christianity could be truly an African religion. His *Limitations of Natural Revelation, Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, and his posthumously published work such as *Biblical Christianity in Africa*, among others, show he truly wanted to anchor any contextual methodology to the Bible. Prince, however, is right that the general tendency was rather to assume contextualization than demonstrate it biblically. After more than forty years of the coinage of the term contextualization, Prince (2017: 68) calls for the urgency of developing contextual methodology biblically: "There is still much of the New Testament, and the Bible as a whole, that needs to be explored to give a comprehensive picture of biblical contextualization." Kato's voice indeed is prophetic in that he had attempted to engage the issue of contextualization biblically when some would envision such reality as futuristic.

Kato's strength also lies in that he was able to speak beyond the confines of Africa. I, as an Asian, more than four decades separated from Kato, and with very different challenges and struggles, can affirm many of the things he affirms. He and I can read the scripture together to come to a common understanding. In this aspect too, he has bequeathed to his readers a compelling argument that all theologies must not be contextual to the degree that they have no universal resemblance and application. God speaks to us through his words sometimes differently, but not contradictorily. Our cultures can enrich our reading of the text, but they can also blind us from seeing the truth. Kato seems to have a profound understanding of both the limitations of culture and the universal applicability of the text.

Conclusion

Paul Bowers (2008: 19) asserts that had it not been for Kato's early demise, he would have more clearly developed his theology. Therefore, it should be within this broader framework of Kato's vision and accomplishment that he must be read and interpreted (Bowers 2008: 14). In a way, I have tried to frame Kato within this larger vision without fully conforming to Bowers (2008: 11) recommendation that we should move beyond the polemic of critiquing and defending him. Bowers is right that given time Kato would have more fully and clearly articulated his ideas. However, Ferdinando (2004: 171) seems to be more on point when he claims that "given the conviction that his writings demonstrate" any changes Kato made would not have affected his overall conviction. I also suggest that Kato had already laid his foundation, and any development must consider this groundwork. It seems clear that for Kato, some of his convictions, such as the supremacy of God's Word, the limitations of natural revelation, and the need for biblical theology, are non-negotiable and even given time I doubt such convictions would have changed. Even though time has changed and our battles have taken new faces, the essential challenge of upholding God's word and the need to test all our methodologies through the Word remains. It is in this aspect that Kato's legacy remains very much alive.

Why did some react so fiercely to Kato's approach? After all, his aim was noble, his doctrine praiseworthy, and his life an example. He genuinely wanted Christianity to be an African religion, albeit in the way he

envisioned. Maybe people were not ready. Perhaps, he went too fast ahead of the masses. Cultural change on a community level cannot be shoved upon people; it must occur gradually. Changes do not always happen overnight. Had Kato been more patient perhaps he would have been better accepted. Maybe people do accept him, and it is the elitist theologians who are disgruntled with his proposals. I do not know. I am neither an African, nor have I been to Africa. Kato had already gone to be with the Lord even before I was born. Kato lived in a context and culture far removed from mine. By the time I read his writings, it had been more than 40 years since Kato has articulated his thoughts and ideas. All these things aside, from what I gather, Kato was genuinely an evangelical Christian and a leader. He is a man I respect immensely and a man I want to emulate.

End Notes

¹ However, one can hear a more sympathetic voice in his 2008 Byang Kato Memorial Lectures, Paul Bowers, "Byang Kato and beyond: The 2008 Byang Kato Memorial Lectures," *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* (January 1, 2009).

² "Byang Henry Kato," *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, accessed November 25, 2017, <https://dacb.org/stories/nigeria/kato-byang/>.

³ I found a reference to Kato's struggle with theological tensions only in two places. One is a brief entry in his diary where he referred to the tension between "God's sovereignty vs. man's responsibility." De la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 84. Another is where he seems to leave a small space for ambiguity concerning the destiny of some unevangelized before he goes on to affirm his understanding of the Bible. Byang H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kisumu, Kenya: Evangel Pub. House, 1975), 180.

⁴ For an outside perspective on the evangelicalism debate, see Gary J. Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 103–169. For a criticism of Vanhoozer's view and defense of scripture as propositional truth, see Paul Helm, *Faith, Form, and Fashion: Classical Reformed Theology and Its Postmodern Critics* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2014), 155–163. Even Helm affirms that assent to propositions is not the first and distinct event in the life of faith. *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵ In the footnote, Bediako suggests that Kato had positively responded to the allegation that he totally rejects the African past including their traditional religious life. However, Kato's responses that Bediako cites do not conform to what the latter is implying. *Ibid.*, 391, n30.

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Mark R. Elliott

Growing Up in America's Segregated South: Reminiscences and Regrets

Abstract

In this personal essay, originally given as an address delivered at the Sakharov Center, a human rights NGO in Moscow, Russia, on June 2, 2017, the author contemplates a lifetime of experiences in the Southern United States and the prejudices and racism that he saw during that time. He relates these experiences to similar issues in Russia today, adding a Christian plea for equality and fair treatment for all people by the Christian community, and also calling on the Church to stand in opposition to racism and anti-Semitism wherever it appears.

Keywords: racism, prejudice, segregation, E. Stanley Jones, Church, Russia

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The most frustrating conversation I ever had on race was in the early 1960s with a high school classmate and neighbor in suburban Atlanta. "George," whose staunch church-going parents were among the most prejudiced people I have ever known, claimed no Black had ever achieved anything of consequence in history. In response to my citing various accomplished African Americans, he argued that anything positive that could be said about Blacks derived from whatever percentage of White blood ran in their veins. I recently recalled this exasperating exchange as I read Annette Gordon-Reed's Pulitzer Prize-winning study, *The Hemingses of Monticello*. This rendering of the travail of an enslaved family, the property of Thomas Jefferson, including the fortunes of the four children he fathered by his slave maid, Sally Hemmings, is compelling reading. What a surprise it was for me to learn from Gordon-Reed that, centuries earlier, Jefferson had employed the very same spurious argument as "George" to discount any assertion of Black biological and intellectual equality with Whites.¹

That reflection came to mind in 2016 as I was pulling together my recollections of "Growing Up in America's Segregated South" for a presentation at Moscow's Sakharov Center, a human rights venue named in memory of Andrei Sakharov, famed Soviet nuclear physicist-turned-dissident. What follows tracks my painfully slow realization in the 1950s and 1960s of the depths of injustice and racism attendant upon my coming of age in Decatur, Georgia, just east of Atlanta.

I was born in 1947 in the United States in Kentucky, a border state that northerners suspect is southern and southerners suspect is northern. My birthplace was Stearns, a coal-mining town in the Appalachian Mountains of Eastern Kentucky. My father was bookkeeper and cashier for Stearns Coal and Lumber Company, and my mother taught high school English and drama. Unlike the Deep South, Kentucky mountain folk were pro-Union in the U.S. Civil War and lived in a region that was home to few African Americans, then or now.

I was only six in 1953 when my family moved to Georgia, so my childhood memories of Kentucky are slim. But my older sister tells me a few Black families lived behind the lumberyard on the outskirts of Stearns, with their children attending a small, segregated school.

I grew up in the Atlanta suburb of Decatur where segregation was also the rule, including Medlock Elementary, where I attended the second through seventh grades, and Druid Hills High School, for grades eight through twelve.² My high school was adjacent to the campus of

Emory University with which it had historic ties. The strong, well-deserved academic reputation that Druid Hills rightly deserved is well represented by Robert Morgan, with whom I studied American history and American government. This truly outstanding teacher required extensive readings that were often lengthy, demanding, or both. I remember, in particular, his classroom lectures in 1964 on two of these books: Margaret Mitchell's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Gone with the Wind* (1936) and W. J. Cash's *The Mind of the South* (1941). I still vividly recall Mr. Morgan's impassioned classroom assault on *Gone with the Wind* for its romanticized, sugar-coating of slavery. In counterpoint to Mitchell's "benevolent" slave masters and the mythology of harmonious master-slave plantation life, W. J. Cash painted a very different picture of Old and New South race relations. For many years a required reading in university courses in American history, *Mind of the South* portrays southern Whites more than willing to employ violence to keep African Americans in their "place," both before and after the Civil War. Cash documents a Southern elite manipulating poor Whites and Blacks alike. The goal, successful for well over a century, was to concentrate and perpetuate political and economic control of the region in a few white hands at the expense of poor Whites and Blacks alike.³

Druid Hills High School demographics were quite unusual for the South. While the exclusion of Blacks was commonplace, my high school had the second highest enrollment of Jewish students of any school in Atlanta. To its credit, I do not recall any animosity at Druid Hills between Gentile and Jewish students. On this score, my strongest recollection is simply of classes a fraction of their normal size on Jewish holidays.

The real divide at Druid Hills was socio-economic. Most of the students who came from Fernbank Elementary were from upper income families, including sons and daughters of Emory professors, while most of the students from Medlock Elementary (where my mother taught fourth grade) and Laurel Ridge Elementary were middle and lower middle class. As one hailing from Medlock, I perceived slights from Fernbank students that, in hindsight, were undoubtedly trivial. What appalls me – and embarrasses me – to this day is how fixated I was in high school on the Fernbank-Medlock/Laurel Ridge divide, while being almost completely oblivious to the blatant injustice of my attending Druid Hills while Black students near my home attended a decidedly inferior, under-funded school. I often marvel at how blind I was as a teenager to this gross inequity.⁴

In the early 1960s, when I was attending Druid Hills, racial conflict was far more apparent to me personally at church than at school. In those years Black families were moving in to neighborhoods closer and closer to my church, Pattillo Memorial Methodist. This precipitated “White flight” to Stone Mountain and other more distant suburbs east of Atlanta. In moving east, Whites came closer to the massive carving on Stone Mountain honoring Confederate heroes Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, and Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson, the largest relief sculpture in the world. Stone Mountain, cited by name in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, was a favorite site for Ku Klux Klan rallies, one of which, out of curiosity, my teenage friends and I attempted to observe, only to be prevented by a police roadblock. Looking back, I regret having attempted to attend such a racist demonstration, spared only by police.

Black families often had more children than the White families they replaced near my church, which put pressure on local schools. The city of Decatur approached Pattillo Memorial Methodist with a request to rent the Sunday school building for temporary classroom space. With so many church families moving away, our congregation certainly could have used the rental income. I clearly recall my father coming home one evening from a church board meeting very upset. He had urged the rental of the Sunday school building but was outvoted by congregants who could not abide the thought of Black children walking the halls of our church.

Around the same time I remember attending a general congregational meeting in which a prominent church member stood to his feet and vowed never to let a Black family cross the threshold of our church. No wonder Martin Luther King, Jr., declared 11:00 a.m. Sunday morning the most segregated hour in America.⁵ What a contrast to the warm welcome my wife and I received a decade later worshipping one Sunday at Atlanta’s Ebenezer Baptist Church, where Martin Luther King, Sr., and Jr. had co-pastored. Integration never came to our church because Pattillo Memorial Methodist merged with Avondale Methodist farther east, and the Pattillo property was sold to a Black congregation, Thankful Baptist, which worships there to this day.

Still, I can say all was not complete, unrelieved prejudice in our church. My youth minister, Rev. Warren Harbert, and his wife, Jo, labored against the prevailing racism in our congregation. Just as many church families were departing the Oakhurst neighborhood of Decatur, Warren and Jo moved in. I recall visiting them in their new home, with Black

neighbors all around, marveling at this concrete statement of opposition to the racial divide that was commonplace in early 1960s Atlanta.

Other memories come to mind. I remember as a child drawing and coloring a Confederate flag, many years before I understood how painful this symbol of slavery is to African Americans. Also as a child I remember a neighbor, a longtime member of Scott Boulevard Baptist Church, who could hardly carry on a conversation without a string of racial slurs. As a teenager I remember 1962 when my parents added a room onto our home, three miles distant from the troubled Oakhurst neighborhood of my church. The Black laborer who was digging the foundation trench asked me if there were any woods nearby. I told him he was free to use our bathroom, but he would not enter our house. Walking this grown man to a wood lot some distance from our home, I pondered how deeply the fear of violating some racial taboo must have been at work in this African American born in the image of God.

The next year, summer 1963, I recall turning 16 and my mother driving me down Confederate Avenue to the license bureau to take my driver's test. That same summer I remember a church youth choir tour to Savannah, Georgia, and a night ride downtown with teenagers from the church hosting us. As Blacks crossed the street in front of us, these Savannah teens called out "one," "two," and "three." I finally figured out they were joking about "points" they would score for hitting this or that African American. No one earned "points" that night for running over Blacks. But this flippant devaluation of human life on racial grounds, so common across the South, did translate, only months later in October, into the White racist bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, killing four young Black girls attending Sunday school. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice grew up in Birmingham, and her friend, 11-year-old Denise McNair, was one of the four children killed. Rice holds dear her photo of Denise receiving a kindergarten certificate from her father, a minister.⁶ I think back on that Savannah joy ride with shame because, while I found my fellow teens' "point system" awful and ugly, I said not a word of objection. Their sin of verbal commission was my sin of omission.

I also recall as a teenager the daily racist diatribe that Pickrick Restaurant owner Lester Maddox paid to place in the Atlanta Journal. This implacable segregationist brandished a gun, and his supporters wielded pick handles, daring any Black to try to integrate his business. In October 1964 Maddox ended up closing his restaurant rather than allow

African Americans to enter as other than cooks and waiters.⁷ Imagine my consternation in 1966 when Lester Maddox was elected governor of Georgia.

My mountain roots and my godly parents, of course, have influenced my views on race. Eastern Kentucky, where I was born, did not identify with the slave-owning plantation culture of the rest of the South, and in the Civil War, Appalachian Whites in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee often fought in Union, rather than Confederate, ranks.

And in Atlanta, growing up, I saw my parents treat Blacks with respect, as they believed Jesus would have. I remember my Mother's love for the Uncle Remus Tales of Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox penned by Joel Chandler Harris and her taking me and my sister to visit the Wren's Nest, Harris's home museum in Atlanta's West End. Years later, my wife and I took our four children to hear Black readings of Uncle Remus stories at the Wren's Nest. My mother also took me to see Walt Disney's "Song of the South," the film adaptation of Harris's sympathetic rendering of Black folk culture. Some critics of Uncle Remus stories in the hands of Joel Chandler Harris and Walt Disney have defined them as racist stereotyping, but others have defended them as deft coping with racial oppression.⁸

As a child and teen I never heard my father engage in racist language, which was very common in our neighborhood. And at church, as I shared, he challenged the racial animus of much of the congregation. But in his later years, Dad took a turn for the worse on matters of race, a great source of grief for me. I have long agonized, trying to comprehend how this could have happened. Mother always had a softening influence on Dad, and perhaps her passing in 1986, and Dad living another 28 years as a widower rendered him more susceptible to racial prejudice. Or maybe his being the victim at work of a Black armed robber is partly to blame. Unfortunately, as Dad lost his eyesight in his last years, he increasingly passed the time listening to Neal Boortz, a bigoted, hate-filled Atlanta radio talk show host who spewed poison into Dad's mind on a daily basis. Undoubtedly, this WSB Radio regimen played some role in steering my father amiss.

While my father's racial stereotyping of Blacks in his last years troubled me deeply, my one consolation is that, growing bias notwithstanding, Dad, to my knowledge, never personally treated African Americans disrespectfully. Willie Rollins was one proof of this to me. Following one of Dad's surgeries, this Black laborer from Wright-Brown

Electric Company where Dad worked, rang our doorbell, having made his way across Atlanta to pay Dad a visit during his recovery. Mr. Rollins had travelled by bus as far as he could and then had walked the last two miles to our home on a blistering, sweltering summer day. In southern parlance, it was hot enough to fry eggs on the sidewalk. Following his visit, I gave Willie Rollins a ride back to the bus stop and thanked him for his kindness in visiting Dad.

Besides my Kentucky roots and my parents, my Atlanta context certainly helped shape my views on race. While I saw raw racial prejudice firsthand growing up in Atlanta, I know from later reading as an adult that Georgia's capital weathered the racial storms of America's post-World War II decades better than most Southern cities. Progressive mayors, William B. Hartsfield (1937-61) and Ivan Allen, Jr., (1962-70), managed to steer Atlanta clear of a good deal of racial violence such that the city would choose to bill itself as "The City Too Busy to Hate."⁹ I know otherwise; still, the positive trajectory of Atlanta's race relations meant that its record compared favorably next to other Southern cities, especially compared to nearby Birmingham, Alabama, mired in some of the region's most egregious racial hostilities.

On October 12, 1958, four members of anti-Semitic hate groups used 50 sticks of dynamite to bomb Atlanta's Hebrew Benevolent Congregation. The rabbi of this, Atlanta's oldest and most prominent synagogue, was Jacob Rothschild, an outspoken proponent of integration. Upon learning of the blast, Mayor Hartsfield immediately made his way to the site and, uncharacteristic for a 1950s Southern politician, condemned the bombing in the strongest terms. Likewise, Ralph McGill of the Atlanta Constitution wrote editorials deploring this hate crime that were so eloquent they won him a Pulitzer Prize. Thus, prominent city spokesmen turned a blot on Atlanta's record into an opportunity to champion a more tolerant future for Georgia's capital. It worked, and the city continued its economic boom, in part because northern businesses and people migrating to it could see some modicum of truth in its mantra, "The City Too Busy to Hate."¹⁰

As an aside, I must admit I have no personal recollection of the synagogue bombing. I have often wondered, "Should I have remembered it?" I was only eleven at the time, but my family did own a television by this point, and we regularly watched the evening news. In 1990 I was moved by the Academy Award-winning film, "Driving Miss Daisy," which recalled the synagogue bombing.¹¹ But looking back, I have to confess that, growing

up in Atlanta, racial injustice only occasionally crossed my mind. I wish I could say otherwise, but such is the case.

In 1965 I made my way back to Kentucky to attend Asbury College, a small Christian liberal arts institution near Lexington, where my mother, my aunt, and my sister had graduated. In my four years there, Asbury was just beginning to integrate, allowing me to get to know Solomon Lasoi from Kenya. Playing on the same soccer team, I marveled not only at his scoring ability, but at his crisp, precise British accent and his flawless grammar. Just two years ago at a soccer reunion I learned that Solomon, now deceased, had been denied service in our college days in a Lexington restaurant. To their credit, Asbury classmates, in solidarity, walked out of the restaurant with Solomon. This Kenyan roomed with Terry Shaw who, like me, hailed from Atlanta. Terry's father was a Methodist minister who had taught his son to believe, like St. Paul, that in God's Kingdom, "there is neither Jew nor Gentile" (Galatians 3:28).

Asbury, with both the college president and the chairman of the board of trustees from the Deep South, was far too slow to integrate. One of its prods in the right direction was board member E. Stanley Jones, a widely respected and frequently published Methodist missionary to India. He knew firsthand how damaging America's discrimination and violence against Blacks was to the cause of missions and to the image of America abroad, not to mention their contradiction of Christ's teachings. Before my arrival on campus, back in October 1958, in an Asbury chapel message, Jones had decried the college's refusal to admit Blacks, and in protest resigned from the board of trustees. A decade earlier, in 1948, this same E. Stanley Jones had written a biography of his friend Mahatma Gandhi, whom Martin Luther King, Jr., credited as contributing to his adoption of non-violent civil disobedience.¹²

I will never forget April 4, 1968, a decade after Jones's prophetic chapel sermon, when news of King's assassination first hit Asbury's campus. I remember exactly where I was standing--in front of Johnson Main Dormitory, named after the school's retired Deep South president. A student from my very hometown, Decatur, Georgia, came up to me and said, "King deserved what he got." I was shocked no end by this callous justification of murder. But to my everlasting shame, I did not take my fellow Georgian to task. What was wrong with me that I did not object to this blatant hatred for the leader of America's Civil Rights Movement? His was, in a verbal sense, another sin of commission. Mine was, again, a sin of omission.

In the early 1970s at least my mother and my wife were proactive in exhibiting Christian compassion as they managed desegregation in their respective fourth and fifth grade classrooms in Decatur, Georgia, and Lexington, Kentucky. As Lexington's Breckinridge Elementary integrated in 1970, my wife, Darlene, broke up her fair share of fights between White and Black children. But once her Black, as well as her White, students realized she was going to treat them all exactly the same way, kids began to get along much better.

Darlene always made the most of Black History Month, including student reports on famous African Americans; and she did this in Birmingham, Alabama, and Anderson, South Carolina, as well as in Lexington, Kentucky, and Elgin, Illinois. One of her favorite object lessons was the book and movie about Ruby Bridges, the first grader who in 1960 helped integrate New Orleans Public Schools.¹³ Over the years Darlene's students, White and Black, were incensed by the book's and the film's depiction of the vicious verbal assaults White parents hurled at Ruby as she walked into school between federal marshals serving as body guards. Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles interviewed Ruby at length, amazed at this little girl's equanimity in the face of day-in, day-out jeers and threats. He came to conclude it was Ruby's simple, Christ-like faith that had allowed her to survive and overcome. Perhaps the most famous Civil Rights song of deliverance, we should remember, was "We Shall Overcome."¹⁴

In 1971, I took some comfort in my home state of Georgia bidding farewell to Lester Maddox as governor. It was a pivotal moment in Georgia race relations when the state replaced the racist Maddox with Governor Jimmy Carter, who genuinely believed in equality for all and who later, as president, championed global human rights, as Soviet dissidents, among others, came to understand. (I have always been proud of the fact that during Carter's governorship, the principal at Medlock Elementary chose my mother's classroom for future First Lady Rosalynn Carter to observe.)

Do my personal encounters with issues of race and prejudice growing up in America's segregated South have any bearing on Russia today? Unfortunately, I would argue they do, because racial discrimination is very nearly a universal human failing. Let me illustrate from personal experience.

In 1986, after twelve years on the faculty of Asbury College, I accepted a position at Wheaton College in suburban Chicago. Our four children, adopted from Vietnam and Colombia, had never experienced racial prejudice in small-town Kentucky, but, ironically, that was not to be the

case in the North. Our oldest son, Fernando, was repeatedly the victim of racial profiling by police on the streets of Wheaton, Illinois. Fernando was never arrested, but police frequently pulled him over for a license check, while I was never pulled over when I drove the same car.

I am sorry to say that two of my children experienced similar racial profiling in Moscow. In 1990 I led a Wheaton College student exchange with Moscow State University. On one occasion, as our group made our way into the Kosmos Hotel, my daughter, adopted from Vietnam, and an African American Wheaton student, were the only ones blocked from entering. This “misunderstanding” was quickly righted, as I proved to the doorman that Heather and Chris indeed belonged with our exchange group, but it could not help leaving a bad taste in our mouths. Then in 1997 I was in Moscow with my son, Pablo. In my dozens of times in Moscow since 1974, militia have never stopped me in the city’s famed subway—except that summer of 1997 when I was with Pablo. We even, on one occasion, were momentarily escorted into the interior of militia Metro holding cells, though fortunately not behind bars. Pablo’s Hispanic features were presumably mistaken for someone from the Caucasus or Central Asia. It is common knowledge how frequent document checks are for non-Slavs in Moscow, but only those corralled by the militia on a regular basis can know how demeaning it is. And for what purpose? The question has to be asked: Does the singling out of individuals with particular “suspect” physical features improve safety? Or does such racial discrimination simply further alienate racial minorities and lead some to radicalization?¹⁵

Czech dissident playwright Vaclav Havel made the remarkable journey from a Prague prison cell to a presidential palace in 16 months. Once in office he advised his fellow citizens that the truest test of Czechoslovakia’s devotion to democracy and human rights would be how they treated the minorities in their midst whom they liked the least. By this standard White America failed the test for centuries, including the century after the Civil War that ended slavery. Czechs and Slovaks—and many other European populations in the post-World War II era—have failed the test in their mistreatment of much-abused Roma. And for the foreseeable future, the test for Europe as a whole will be its Muslim immigrants. For Russia, the test comes in its treatment of its African and Asian exchange students and its Central Asian, Caucasus, Vietnamese, and North Korean immigrants and contract laborers.

From the perspective of Christian theology, the impetus for treating everyone with respect derives from the belief that every human being is created in the image of God. In addition, unpopular minorities—and by extension, unpopular religious minorities—deserve equal protection before the law on the basis of both Christian and Enlightenment principles. Unfortunately, these two foundations for equal justice for all run counter to the base tribalism and racially fueled nationalism that continue to raise their ugly heads on both sides of the Atlantic, and indeed, worldwide.

We should all recall the famous confession of Martin Niemoller, the German Protestant opponent of Nazism, who bemoaned his personal acquiescence in the face of evil. He did not protest Hitler's crimes against others (socialists, trade unionists, Catholics); "Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Finally, they came for me and there was no one left to speak out."¹⁶ As commendable as this admission may be, it still can be construed as pastoral pragmatism: We should defend the defenseless in case we should, in turn, require defense. A case can be made that it would be better to defend equal rights for all, regardless of personal consequences, simply because, under heaven, it is the right thing to do.

In my lifetime, like Niemoller, I, as well, have often failed to actively oppose bigotry and racial prejudice. For me, a sterling example of not retreating into a comfortable, safe shell is Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko and his outspoken condemnation of Soviet anti-Semitism. In the summer of 1974 my wife and I managed to make our way to pay our respects at the site of the Nazi murder of Jews at Babi Yar in Kyiv, Ukraine. The tiny granite marker then at the site made no reference to Jews, who were the great majority of the massacre's victims; only generic "Soviet citizens" were commemorated. Yevtushenko's famous 1961 poem, "Babi Yar," accepted none of this Soviet gloss. He wrote, "I am each old man here shot dead. I am every child here shot dead."¹⁷ Moving beyond censure of official silence on the Holocaust on Soviet soil, Yevtushenko figuratively donned a Jewish mantle to make a plea for a nobler Russia free of the shackles of anti-Semitism. The invitation extended to Yevtushenko to read his poetry in Red Square in July 2016, in what proved to be his last summer of life, is the Russia I hope and pray to see more of. Let me close with the oft-repeated prayer from the Orthodox Divine Liturgy, which I invoke for myself, for my fellow Americans, and for my many Russian friends who have so enriched my life: "Lord, have mercy."

End Notes

¹ At the Concert Spirituel in Paris Jefferson attended a violin performance of nine-year-old mulatto prodigy George Bridgetower, whose mother was Polish and whose father was from Barbados. When such mulatto “Bridgetowers” were brought to his attention later in America, the future president attributed any demonstrable talent to the white blood present. Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello; An American Family* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008), 260-62.

² For White youth coming of age in the segregated South see also Philip Yancey, *Soul Survivor: How My Faith Survived the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 2003); and Charles Dew, *The Making of a Racist: A Southerner Reflects on Family, History, and the Slave Trade* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2016). I have discovered that Yancey and I have parallel biographies at a number of points. We both grew up in the Atlanta suburb of DeKalb County with our high schools, Gordon and Druid Hills, competing in sports. We both graduated in the mid-1960s. We both observed White flight towards Stone Mountain, and much later we both visited the Kings’ Ebenezer Baptist Church. We both attended churches that did not admit Blacks. Yancey attended Wheaton College where I taught for 13 years. But above all, we both have agonized over our years of blindness to racial injustice surrounding us in suburban Atlanta (Yancey, *Soul Survivor*, 15-41).

³ The longstanding influence of Cash’s work, never out of print, is documented in Louis D. Rubin, “W. J. Cash after Fifty Years,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 67 (Spring, 1991); Charles W. Eagler, ed., *The Mind of the South: Fifty Years Later* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1992); and Paul D. Escott, ed., *W. J. Cash and the Minds of the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992). Joseph L. Morrison notes that Margaret Mitchell and W. J. Cash once met in her Atlanta club where they “had a good laugh over the naïve Yankee faith in the Old South legend, a legend Mind sought to demolish as earnestly as *Gone with the Wind* to perpetuate” (W. J. Cash, *Southern Prophet: A Biography and Reader* (New York: Knopf, 1967), 117.

⁴ Narvie J. Harris and Dee M. Taylor, *African-American Education in DeKalb County* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 1999); and *A Quarter-Century of Education in the DeKalb School System, 1947-1972*; <http://library.gsu.edu/search-collections-archives>.

⁵ King made the comment in answer to a student question at Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, December 18, 1963. “Segregated Churches Rapped,” *Greensboro (NC) Daily News*, 21 January 1964, A4.

⁶ Verna Gates, “Condoleeza Rice Recalls Racial Blast that Killed Childhood Friend,” September 14, 2013; <http://www.reuters.com/article/usa-alabama-memorial-idUSBRE98C11720130914>. See also Frye Gaillard, *Cradle of Freedom; Alabama and the Movement that Changed America* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 199-200.

⁷ Bob Short, *Everything Is Pickrick; The Life of Lester Maddox* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999), 54-64; http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/atlanta/obituary.aspx?pid_1114520.

⁸ Chris Haire, "The Tar Baby Gets a Bad Rap," *Charleston City Paper*, April 19, 2012; and Chris Haire, "Who Framed Brer Rabbit: The Truth about Disney's Classic and Controversial Song of the South," *MetroBEAT*, February 19, 2003. The ambiguity that Harris's Uncle Remus can evoke is illustrated in Joel Chandler Harris, *A Biography* by Paul M. Cousins (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968). Here one reads of a character who allegedly "had only pleasant memories of the discipline of slavery" (p. 4) while Uncle Remus's creator allegedly "never forgot...the darker aspects of slavery" (p. 223).

⁹ William B. Hartsfield, *Cities and Racial Minorities; Atlanta's Approach* (Washington, DC: National League of Cities, 1964); Ivan Allen, Jr., *Mayor: Notes on the Sixties* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971).

¹⁰ Melissa Fay Greene, *The Temple Bombing* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1996), 2-6; 255-57; Andy Ambrose, "Four Things You Should Know about Atlanta," *Perspectives on History* (December 2006); Leonard Ray Teel, Ralph Emerson McGill; *Voice of the Southern Conscience* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 319-24; <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/temple-bombing>.

¹¹ Edward A. Hatfield, "Temple Bombing," *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, 2007; Roger Ebert, "Driving Miss Daisy," January 12, 1990; <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/driving-miss-daisy-1990>.

¹² E. Stanley Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Interpretation* (Lucknow, India: Hodder and Stoughton, 1948); David Swartz, *From the Ends of the Earth: Evangelical Internationalism in the American Century*, forthcoming; Tom Albin, "A Man for Our Time: E. Stanley Jones," *Good News*, January 6, 2016; Leonard Sweet, "Forward" to reprint of E. Stanley Jones, *Abundant Living* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2014). On October 26, 1960, from Reidsville State Prison in south Georgia, Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote his wife, Coretta, asking for books from their home, including the Gandhi biography by Jones. Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters; America in the King Years, 1954-63* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 363; Clayborn Carson, *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Vol. 5, Threshold of a New Decade, January 1959-December 1960* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 531-32.

¹³ Ruby Bridges, *Through My Eyes* (New York: New York Scholastic Press, 2009); Robert Coles, *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (New York: Scholastic, 2010); "Ruby Bridges," television film, 1998.

¹⁴ Yancey, *Soul Survivor*, 97-98.

¹⁵ Matthew Kupfer and Bradley Jardine, "Cop Stop," *Moscow Times*, April 13, 2017, 3.

¹⁶ “Martin Niemöller, German Theologian and Pastor,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2017; <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Martin-Niemoller>.

¹⁷ Yevgeny Yevtushenko, *Early Poems* (London: Boyars, 1989), 149; Yevgeny Yevtushenko, *A Precocious Autobiography* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1963), 16-22; 138.

Logan Patriquin

Special Essay: Testing the Homiletical Buoyancy of James K. A. Smith's "Narrative Arc" Approach to the Fall

Abstract

Pastors have long been under-resourced when it comes to deciphering how to craft intelligible, persuasive, and preachable sermons on some newly "settled" Christian academic positions, particularly those surrounding the doctrine of the fall in light of contemporary science. The first three chapters of Genesis, along with New Testament allusions to the edenic creation of humanity, need not inspire near the level of fear and trepidation that ministers have long associated with the public proclamation of human origins. We will examine a new resource in this discussion by James K. A. Smith, make a modification, and then test it in the context of the public proclamation of a popular historical Adam passage. We will find in this new resource a model for understanding the Fall that remains faithful to the creedal tradition of the Church, engages current scientific theories of human origins, and, with a few tweaks and further discussion, can help pastors preach better sermons.

Keywords: The Fall, James K. A. Smith, Narrative Arc, homiletics, doctrine

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Introduction

We live in a scientific age that is testing the pliability of once unquestioned Christian theological tenets and this phenomenon is by no means limited to discussions surrounding human origins. Regrettably though, as contemporary scientific investigations continue to lead the collective social conscience towards embracing a gradual rather than static and instantaneous view of human genesis, evangelical pastors seem to be spending more time bailing water out of the sinking boat than inviting people aboard.

A quiet revolution appears to be taking place in Christian academic circles. More and more biblical scholars and theologians have been willing to hold their breath for a minute and dive into uncharted waters to examine potential holes in the hull of historical Christian doctrine, particularly those elements illuminated by genomic evolutionary science. Once quiet minorities of Christian philosophers and scientists have blossomed into vibrant and well-funded parties calling on their evangelical brethren to reexamine some crucial texts and dare we say potentially “reformulate” some foundational Christian doctrines. Highlighted most profoundly by this cultural tide are the Christian doctrines of *human uniqueness* and *the fall*.

Two popular responses follow: 1) a wholesale rejection of contemporary science encroaching on time-tested theological tradition, citing lack of epistemic warrant rooted in the doctrine of God, or 2) a bandwagon embrace of evolutionary theory coupled with a theological reconstructive enterprise aimed, like an axe, directly at the trunk of some cherished evangelical theological sensibilities like a historical Adam (and Eve). Is there no *via media*?

As it turns out, for a number of years prior to its publication, the contributors of the 2017 Eerdmans compendium, *Evolution and the Fall*, had been meeting together trying to allow for time and space in the context of communal worship for the “cultivation of constructive theological imagination [that] begins with liturgical formation,” a noble pursuit to be sure.¹ Supposing the goal of the project was to produce a text immersed in communal ecumenical worship, it is fair to examine the product by a simple standard: will it preach?

So often professional academic attempts at dramatic constructive theology miss the mark in the context of communal worship, especially in the proclamation of the Word of God. Take for example the all too contentious conversation surrounding a ‘historical Adam.’ In discussions I

have had with pastors on this topic, many seem more wary of the homiletical ramifications than potential theological issues involved in embracing a non-historical Adam framework. The question is not, can my theology adapt to an evolutionary account of human origins? It is: can my preaching adapt? Does this new resource, *Evolution and the Fall*, helpfully inspire cogent public proclamation of the Gospel in faithful Christian communities?

To answer this question we will examine James K. A. Smith's essay in the volume, "What Stands on the Fall? A Philosophical Exploration." By my estimation, his essay sets the tone of the text as a whole and also provides a *novum* speculative attempt at understanding the "event-ish" nature of the Fall. Dr. Smith argues that theological ingenuity in light of modern science ought to remain faithful to the "Narrative Arc" of the Christian faith. According to Smith, there is a lot of wiggle room, so to speak, when engaging present-day complications surrounding the traditionalist conception of the doctrine of the fall. That is, so says Smith, as long as we embrace the major plot turns of the time-tested and creedally formulated story of God's interaction with the world. Beyond creedal integrity though, will his admittedly speculative attempt at imagining a temporal yet non-punctiliar fall "event" hold water in the context of week in and week out preaching? We will find his "Narrative Arc" approach to be a helpful tool for faithful Christian proclamation concerning the doctrine of the fall, even in our scientific age.

Narrative Arc Foundations

Smith resists the infectious practice of theological "cherry picking" in order to more fully synthesize historic Christian faith with current scientific understanding. He argues:

Christian theology isn't like a Jenga game, an assemblage of propositional claims of which we try and see which can be removed without affecting the tower. Rather, Christian doctrine is more like the grammar of a story held together by the drama of a plot.²

For Smith, the story is best held together in the current dominating Augustinian portrait of the Fall.³

His Augustinian theology is buttressed by presenting a framework for Christian theological imagination that leads him to affirm the "event-ish" nature of Adam and Eve's fall into sin. In effect, he believes some

level of timefulness to a fall “event” is essential to make sense of the story. Luckily, one need not share his belief in the indispensable coupling of his framework and a “historical” fall to still find his narrative arc approach useful—especially in the practice of preaching.

He amiably suggests that the best methodology for theological exploration and development in pursuit of a synthesis between science and theology is one that works to formulate “faithful extensions” to the core plot or narrative arc of the story of God’s relationship with humans. The principal tenets of his narrative arc, borrowed from J. Richard Middleton, are: “[1] the goodness of creation, [2] a fall into sin, [3] redemption of all things in Christ, and [4] the consummation of all things.”⁴ Ultimately, all Christians should affirm with Smith that adding new twists and turns to the plot that change the fundamental nature of the story of salvation ought to be cautiously avoided. Pastors responsible for the quotidian development of sermons, bible study materials, and the spiritual formation of Christian leaders ought to be able to breathe easy at this sentiment.

Nevertheless, it would be more advantageous to embrace an amended version of Smith’s account of the core turns in the story. A more careful and faithful presentation of the narrative of scriptural and scientific revelation would include the revision of point two to say, “the nonessential entrance of sin into the created order by way of human volition.” As modified, point two retains the Christian commitment that sin is not simply a natural development of creation while also embracing the very real possibility of sin within God’s good created order. Stated this way, God is by no means the author of sin in any primary fashion. Additionally, the origin of sin is allowed an appropriate level of mysteriousness given our current and projected level of scientific understanding of this matter.

Our new elucidation of the major points in the narrative arc of scripture is as follows: 1) the goodness of creation, 2) the nonessential entrance of sin into the created by way of human volition, 3) redemption of all things in Christ, and 4) the consummation of all things. Operating with this amended summary of the vital movements in the narrative arc of salvation history, let us examine the preachability of Smith’s “modest proposal” at taking modern science and theology seriously with regard to the doctrine of the fall.

The Homiletical Viability of Our Amended Narrative Arc

To use Smith's borrowed words from Charles Taylor, Christians are substantially "cross-pressured" when attempting to commit to a *historical* and *perfect* couple as the fountainhead of humanity biologically and hamartologically speaking.⁵ Taking into account all we know about scripture and science, one ought to affirm with Smith that there are in fact scenarios that faithfully maintain commitments to the goodness of creation, human uniqueness, and humanity's rebellion into sin, without necessarily affirming an original human population of two. Below is my outline of Smith's provisional model of the Fall:

God creates a *good* world and produces biological life via an evolutionary process (which includes even the nastier parts like death, predation, and evolutionary dead-ends) → Creatures complex enough to be said to "bear the image of God" arise from this process with an original population of no less than 10,000 individuals → God corporately elects this emergent species as his covenant people to serve as his representation to and for the created order → These original humans are not *perfect*, in the popular sense, but are enabled and empowered to carry out God's *very good* mission for them on earth → They break faith with God by choosing instead to pursue their own perceived good and "fall."⁶ → After this nonessential temporal "fall" humanity is left in a state that requires the restoring grace of God found only in Christ Jesus.

Granted, certain movements in this presentation of the creation narrative feel destabilizing to some cherished evangelical theological sensibilities. One thinks specifically of what Smith calls Augustine's "priority-of-the-good" thesis—the logical, theological, and chronological commitment that the goodness of humanity precedes the Fall.⁷ How can one imagine a *good* humanity arising out of presumed millennia of what is usually described as "natural evil" (pain, death, predation, etc.)? Additionally, how about the corporate election of a minimum population of 10,000 original humans, or the renunciation of "perfection" language? Traditionally the aforementioned issues have dominated the discussion, but much work has been done to provide a path forward on these points. What has not yet been presented, in a way that aids homileticians, is how one can faithfully integrate a corporate "fall" into our homiletical theology.

Christians have historically professed in creedal fashion (whether or not it has been preached this way) the *goodness* rather than *perfection* of God's initial creation. To this point Smith helpfully places the category of perfection, as it relates to the created order and humanity specifically, into its proper eschatological place at the consummation of the age.⁸ Still looming large though is the question: Does the affirmation of universal human sinfulness require a fall "event"? Here is where Smith's thought is particularly helpful to homiletical practitioners hoping to cobble together sermons that are persuasive in our 21st century context that are also faithful to the traditionally accepted narrative of salvation as well as the text of scripture.

For too long most ministers have been presented with, "*either* ahistorical 'theological' claims [not in line with the narrative arc of scripture] *or* literalist 'historical claims' [not tenable by scientific standards]," as the only options for decoding the text of Genesis 1-3, argues Smith.⁹ Out of this vacuum, Smith nobly introduces a nuanced interpretation of the text by postulating a temporal and timeful fall that is not necessarily instantaneous. He opines:

Since we are dealing with a larger population in this 'garden,' so to speak, there is not one discrete event at time T_1 where 'the transgression' occurs. However, there is still a temporal, episodic nature of a Fall. We might imagine a Fall-in-process, a sort of probationary period in which God is watching...So the Fall might take place over time T_1 - T_3 . But there is some significant sense of before and after in this scenario.¹⁰

This will preach. Let me explain.

The Necessity of Event-ish Language

Smith rightfully resists the trend of some prominent theologians and biblical scholars who construct *representative* or *archetypal* models for understanding Adam and Eve, on which the future of humanity's election into immortality or "fall" to perpetual finitude hangs on their individual choices.¹¹ Especially given what we know of humanity at the time in question, it would not be just of God to impute guilt and impart a corrupted sinful nature upon the rest of the human population if only two of these original 10,000 or so, "eat the fruit," metaphorically speaking.

The most popular archetypal options try to portray God as just in his ensuing imputation and impartation of judgment, in the form of a corrupted and mortal nature onto every unsuspecting bystander, by depicting Adam as a *priest* or *king* for/of all original humans. If Adam was corporately responsible for all humanity in his priestly or kingly duties then God could properly hold all humanity responsible for their designated leader's transgression, so some say. Deborah Haarsma, a scientific voice of reason, calls us to remember that the social context of these original 10,000 or so humans was a disjointed jumble of geographically and culturally detached tribal societies, not some collective human cohort isolated in the Ancient Near East under one leader.¹² So far as paleoanthropology can tell us, there is no reasonable way to imagine a kingly or priestly structure over all original humans; especially one needed to make sense of the just spread of guilt and a corrupted human nature by means of divine imputation and impartation.¹³

This is why speaking of a “fall” in time as something more like “an episode-in-process” is valuable. Smith offers a timely illustration:

I think we make room for something like this in other contexts. For instance, when did I “win” the Daytona 500? Only at the checkered flag? What if I was leading for the final twelve laps? Or when did I earn a gold medal for the marathon? Only when I crossed the finish line? The “event” of my “win” does not seem to be simply punctiliar. Every coach knows this when he points out that, while the other team beat us with a score as the clock ran out, we “lost” the game earlier by missing scoring chances, etc. The point is that our folk notion of an “episode” is quite elastic.¹⁴

This non-punctiliar, episode-in-time approach retains a real *before* and *after* sense to sin that helpfully allows the origin of sin to remain mysterious. What we have then instead is an exposition of the Fall that retains both Smith's “priority-of-the-good” thesis and his “necessity-of-grace” thesis—as opposed to Pelagian attempts to locate some inherent human ability with respect to salvation—though he mistakenly claims that holding these two theological points necessarily makes one Augustinian.¹⁵

Preaching Aids

With James K. A. Smith's narrative arc approach to the doctrine of the fall one can faithfully preach the stories in Genesis 1-3 with theological

conviction. One can boldly proclaim that God created and it was very good, that humanity has indeed “fallen” into sin, and that we are completely and totally incapable of reclaiming our *very good* purpose apart from the saving work of Christ Jesus on our behalf. Truthfully though, preaching this story like a story is still the way to go.

There is nothing disingenuous about preaching the rich theological account of Adam and Eve like any other Bible story, especially to children, so long as we are consistent with our language. When referring to Adam and Eve let us regularly include tags like: story of, narrative of, or epic of. In this way, we can mine the depths of these stories for their crucial theological tidbits without communicating to our congregations that one must believe in direct, literalist, renditions of the text in order to retain the heights of God’s revelatory truth about himself and about our pre-and postlapsarian relationship to him.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22

Many ministers will acquiesce to the fact that the narrative of Genesis 1-3 could be interpreted in light of modern science without threat to the narrative arc of scripture, so long as mention of Adam and Eve was isolated to those texts. Yet they aren’t. How do we preach passages like 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 and Romans 5:12-21 where Paul emphasizes the sin of an individual (Adam) to in turn highlight the salvation that comes through one man—Jesus Christ? We will examine the text of 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 through our amended version of James K. A. Smith’s narrative arc criteria to see if we can’t maintain homiletical buoyancy in these choppy waters.

Throughout chapter fifteen of first Corinthians Paul has been waxing eloquently on how resurrection is an indispensable foundation of Christian theology. If Christ is not raised, then we have no hope to be raised. He attempts to further hammer this point home in the Greco-Roman consciousness of this important port city by reminding the Corinthians of the hamartiological foundations of their current problem, “For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.”¹⁶ Essentially, Paul boasts that universality of human sinfulness (coming through Adam) requires all to seek Christ as their only hope for resurrection onto eternal life with him, in Pauline language, “to receive what is imperishable.” Does this text demolish our theological Jenga tower?

First, would interpreting this text within a non-historical Adam framework undermine the goodness of God's prelapsarian creation? Certainly not, the entire presentation of resurrection theology in 1 Corinthians 15 is God's eschatological remedy for sin. He is making good, presumably something better, out of what transpired hamartiologically. God does not trash the originally good physical nature of humanity but, making beauty out of ashes, adds to the original goodness a participation not only in the image of God, broadly speaking, but in the "image of the man of heaven"—who is Christ Jesus our Lord.¹⁷

Next, does filtering this Pauline argument through a non-historical Adam framework undercut the Christian commitment to the universality of human sinfulness or blame God for our self-inflicted predicament? No. Rhetorically speaking, one does not strip Paul's words of any measure power or theological coherence by superimposing some twenty-first century categories to describe his argument. Suppose we described it this way:

Since death (the problem) has a human origin, resurrection (the solution) must also have a human origin. Because in our current state all die as a result of sin, all must be made alive through Christ, the God-Man.

In the reconstructive practice of public proclamation we don't lose anything or pull the wool over anyone's eyes by using such language. Even though Paul uses particular language (Adam) and undoubtedly embraces an ancient, pre-scientific understanding of human origins rooted in a historical couple, placing all humanity in Adam as a literary figure accomplishes the same theological acrobatics as Paul's intended resurrection theology. A non-historical Adam framework, even coupled with a non-punctiliar "event-ish" fall, does not threaten the under riding argument of Paul's theological exhibition.

Finally, would replacing "Adam" with an early human population that elects to pursue its own collectively identified "good" instead of God's *elected good*, allow for redemption outside of Christ? Certainly not, even if one is able to envision a speculative, non-instantaneous, collective "fall" into sin, one still requires a historical "second Adam" to supply a way of redemption. By means of divine general and special revelation we find that simply being human at this stage of biological history means we are relationally distant from God because of sin. Additionally, the scriptures unashamedly disclose that our only hope to rectify this problem is the

atoning work of Christ on our behalf and the eventual sharing of his resurrection nature at the consummation of the age.

When encountering passages of scripture that seem to describe a historical Adam and Eve involved in a instantaneous fall in time, pastors don't need to prevaricate or conjure up with some fancy verbal work around to remain theologically, scripturally, and scientifically faithful in their sermons. Instead, with one's head held high one can proclaim, with Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, that just as all humanity is unified in death because of sin all humanity is unified in resurrection because of Christ. The real issue here is that all who share in sin will one day share in Christ's resurrected nature. Will you be resurrected to eternal life with Christ or have to stand before a holy God having not accepted, by faith, his meritorious sacrifice made on your behalf? Interpreting this text in a non-traditionalist way concerning Adam and the Fall does not fundamentally redirect the narrative arc of scripture nor does it make for cop out expository preaching.

Conclusion

Contemporary scientific pressures do not undermine the fabric of the narrative arc of scripture. Historic, Trinitarian, Orthodox Christianity provides enough flexibility to absorb modern scientific revelations about human origins. Not only can one integrate this theologically; one can embrace it homiletically. It is not advisable to get up in front of a congregation and lecture them about the literary as opposed to historical nature of the biblical Adam. Nonetheless, it is crucial to preach sermons that fix Christ as the solid rock and foundation of our faith, not Adam, who is shifting sand in light of genomic evolutionary science.¹⁸

Christ is the second Adam and we can preach with Karl Barth that as we encounter the living Word (who is the eternal Logos) in Genesis 1-3 we participate in his vivifying and recapitulating grace in as much as we see ourselves incomplete in Adam yet completed in Christ Jesus.¹⁹ The Fall narrative of scripture reveals to us our dilemma as a people estranged from God and hopeless apart from his grace. Contrary to populist rhetoric it is, in fact, possible for preachers to formulate and proclaim a doctrine of original sin and the origin of sin that is faithful to all we know of human genomics so far and also doesn't adversely affect the plot of salvation history, or undermine the credibility of our sermons.²⁰

End Notes

¹ William T. Cavanaugh and James K. A. Smith, "Introduction-Beyond Galileo to Chalcedon: Resources for Reimagining Evolution, Human Origins, and the Fall," in *Evolution and the Fall*, eds. William T. Cavanaugh & James K. A. Smith (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), xviii.

² James K. A. Smith, "What Stands on the Fall? A Philosophical Exploration," in *Evolution and the Fall*, eds. William T. Cavanaugh & James K. A. Smith (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 50.

³ He continues, "In that sense, the doctrine of original sin and the historical understanding of the Fall is woven into the fabric of a story that is ultimately the drama of God's gracious interaction with humanity." *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2027) cited in Cavanaugh and Smith, 55.

⁶ I take some stylistic and theological liberties in my summary. You can read the entirety of James K. A. Smith's "imagined scenario" in *Evolution and the Fall*, 61-62.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁹ Author emphasis, *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹¹ For perhaps the most in vogue representative model see, John H. Walton, "A Historical Adam: Archetypal Creation View," in *Four Views on the Historical Adam*, eds. Stanley N. Grundy, Matthew Barrett, and Ardel B. Candy (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013) 113-115. Walton imagines a scenario where out from among a young and immature race of early humans God selects Adam and Eve and takes them to a holy place. Within this theoretical arena Adam and Eve serve as representatives of an entire already present race (he uses the language of "archetypes"). In this epic, God gives Adam and Eve all that is necessary to live in relationship with him but also provides guidelines, e.g., "Don't eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The goal of this experiment is to provide an environment for Adam and Eve to be obedient and then by their punctiliar and singular righteousness God would consequently gift immortality to the entire present and future human race, i.e., eating of the tree of life. Instead, humanity's archetypal couple disobeys and punishment for their disobedience is then imputed to the entire race. For a fuller depiction of his model see, John Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2-3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).

¹² Deborah Haarsma spoke this timely corrective as part of panel discussion on the “Historical Adam” at the 2017 Center for Pastoral Theologians Conference in Oak Park, IL. 24 October 2017.

¹³ In all fairness, many scholars arguing for an archetypal Adam and Eve do not necessitate belief in a postlapsarian divine imputation of guilt and impartation of a sinful nature. Many are willing to embrace some sense of a social and/or generational spread of sin throughout the original human population.

¹⁴ Smith, *Evolution and the Fall*, 63 fn 32.

¹⁵ Smith sees this a defense of Augustinian theology because it protects and advances his “priority-of-the-good” thesis and his “necessity-of-grace” thesis. Missing from his critique of traditions he characterizes as “non- or even anti-Augustinian (Orthodox, Wesleyans),” is the realization that Augustinian theology does not have a corner of his two theses (58 fn. 27). Simply because Augustine is not a heretic does not mean he is the standard for orthodox positions on the Fall. For example, while Irenaeus characterizes original humanity as infantile and not fully developed, he in no way ontologizes the Fall making sin’s existence in creation an assault on God’s goodness. Quite the opposite in fact, before “falling” into sin in Irenaeus terms, though infantile, humanity was very good, walking in faith with God and relying on his enabling and developing grace. Tragically, sin arises from human ignorance and leaves humanity estranged from God and their destiny apart from the redemptive work of Christ on their behalf. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, bk. 4, ch, 38, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956, Vol. I.), 1-2. To suggest that affirming the “priority-of-the-good” and the “necessity-of-grace” theses necessarily makes one Augustinian instead of simply orthodox is categorically false.

¹⁶ 1 Cor 15:21-22, *NRSV*.

¹⁷ 1 Cor 15:49, “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.”

¹⁸ Matthew 7:24-27.

¹⁹ “Adam is not a fate which God has suspended over us. Adam is a truth concerning us as it is known to God and told to us.” Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol.4, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, part 1, trans. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (New York: T&T Clark, 1956), 511.

²⁰ For one such attempt at an evolutionary and evangelical non-Augustinian constructive theology of the Fall see Logan Patriquin, “Towards and Evolutionary Understanding of the Doctrine of Original Sin,” *Theology and Science* (forthcoming).

From the Archives: Of Children's Teeth and Missions: The Papers of Martha R. Jones

Sometimes people ask about the strangest items we might have in the collections of the Archives and Special Collections of the B.L. Fisher Library. We usually respond by talking about the presence of a collection of children's teeth, found among the Papers of Martha Richardson Jones (1884-1974).¹ While the presence of human teeth might seem odd at first, the story of Martha Jones is one of great determination, creativity, and inspiration.



Some of the Children's Teeth from the Martha R. Jones Collection

Born June 12, 1884 in Nashville, Martha was motivated by her own illnesses as a child to study the chemistry of food and nutrition at Vanderbilt University and Peabody College.² She went on to the Department of Physiological Chemistry at Yale University on a fellowship for doctoral studies. While there, she became the first woman research assistant in the department in 1918, ultimately earning her Ph.D. in 1920. She then went on to do research at the University of California in the Pediatrics Department of their medical school. She focused on studying the effects of acid and alkali in the diet of dogs. In particular she looked at their bones and teeth. She found that too much alkali in the diet softened the layers under the surface of teeth and bones, while too much acid would cause decay of the enamel. While she presented her findings in 1928 at the International Association for Dental Research, her colleagues doubted her findings because they were not proven on human subjects.



**A Japanese Sugar Plantation Worker and her Infant
The Developmental Health of Children's Bones and Teeth were
Martha Jones' Primary Concern**

From 1928 to 1963, Martha Jones worked as a research associate at the Queen's Hospital in Honolulu, Hawaii. Jones focused on the diet of children at Ewa Plantation, where most of the workers were of Filipino or Japanese origin. The Ewa Plantation began in 1890, and by 1923 became the first sugar company in the world to raise ten tons of sugar per acre; by 1933 Ewa Plantation produced over 61,000 tons of sugar a year.³ The children had high levels of mortality, severe levels of sickness and showed signs of poor bone formation and teeth decay. As she compared this with the children of native Hawaiians (whose children in comparison had good health and excellent teeth and bone formation), she realized that part of the underlying problem was in their diet. The Hawaiian traditional diet of taro, sugar cane, fish, breadfruit, banana, and sweet potato was well balanced between acidic and alkaline sources. In response, she developed a food made of cane syrup, milk and *poi* (a traditional Hawaiian food of mashed, cooked taro root). She marketed this syrup as Gee-Gee Syrup with the use of characters called the Gee-Gees.



Teeth from the Martha Jones Collection that Clearly Show Signs of Decay

Martha Jones continued to do research on the relationship between diet and dental decay by studying U.S. servicemen at Pearl Harbor Submarine Base and the Navy Academy of Annapolis. Jones established the Martha R. Jones Foundation for Health Education in 1961 at Asbury Theological Seminary, in the hopes that missionaries would take a serious interest in the nutritional and physical needs of the people they were sent to serve, and not just focus on the spiritual needs. Martha R. Jones died on January 21, 1974 at the age of 89, after giving a lifetime of service to the nutritional care of children for their well-being and physical development.

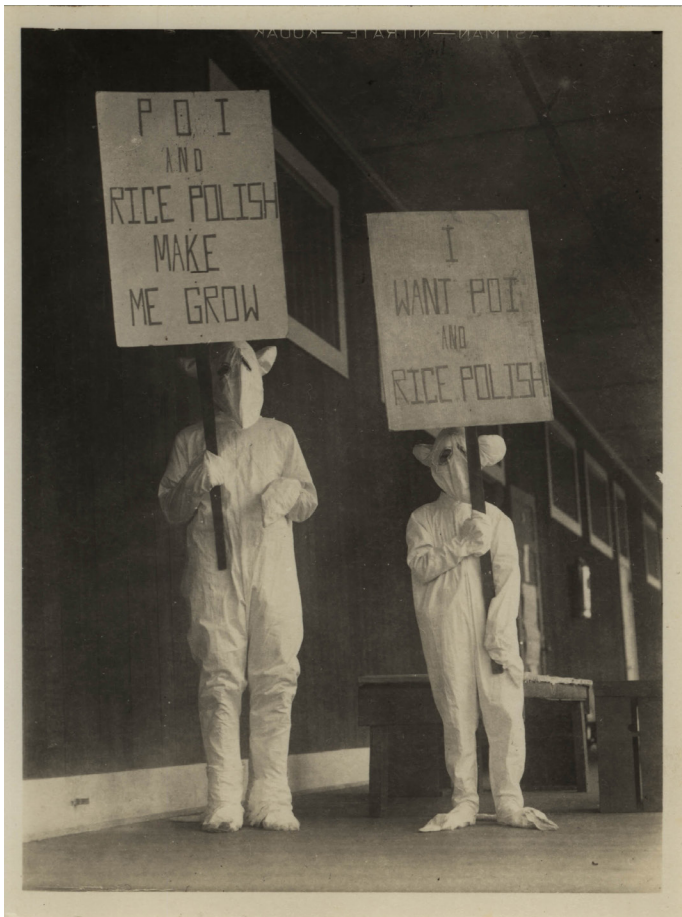


Photo of Some of the Marketing Martha Jones did to Encourage the Use of More Balanced Diets Among the Sugar Plantation Children

The archives of the B.L. Fisher library are open to researchers and works to promote research in the history of Methodism and the Wesleyan-Holiness movement. Images, such as these, provide one vital way to bring history to life. Preservation of such material is often time consuming and costly, but are essential to helping fulfill Asbury Theological Seminary's mission. If you are interested in donating items of historic significance to the archives of the B.L. Fisher Library, or in donating funds to help purchase or process significant collections, please contact the archivist at archives@asburyseminary.edu.



Paper Cutout of the Big Gee-Gee, Used to Market Martha Jones' Gee-Gee Syrup

End Notes

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

² Most of this information comes from the finding aid for the Papers of Martha R. Jones in the B.L. Fisher Library, located at: <http://place.asburyseminary.edu/findingaids/22/>.

³ Cf. http://www2.hawaii.edu/~speccoll/p_ewa.html. This is the finding aid for the Register for the Ewa Plantation Company, which is held by the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association Plantation Archives. Retrieved 7/6/2018.

Book Reviews

Devotions on the Greek New Testament: 52 Reflections to Inspire and Instruct, Vol. 2

Edited by Paul N. Jackson
Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan
2017, 192 pp., paperback, \$18.99
ISBN: 978-0-310-52935-4

Reviewed by Timothy J. Christian

This second volume to the *Devotions on the Greek New Testament* series from Zondervan features the works of a number of veteran NT scholars from the broadly evangelical theological tradition, for example, Anthony Thiselton, David deSilva, Nijay Gupta, Steve Walton, Cynthia Long Westfall, and Todd Still to name a few. The book contains 52 short essays (2-4 pages each), presumably one for each week of the year, on particular NT passages which comment upon the Greek text and insights lost in English translations. Its strength comes from the quality exegetical work of the scholars who contribute these brief essays. The detailed, scholarly content of each essay is solid. Moreover, the book highlights passages from the whole NT covering every corpus of the NT, and in fact has at least one essay on every book of the NT.

There are, however, several issues with this second volume. Most importantly, the title and subtitle do not reflect the content of the book. In other words, it claims to be “devotions” and even “to inspire.” Yet the

majority of the content in these essays—I have deliberately termed them “essays” and not “devotions” because I do not think it appropriate to classify them as “devotions”—is focused upon instruction (“to...instruct”). This is highly problematic. The terms “devotions” and “inspiration” in biblical and spiritual formation circles have strong connotations that the material will have some deep practical and/or applicable insight into Christian living, theology, ministry, and the church. These terms conjure up the idea of daily devotional books such as Oswald Chambers’ *My Utmost for His Highest* or perhaps on a popular level something like Joyce Meyer’s *Starting Your Day Right: Devotions for Each Morning of the Year*. Such popular devotional books often lack content, biblical and exegetical accuracy, and pull heavily from pop-psychology. Thus, there is a strong need in the guild of biblical studies—and might I suggest even for popular audiences—for devotional materials based upon solid exegetical interpretations of the biblical texts. In that regard, this volume is tremendously disappointing, not in that it does not provide exegetical insight on the Greek text, but that it only has exegetical insight on the Greek text. Only a very small handful of essays actually break into the realm of application (see especially David R. McCabe on Rom 5:6, Nijay K. Gupta on Phil 2:3-4, and J. Scott Duvall on Rev 3:20). I think that this demonstrates still the lack of ability among biblical scholars to apply the biblical text to our current surroundings, whether that be daily living, Christian ministry, the church, or important theological debates. It probably stems from an underlying timidity and tentativeness within biblical studies to make truth claims about God. It is unfortunate that, even among evangelical scholars, we fall so short of the bar to inspire devotion and worship to God, applying the biblical text in practical and helpful ways. Now I am not sure what or whom is to be at fault for this lack of inspiration and overemphasis upon instruction in this volume (perhaps the editor; but I do not know). I certainly do not think that it comes from the contributors—my esteemed colleagues—whom are to be commended for their brilliance on the Greek NT. Regardless the reason, there were only a few moments while reading the book that the phrase came to mind, “That’ll preach!” This should not be so for a book claiming to inspire and be devotional. Every essay should leave the reader saying, “Amen! Preach it!” Even a simple, written prayer at the beginning or end of each would have helped (only a few did this). There are of course other series available that focus upon practical application of the NT to our world today, for example, the NIV Application Commentary series. Also, some

commentaries will occasionally provide a “Bridging the Horizons” section which discusses what the text means for today. After reading this volume, the need truly is still there for a Christian devotional book that is both based upon exegesis of the text (to instruct) and applies that to practical issues in life, ministry, and the church today (to inspire). In short, NT scholars still need to aspire to move beyond interpretation of the text to its application, at least when it comes to composing devotions on the Bible.

Another related issue has to do with the audience of the book: who is this written for? At times, the instructional nature makes it seem as though it is for pastors and students, yet often the language and terminology used is far too technical for them to understand. Also, there are often no aids for non-experts to read the long Greek passages. Other times, it seems as though it is written for scholars, but why would scholars write to instruct other scholars in ways that at other times are too simple and simplified? For future volumes to be effective, this issue of audience will need to be sorted out by the editors and publishers beforehand. The dual-audience approach did not work in this volume.

Overall, I would not recommend this book for those academically inclined seeking robust insights from the NT *that will also deeply impact their spiritual life*. Moreover, I would not recommend it to scholars because it will be far too basic at times, and there are better and more detailed resources to receive instruction on these passages (commentaries, articles, etc.). Others may differ in opinion and some scholars might prefer that there be a lack of application. For these, I would recommend this volume. But by and large, the book does not deliver spiritually transformative or formational devotions on the Greek NT, for which I am greatly disappointed.

The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom: A Theological Introduction to Wisdom in Israel

Tremper Longman III

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2017, 336 pp., hardback, \$32.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-2711-6

Reviewed by David Nonnenmacher, Jr.

Scripture's notorious books on wisdom (Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes) have long been at the center of discussion as scholars continue to debate wisdom's origin. Is wisdom the result of humankind's interaction with life's hurdles, or does it have a more divine heritage? Just what is wisdom, after all? The answer to these questions can perhaps be best seen in the title of Tremper Longman III's book *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom*. Here, Longman heavily asserts that wisdom is not merely practical, but it is also theological, as the aforementioned texts consistently point toward one's relationship with the Lord. Rather than taking the more commonly implemented historical-critical approach to such a topic, Longman prefers the synchronic (or canonical) approach initially laid out by Brevard Childs. It is through this very methodology that Longman emphasizes the "wisdom books" along with the entirety of the canon as being the scriptures of the church.

The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom is markedly divided into five parts, all of which aim to explore the nature of wisdom primarily from an OT perspective. Part one introduces the reader to scripture's wisdom literature by first exploring Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes. Longman concludes that the premise of all three is that wisdom is "the fear of the Lord," but he notes that this is expressed in different ways. Proverbs is inclined toward prescriptive advice while wisdom in Job is mostly seen in the dialogue between him and his friends. Part two explores where wisdom can be seen in other portions of the OT. He begins by more broadly observing other books such as Deuteronomy and Psalms before narrowing his field to biblical figures such as Joseph, Daniel, Adam, and Solomon. In the case of the former two characters, Longman notes that "they both attributed their wisdom to God" (93), while the case of the latter two serve as the example of what *not* to do in the pursuit of wisdom.

Part three contains a substantial shift as wisdom is examined through both the broader context of scripture (from prophecy to law) as well through various writings found elsewhere in the ANE (from Mesopotamian to Egyptian). Longman opposes the statement that wisdom is set apart from other writings due to its cosmopolitan nature — that is, its connection with experience, observation, tradition, and correction rather than being derived from revelation. Part four inquires as to wisdom's practicality. What are the consequences for those who adhere to a foolish lifestyle? Did Israel establish a cultural setting that cultivated wise living? And more uniquely, is there a deeper meaning to wisdom's personification as a woman? Finally, part five discusses wisdom literature in the inter-testamental period as well as in the NT. Longman concludes here that the NT contains significant continuity with the OT, ultimately stating, "Jesus is the epitome of God's wisdom, or, perhaps better, the incarnation of God's wisdom" (256).

One of the many notable strengths of Longman's work includes his insertion of summaries at the end of each segment. In league with this, he makes it a point to offer overviews before entering into critical analysis and interpretation, making readability a dominant trait in his writing style. This is especially valuable when considering the vast amount of material covered from front to back. With respect to content, Longman does well in challenging the modern understanding of wisdom. He demonstrates it to be something uniquely connected with the writings of the OT and the revelation of God — a position not generally upheld in scholarship today. It is difficult to critique this publication. Of the few things that could be pointed out, it could perhaps be said that Longman occasionally insists on some topics when they are not *entirely* relevant to the broader thrust of the text. For example, the personification of wisdom as a woman probably does not offer up as many challenges for female readers as he insists. Topics such as these may present themselves as mildly tangential, but Longman is quick to return to his point in well-orchestrated fashion.

It can be said without reservation that Longman's *The Fear of the Lord is Wisdom* has much to contribute to its field. It would do well in the hands of either a pastor or professor, but its rare tilt toward the esoteric may make this book not as suitable for a layperson's Bible study. One can hope that more will chime in on the conversation as a result of Longman's work.

Christian Women in the Patristic World: Their Influence, Authority, and Legacy in the Second Through Fifth Centuries

Lynn H. Cohick and Amy Brown Hughes

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2017, 336 pp., paperback, \$34.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-3955-3

Review by Michael Tavey

Christian Women in the Patristic World; Their Influence, Authority, and Legacy in the Second Through Fifth Centuries by Lynn H. Cohick and Amy Brown Hughes is an insightful read that will help readers understand how the female voice helped shape Christian theology and tradition in the early Patristic era. Such a book is needed, considering that most books devoted to the theological developments of this time period seem to solely focus on the male voice, with scant mention of how women helped shape theology of this period. A word of caution, however, should be noted. Not all of the women in their work can be historically verified. Some of these women, although influential within the Christian world, are most likely fictitious. Thus, the title can be somewhat misleading. Therefore, it is advised to read this book more as a prism on how the early Church was influenced and shaped by the metaphorical female voice, and not how literal historical women helped shape the early Christian era, although some of them most certainly did.

Cohick and Hughes structure their book according to nine chapters, with each chapter addressing a prominent “woman” who had some level of influence or legacy within the Patristic era. The first two chapters are devoted to three prominent martyrs: *Thecla*, the proto-virgin Martyr, and Perpetua and Felicitus. Concerning *Thecla*, legend has it that she was the first female martyr in the history of the Church. Concerning Perpetua and Felicitus, it is revealed how their martyr stories were the most retold and most influential in the early Christian era. These chapters help detail how their legacies shaped early Christian theology, and how their stories affected later prominent women in their own stories. The third chapter addresses “Christian women in Catacomb art.” The chapter details how such art became a vital part in the formation of worship practices

in the early Christian era. The fourth chapter explains how certain female voices, like Blandina, helped shaped the ascetic life of the Christian.

The fifth chapter focuses on Helena Augusta, and how she used her authority, power, and influence to help transition the early Church from a place of persecution to a place of prominent religious power and authority in Rome during the fourth century ADE. Most intriguing is the story that details her pilgrimage to Jerusalem, where she supposedly finds the “True Cross,” or the cross upon which Jesus was crucified. The sixth chapter addresses how women took a prominent place in Christian pilgrimages, and how they influenced the understanding of Christian pilgrimage. The next two chapters focus upon four women: Macrina, Paula, Marcella, and Melanias. These four women are known for their great theological and doxological influence on the early Church. Most notable among them is Macrina who, according to Gregory of Nyssa, had a significant and prominent role in teaching and mentoring him. If so, then it is no understatement to suggest that Macrina had an instrumental, albeit indirect, part in the formation of the Constantinople-Nicene creed. The last chapter details the lives of Pulcheria and Eudocia, who were later empresses that affected the theology and growth of the Church in the fifth century ADE.

Cohick and Hughes’ book will provide teachers, students, pastors, non-pastors, and others with an insightful understanding of how the female voice shaped theology in the early Patristic era, and how such shaping affects our own theological and doxological lives.

Introducing Theological Method: A Survey of Contemporary Theologians and Approaches

Mary M. Veeneman

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2017, 202 pp., paperback, \$24.99

ISBN: 978-0-80104-949-1

Reviewed by Matthias Phurba Sonam Gergan

Mary M. Veeneman begins by recounting Karl Barth’s personal, social, and historical background and framing these as key contributors to the development of his theology. The structure of the introduction

undergirds the rest of the book as Veeneman expresses her hope that readers will become better theologians by a greater awareness of how theological thought and methods are influenced by context.

The first chapter examines the “reasons for” and “methods of” theology. She begins by noting the general agreement on the Bible, tradition, and reason being the primary sources for theology with “historical location” being another key influence. Following this, she notes that despite starting from points of agreement theologies diverge due to differences in their understanding of the use of the Bible, factors informing their interpretation, orienting questions, and theological assumptions.

Resourcement and Neo-Orthodoxy theologies are the first methods examined by Veeneman. She sees these as reactions to late 19th and early 20th-century theologies. Avery Dulles, Karl Barth, and Wolfhart Pannenberg are the theologians chosen by her to represent these methodologies. The importance of Dulles’ approach lies in his efforts to build bridges even with sharply dissenting voices. She highlights Barth’s contribution in his ideas regarding a wholly other God connected to creation through Jesus as a source of hope. Pannenberg, Barth’s student is noted for his contribution in removing the sharp distinction between God and creation characteristic of Barth.

Paul Tillich is the first representative of the Theologies of correlation. Veeneman points to WWI as a key influence for him also while noting his emphasis on theology addressing present situations with the Christian message. Karl Rahner is contrasted with Barth for his choice to begin theology from questions regarding the human knowing of God. Finally, Bernard Lonergan is examined for his attention to the nature of human knowing and his study of the relationship between the cultural matrix and religion.

Postliberal Theologies are presented next and are characterized by their attempts to avoid the extremes of “propositionalism” and liberalism’s reliance on experience. George Lindbeck is noted for his rule theory, which points to the necessity of doctrines for identity. Next, Hans Frei’s aesthetic approach is highlighted for seeking the meaning of a text in the “story world” that it creates.

Millard Erickson, Stanley Grenz, Kevin Vanhoozer, and Clark Pinnock are examined under the category of Evangelical theologies. Veeneman notes that all three prioritize scripture, a characteristic of

Evangelical theologies. However, each of them emphasizes different aspects that led to unique contributions. Erickson is noted for his prioritizing of scripture over traditions and his approach oriented towards deducing ideas about God and reality using the scripture. Grenz is noted for his emphasis on the role of community in theologizing. Vanhoozer's canonical-linguistic approach is presented as an attempt to uphold the *sola scriptura* while connecting it to the practices of the church. Finally, Pinnock's open theist position and emphasis on narrative are presented as his key contributions.

Chapters six and seven are dedicated to the related yet distinct traditions of political and feminist theologies. Veeneman points to their commonalities in their emphasis on the specificity of people and contexts. They are also noted for the common influence of Vatican II – especially the *Gaudium et Spes*. Johann Baptist Metz is noted, as a pioneer of liberation theology and for his critique of Rahner. Gustavo Gutierrez is noted for his emphasis on praxis with critical reflection. Sin in Gutierrez's work is shown to be framed from a political dimension.

In Black theology, James Cone is noted for his emphasis on the use of scripture as a tool for addressing contemporary issues. Feminist theologies are categorized into three waves characterized by the background of the theologians in each. It is shown that the feminist movement became worldwide in the third wave. Elizabeth Johnson and Delores Williams are the two theologians examined within feminist theology. Johnson is noted for her contribution to the language for God and Williams for her development of Womanism.

Theologies of pluralism and comparative theology are the final categories presented by Veeneman. These categories are included due to the methodological challenges presented by them. She highlights the exclusivist, inclusivist, pluralist conversation and the major voices in them. Jennine Fletcher is examined for her contribution showing the potential of feminist theology with its concept of hybrid identity for resolving the dichotomy between sameness and difference in models of comparative theologies. Finally, she notes Thatmanil's questioning of religion as a category as a key question moving forward.

The book offers a succinct yet insightful overview of major theological methods of the 20th and 21st centuries. It highlights the impact of the theologians' context on their theologizing and the contribution of each development to what is seen as an ongoing conversation in theology. This leads to the singular "theological method" while engaging with the

larger community with different theologies. While the book is excellent as an introductory text, it can also ably serve as a refresher for more seasoned students.

Cultural Insights for Christian Leaders: New Directions for Organizations Serving God's Mission

Douglas McConnell

Mission in Global Community Series

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2018, 224 pp., paperback, \$22.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-9965-6

Reviewed by Matthew Haugen

In an increasingly globalizing era, organizations are faced with the tremendous challenge of interpreting and engaging with multivalent cultural contexts. Utilizing cognitive and social anthropology, psychology, and leadership studies, McConnell explores different perspectives on the cross-section of culture and organizational leadership with a particular focus on culture, human nature, individuals, and communities.

Cultural Insights for Christian Leaders is organized into eight chapters. Each chapter begins with a clear thesis and methodology, which entails different sets of typologies to analyze the given topic. A unique contribution in McConnell's exploration of the cross-section of culture and leadership is his use of case studies from international scholars in each chapter to provide examples for his analyses.

Chapter one focuses on organizations in light of God's mission. How does understanding the *missio Dei* and culture influence missional leadership? Chapter two focuses on worldview. How does understanding culture and human nature influence one's worldview, especially with regards to concepts such as embodiedness and embeddedness? Chapter three focuses on the relational nature of leadership. How do physically embodied and culturally embedded people relate to one another, especially in the context of an organization? Chapter four looks at imitation and rituals. How does Christian formation occur through mimetics and repetitious, deferent, communal habits?

Chapter five looks at the nature of authority within an organization. How should Christians exercise authority and how does trust factor into it? Chapter six looks at the social construction and maintenance of “worlds,” particularly those that are missional in the context of Christian organizations. How does the use of categories facilitate conversations cross-culturally as well as allow for the development of trust and understanding? Chapter seven looks at culture as it relates to organizations and leadership. How does a systems approach to analyzing and interpreting culture allow for interculturality in organizations and their leadership? Chapter eight summarizes the prior chapters while including some of the implications for each topic.

McConnell’s unique contribution in *Cultural Insights for Christian Leaders* is his intercultural disposition (with his inclusion of international scholars into the conversation) and his use of Hiebert’s model of culture (i.e., cognitive, affective, and evaluative) in tandem with cognitive anthropology to clarify how physically embodied and culturally embedded people (e.g., members) interpret, store, and transmit culture in an organization.

The primary critique that I have toward McConnell’s work is his ecclesial assumptions, namely that the church has a universal form and is just another organization. In McConnell’s defense, this book is largely devoted to providing tools for Christian organizations rather than prescribed organizational models, and he does recognize that his research is anthropocentric in nature.

Overall, this book substantially contributes to the interdisciplinary conversation between organizational leadership and intercultural studies. I recommend this book to those interested in the fields of anthropology, psychology, missiology (i.e., Church Growth movement), and leadership studies.

The Protestant Reformation and World Christianity: Global Perspectives

Edited by Dale T. Irvin

Reformation Resources, 1517-2017 Series

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

2017, 203 pp., paperback, \$39.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-7304-0

Reviewed by Zachariah S. Motts

There have been many books published to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, but this slim collection of essays is one that deserves to be noticed. The authors truly do bring global perspectives to the conversation and, by doing so, shed new light on that history and our position within that history. The contributions do not pull their punches, either. There is no rule here that an essay must end in cheering for the success of the Reformation. No, there is tension, criticism, wrestling, and ambiguity within these pages and the praise is hard-won. One should expect no less, though, when voices of those affected by the Reformation, but often bracketed out of the discussion, are represented in the conversation. That is what makes this book so refreshing and so challenging at the same time.

Dale Irvin is very conscious as a historian of the need for “reinvigoration and renewal” of the dialogue surrounding the Reformation through diverse perspectives and under-represented voices (ix). To that end, there are six essays in this collection exploring the Reformation history in relation to Muslims and Jews, the Roman Catholic reformer, Las Casas, women, those deemed “ethnics,” and Asians. It ends with a piece by Serbian Orthodox theologian, Vladimir Latinovic, on contemporary challenges to the continuing legacy of the Protestant Reformation. Of course, this foray cannot be and does not try to be exhaustive of all the possible perspectives and urgently arising issues that could be broached when speaking of the effects of the Reformation, but it is a very useful and rewarding step in the right direction.

Just to take one example, Charles Amjad-Ali does an excellent job of laying out the intricate relationship between Muslims, Jews, and European Christians at the time of the Reformation. While many think of Western Europeans as the inheritors of Greco-Roman civilization, Amjab-

Ali shows that the Islamic world inherited the Roman world through Constantinople, the capital of the Roman Empire, which survived long after the fall of Rome until it was conquered in 1453 (10). This inheritance then circles back into Western Europe through the great Islamic scholars which people like Thomas Aquinas depended on as sources. Amjab-Ali suggests that this route influenced the very theology that arose during the Reformation. “It was in the light of these masters [i.e. Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina/Avicenna, Ibn Rushd/Averroes] that Thomas reexamined Christianity and insisted on the perspicuity of the sacred text, as was centrally held in Islam. This then influenced Luther’s *sola scriptura* (and Calvinist centrality of the word of God – the scriptures) which had little or no space for the mediation of *traditio*” (11). By this recognition, Amjab-Ali does not just connect Islamic thought to the history of Western Europe; he links the influence of another religious group into the central theological rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation. From that point, he wades through the long history of conversation and influence, but also alienation and demonization of Jews and Muslims by the Reformers and their heirs up to the present day and the Muslim refugee crisis. This essay does not shy away from the hard, painful parts of that history, but it does end in hope for the further sanctification of Reformation theology and the development of “a sympathetic ear of inclusion, and a dialogical and vocational partnership for the sake of the world that God loves and for God’s shalom/salaam” (37).

Amjab-Ali’s contribution is only the first essay in what is a very rich collection. As a missionary in Japan, I especially enjoyed Peter Phan’s essay, “Protestant Reformations in Asia,” but the overall quality and the diversity of perspectives in this book means that it is worth reading cover to cover. I am sure this book will inspire conversation and further lines of needed research.

Essential Beliefs: A Wesleyan Primer

Edited by Mark A. Maddix and Diane Leclerc

Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City

2016, 159 pp., paperback, \$17.99

ISBN: 978-0-8341-3570-3

Reviewed by J. Russell Frazier

Mark A. Maddix and Diane Leclerc, both professors of Northwest Nazarene University (NNU), are the editors of this collection of essays that proposes to introduce readers to the *Essential Beliefs* of Wesleyan theology. The purpose of the book is to provide *A Wesleyan Primer* (as the subtitle suggests) for devotees of the Wesleyan-holiness tradition to enable them to distinguish the essentials “from the non-essentials of our theology” (10). The editors hold that truth is principally personal, entailing “a personal engagement with God through Christ as enabled by the Holy Spirit” (13), and as such, theology should not be merely informative but “formative and transformative” (13). The editors sought “young theologians, or theologians from other cultures” (16), although only four of the twenty contributors represent cultures outside of the United States. This section also indicates that seven writers have some connection to NNU.

The introduction is entitled “Theology in Overalls,” a phrase borrowed from J. Kenneth Grider which points toward a theology for the laity (9). Maddix and Leclerc define theology as “the process of taking the grand truth of the scriptural witness to Jesus Christ and applying it to the present-day context” (9). Borrowing a cue from John Wesley’s sermon title, the design of the editors is to theologize in “The Catholic Spirit” (12). They assert that Wesleyans should engage theological challengers with a spirit of love: “...we must always, always love each other despite our differences over doctrine” (12). Against the “relative and *purely* contextual” background of post-modernity (12, emphasis in the original), the editors propose an attempt to transcend the “extreme positions between secular relativism and rigid absolutism” (13) and assert the precedence of genuine relationship with Christ, the Truth, “over static faith statements and cold, doctrinal propositions” (13).

The nineteen chapters are divided into the following five parts: “How to Do Theology,” “Who God Is,” “Creation, Humanity, and Sin,”

“Saved and Sanctified,” “The Church’s Meaning, Purpose, and Hope.” In the first chapter, “How and Why We Do Theology?” Dick O. Eugenio argues that the theological task is principally inductive, a creative task rather than a deductive one which derives understanding from what is already organized and systematized. He describes Wesleyan theology as scriptural, experiential, practical, grounded in transformative love, optimistic, and ethically responsible. Celia I. Wolff describes the manner and attitude in which Wesleyans read the Bible and the formative role of scripture within the Christian life. John Grant takes on the remaining three sources of theology (tradition, reason and experience) in a chapter on the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

In Part 2 on “Who God Is” Timothy R. Gaines addresses, in chapter 4, the question “How Can We Understand the Trinity?” He affirms that who God is as Trinity is “substantially love, in mystical three” and that what God does as Trinity is “lead our hearts in love” (46-47). Benjamin R. Cremer appeals for a balanced understanding of Christ and for believers to participate in the cyclical story celebrated in the Christian year in order to experience transformation and to become the body of Christ in the world. Chapter six raises the question, “What Does the Holy Spirit Do?” In response, Rhonda Crutcher underscores the personality and the relationality of the Holy Spirit and the centrality of the Spirit in the work of redemption.

Eric M. Vail mounts a defense of the doctrine of “creation out of nothing” in chapter 7 of part 3 entitled “How Did It All Begin?” Ryan L. Hansen develops a relational view of what it means to be human, arguing his point from both the Old and New Testaments as well as from Wesley. Despite the fallenness of humanity, “Jesus, *the* quintessential human, is the one who opens up a new way to *be* human, healing the relation between God and humanity” (71). Chapter nine raises the question “How Do We Define Sin?” Leclerc discusses personal and original sin. The former is discussed in typical Wesleyan categories. Regarding original sin, Leclerc argues that the primary category is idolatry, which expresses itself as both egocentricity (the idolatry of self) and “exocentricity” (the idolatry of others). For Leclerc, these categories encompass more completely than other paradigms Wesley’s own understanding of sin. Sarah Whittle addresses the idea of systemic sin and the social, corporate, and personal responsibility toward it. Joe Gorman, in chapter eleven, addresses the problem of suffering, and while offering some viable explanations (e.g., God does not cause suffering), he concludes that the issue of evil defies explanation. In the last section entitled “A Church

Theodicy," he asserts that the incarnational presence of Christ through the church ministers grace in the midst of suffering.

Part 4 "Saved and Sanctified" opens with the question "What Does It Mean to Be Saved?" Jacob Lett, in response, discusses three "stages" of the impact of the atoning work of Christ upon responsive human beings: reconciliation, new birth, and participation. In chapter 13, David McEwan discusses the doctrine of entire sanctification. He asserts that Wesley held that the essential nature of God is love and living the sanctified life entails the fulfillment of the love command of Christ. The author of this chapter also discusses the limitations of sanctification in the Christian life. Gift Mtukwa grounds Wesleyan ethics in the *imago dei* in his chapter on "What Makes Ethics Christian?" Wesleyan ethics entails a call "to reform the nations" (111) and calls believers to holy living, entailing both "works of piety" and "works of mercy" (114). In response to the question, "How Do We Grow Spiritually?" Mark A. Maddix affirms the importance of the means of grace, i.e. the instituted (commanded by Christ), prudential (wise practices), and general (e.g. watching and denying one's self) means of grace. The Lord's Supper is also discussed in this chapter.

The fifth and final part of this book is entitled "The Church's Meaning, Purpose, and Hope." The author of chapter 16, "What is the Church?" Montague R. Williams discusses the marks of the church: unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. The four marks are a reality because God has declared it, but they are also an imperative for the church to become what God has called it to be. Joshua R. and Nell Becker Sweeden address the mission of the church in chapter 17. The Wesleys employed the *ecclesiolae* within the *ecclesia* as the Methodist movement served as a renewing force within the larger church. Thus, the church is defined as a renewal movement "as it integrally participates in God's mission in and for the world" (141). Kelly Diehl Yates employs the Wesleyan doctrine of prevenient grace as foundational to an appropriate response to the treatment of people of other religions. She encourages optimism, humility, and coexistence as ways Christians should act toward those of other faiths. Charles W. Christian addresses the subject of eschatology in the final chapter. After a brief discussion of the historical positions, he discusses the themes which he believes arise from a Wesleyan view of the end times: 1) The kingdom is here and now and will be fully realized later; 2) The last days are about a Person [Christ], not a calendar; 3) God's goal is transformation, not escape; 4) Eschatology is about optimism, not pessimism.

The book has been written against the post-modern backdrop of diversity and aims to establish the essentials of the Christian faith from a Wesleyan-holiness perspective in light of such diversity. The writers affirm the importance of understanding the essentials of the Christian faith: "It is only as we understand these essentials that we can then translate them in ways that relate to those with whom we want to communicate" (10). On this point, one can certainly agree with the importance of the essential beliefs. However, the book does not describe the methodology employed for discerning the essentials. If, for example, the method entailed conformity to the creeds of the Christian church, why was a treatment of baptism omitted? The question remains: What determines what the essentials or non-essentials are?

In the opening chapter, Eugenio discusses the theological methodology that presumably sets the stage for the remainder of the book. He identifies the theological methodology as "inductive thinking" (22). He disparages deductive thinking as "simply learning information that is already ordered and systematized" (22). Though I understand that Eugenio is discussing "doing" theology, one must take care not to disparage the didactic role of systematic theology. Naturally, the reader wants to ask: What is the specific data from which a theologian proposes the general principles according to Eugenio? Here he proposes the following:

Induction involves exploration and discovery through relationships and through looking for the connections between Christian beliefs. *Conferecing* with others is the Wesleyan model of asking and responding to questions. It involves everyone in a worshipping community – leaders, scholars, theologians, and laypeople. All voices are heard with a spirit of humility (22, emphasis in the original).

While Eugenio indicates "students of the Bible and of theology" should engage in conferencing, little clarity is given about the composition of the "worshipping community." Could the "worshipping community" be comprised of individuals from other denominations or faiths? Are there "essential beliefs" to which one must adhere as a prerequisite to participation in this "worshipping community"? One can see the circular reasoning within such an argument.

Eugenio's proposal appears to disparage the didactic role of written theology. The orality of conferencing methodology points to the

tentative nature of the theological task. It also points to incompleteness. Is the task of theologizing done only when “all of the voices are heard with a spirit of humility”? Given the politics prevailing within the institutional church and the economic disparity, can we ensure that the voices of the oppressed and poor are able to present themselves at the conference, much less gain the same hearing in the din and the deference to Western thought found in many of our institutions? Despite the relativistic context of post-modernism, are theologians confined to making only “uncertain sounds”? Thus, one wonders about a methodological shift in Wesleyan-holiness theology as evidenced in the design of the discussions at the Global Theology Conferences of the Church of the Nazarene that reflects Eugenio’s conferencing methodology.

Another issue evidenced within this book is the shift in the controlling norm of Wesleyan-holiness theology. Several writers of this tome, if not all, assert the love of God as the essential nature of God. McEwen is representative when he writes: “At the heart of John Wesley’s theological understanding is the claim that the essential nature of God is love...” (104) which, in the opinion of this reviewer, reflects a misunderstanding of Wesley. Thus, *Essential Beliefs* seems to have modified the emphasis on the holy-love as the essential nature of God that was found in Wesley and neo-Wesleyan works to an emphasis on the essential nature of God as love alone. H. Ray Dunning (*Grace, Faith, and Holiness a Wesleyan Systematic Theology*, 105–117) underscores that the history of theology demonstrates the danger of the pendulum of theological currents vacillating between the immanence (love) and transcendence (holiness) of God, and he advocates a balance between holiness and love.

Rather than employing an inductive approach to scripture, Wolff recommends, “viewing the whole Bible through passages that highlight God’s active love for all of creation remains a sound Wesleyan interpretive lens” (33). Not only does she express the desire to read the Bible through a particular lens, her chapter also demonstrates another concern with the book, the lack of comprehensiveness. For example, Wolff’s chapter makes no attempt to address the authority of the Bible or the inspiration of scripture; it only addresses “How Do We Read the Bible for All It Is Worth?” Perhaps the issues of authority and inspiration are deemed non-essentials.

As stated above, *Essential Beliefs* is a collection of essays by various writers and as such, suffers from books of the same genre. The lack of a comprehensive treatment (however cursory the treatment might be)

gives evidence of the lack of usefulness of this book for certain purposes. The book lacks an interrelatedness of one doctrine to all of the other doctrines that characterizes a systematic theology – a feat rarely achieved in a collection of essays of various writers. Despite the faults, the writers make some important contributions to the on-going conversations in Wesleyan theology. The book should be valued for those seeking insights into an understanding of Wesleyan theology.

The Rise of Pentecostalism in Modern El Salvador

Timothy H. Wadkins

Studies in World Christianity Series

Waco, TX: Baylor University Press

2017, 255 pp. hardback, \$49.95

ISBN: 978-1-4813-0712-3

Reviewed by Robert A. Danielson

As a scholar of Pentecostalism in El Salvador who has followed Wadkins' various articles on the subject, I have been eagerly waiting for him to write a full-length monograph on the subject. El Salvador is a wonderful microcosm of Latin American Christianity, with a rich history of Spanish Roman Catholicism going back to the period of the conquest, the introduction of Protestantism in the end of the 19th century led by the American Baptists, a strong voice in Liberation Theology with (now Saint) Oscar Romero and Jon Sobrino, and a rapid growth of both traditional and independent Pentecostal groups. Wadkins does a beautiful job of weaving these stories together to reveal both the complexity and challenges of the current religious setting of El Salvador.

Based on an extensive survey of nine major Salvadoran churches and detailed interviews with both leaders and members of these congregations and others, Wadkins builds an image of El Salvador, not from pure statistics, but rather from a constant series of narratives and vignettes of individual experiences. As one who has studied both Misión Elim Internacional and the Tabernáculo Bautista (both of which appear frequently in the book), he has a very clear and accurate view of the situation in El Salvador. I was equally impressed by his work on the much less-studied

Catholic Charismatic movement in chapter eight. This is an area that needs much more study to achieve a more well-rounded picture of Christianity in Latin America. While many Protestant scholars seem to accept the narrative that Pentecostalism will continue to grow and outpace Roman Catholicism, those intimately involved in the region know this will not be the case due to the growth and strength of Catholic Charismatics.

There are two areas that I wish Wadkins had dealt with more deeply, and two areas where I have some disagreement with the author. First, I would like to have seen more work done to set the book within the context of Spanish colonial Roman Catholicism with its indigenous elements. A large part of modern Pentecostalism is a reaction to that past and only makes sense within that context. Secondly, Wadkins makes a brief remark comparing Pentecostalism in El Salvador to the Roman Catholicism critiqued by John A. McKay in his 1933 book, *The Other Spanish Christ*. Wadkins (142) writes, "The historical Jesus is conspicuously absent among most Spirit-filled Christians in El Salvador. Interviewees dwell upon their personal experience of accepting Christ as a 'personal' Savior, which is quickly surpassed by the deeper, more profound experience of the Holy Spirit. For these individuals Jesus amounts to an abstract, ethereal Christ of faith, and they express little awareness of the life and ministry of Jesus as a basis for Christian discipleship or social praxis." This incredibly important comment needs more discussion, not just for Pentecostalism in El Salvador, but also for Global Pentecostalism in general. From my perspective, modern Pentecostalism is often becoming the new replacement for folk Catholicism as a modern version of a syncretistic folk religion due to its lack of Christology. This theological critique cries out for more serious missiological reflection. I fully understand the limitations of a book like this, and so I do not intend these comments as criticism, just the desire to see these areas more fully developed.

My disagreements with Wadkins are minor and are rooted in his interpretive framework and not his excellent descriptive work. First, he interprets the rise of Pentecostalism from more of a socio-political framework than I might like. For example, he frequently refers to Pentecostalism as somehow promoting individualism and democracy in El Salvador. I would argue that by its very nature, traditional Roman Catholicism in Latin America is a very individual faith already, with private altars in the home adorned with personal saints and private rituals of veneration. Pentecostalism might be building on this tradition, but I do not

think it is necessarily introducing it within the religious sphere. In terms of democracy, what I see more clearly emerging from the evidence is a more open division of the society along lines of class than previously permitted by the Roman Catholic system of parishes. Of course such class division existed before, but the various types of Pentecostal churches mentioned by Wadkins include churches just for the wealthy or middle class, where they can isolate themselves more from the lower classes. This hardly seems to harbor democracy. Secondly, I feel Wadkins either overlooks or minimizes the impact of immigration on the rise of Pentecostalism in El Salvador. This is true in terms of the transnational impact of Salvadoran immigrants in the United States impacting family connections, but also in terms of the internal turmoil caused by the disruption of the traditional family structure and its role. Many smaller Pentecostal churches are forming the support networks and playing the roles traditionally belonging to family members. The same is happening on the opposite side of things with the growing gang problem.

On the whole, Wadkins' work is a masterful descriptive work that is a must-read for any student of religion in Latin America. El Salvador is a microcosm of what is happening across the region, and because of this, this book should be read by those interested in modern themes in religion in all of the nations of the region, not just those interested in El Salvador. While I have some interpretive critiques of his work, this book is solid in its research, penetrating in its conclusions, and truly reveals the complexity of the religious context in modern Latin America. The work is clearly written, engaging in its narrative style, and accessible to people at all levels of the academic spectrum. Wadkins has given us a truly great work for understanding Global Pentecostalism in Latin America.

The Divine Christ: Paul, the Lord Jesus, and the Scriptures of Israel

By David B. Capes

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic

2018, 224 pp., paperback, \$24.99

ISBN: 978-0-8010-9786-7

Reviewed by J. R. Wright

David B. Capes has a noteworthy purpose in writing *The Divine Christ*. He seeks to refute the often arbitrarily accepted paradigm that Christology in the first-century gradually advanced from a “low Christology” (e.g., the Christology recognized during Christ’s life and immediately afterwards) to an eventually-developed “high-Christology” (e.g., as articulated in the Gospel of John). This paradigm was typified in the twentieth-century by the history of religions school (e.g., Wilhelm Bousset), and is more recently represented by the work of Bart Ehrman. However, as Capes notes, “This developmental scheme is based on the supposition that, during the three to four decades separating Paul from John, significant changes occurred with regard to the Christian disposition toward Christ. It assumes that Paul never identified Jesus with God in any substantial way” (156). Therefore, Capes returns to his earlier work on “OT YHWH Texts” in order to demonstrate that the aforementioned Christological paradigm is an erroneous one, and that the earliest Christians in fact held what one may define as a “high Christology.”

Capes begins his argument in chapter one (“‘Lord’ and ‘LORD’ in the Bible”) with a presentation of how the word κύριος has been understood and translated in the English Bible tradition. Essentially, Capes demonstrates the various ways in which κύριος in the LXX and NT can function on the one hand as a representation of יהוה, and on the other, in which κύριος can reference human rulers or persons of authority. Such semantic distinctions are of great relevance for any Christological analysis, as both meanings of κύριος are applied to Christ (as Capes will eventually demonstrate), and as one must inevitably establish a divine antecedent (i.e., that a particular application of κύριος to Christ associates Christ with God) in order to establish a “high Christology.”

In chapters two (“*Kyrios*/Lord as a Christological Title”) and three (“Jesus as *Kyrios* in Paul’s Letters”) Capes further explores the significance

of the attribution to Christ of κύριος. Chapter two delves deeper into the conclusion of the history of religions school, as argued by Bousset for example, that belief in Christ's divinity originated outside of the Jerusalem church. Essentially, Bousset and others of his persuasion argue that a rigidly monotheistic Second Temple Judaism would not have allowed the deification of Christ. Therefore, any such deification must have occurred later outside "true" Judaism in the Hellenistic environs of the diaspora, and in the greater Greco-Roman context in which the deification of human persons was already commonplace. Capes demonstrates that such notions have recently been refuted by scholars such as Martin Hengel and N. T. Wright, who argue that one should more properly perceive Judaism in the first-century as a spectrum of "Judaisms," and that any first-century Judaism must be considered thoroughly Hellenized. Therefore, according to Capes, the borrowing of κύριος by the earliest Christians did not have its origins *outside of Judaism*, but from within (i.e., the LXX). In chapter three, Capes identifies in detail three contexts in the letters of Paul in which the application of κύριος to Christ is found: ethical, eschatological, and liturgical.

Chapters four ("YHWH Texts with God as Referent") and five ("YHWH Texts with Christ as Referent") form the nucleus of Capes's argument. "YHWH Texts" as defined by Capes are OT "quotations and allusions [in the NT] that contain a reference to the unspeakable name of God [i.e., the tetragrammaton]" (86). While "YHWH Texts" with God as referent distinguish contexts such as justification and divine wisdom, "YHWH Texts" with Christ as referent distinguish contexts such as eschatology and the resurrection (149). It is through these references that Capes demonstrates Paul's "high Christology." In other words, Paul applies OT quotations containing the divine name both to God and to Christ as a way of demonstrating the divine nature and authority of both. By applying these texts to Christ, Paul has therefore demonstrated that he had Christ's divinity in view.

Capes concludes his work with chapters focusing on summary and exegetical implications. These implications need not be explicated in detail here, as they should be readily apparent. What is at stake is nothing less than the divinity of Christ as perceived by the earliest Christian communities and the thoroughly Jewish Paul. The work bears import for Christology, intertextuality, Pauline studies, and systematic theology. Capes's arguments are sound, well-structured, and scrupulously argued. Further, it

is a welcome rebuttal to recent secular trends in Christology studies, and should be considered an invaluable resource to students, pastors, and scholars alike.

Migrants and Citizens: Justice and Responsibility in the Ethics of Immigration

Tisha M. Rajendra

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

2017, 179 pp., paperback, \$25.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-6882-4

Reviewed by Christopher Ashley

The current political tenor surrounding issues of immigration in the United States is one of vitriol and shallow arguments. Tisha M. Rajendra bravely enters the conversation by attempting to reframe the debate from the typical dichotomy of cosmopolitans (who stress the universality of human rights) and communitarians (who emphasize the rights of nation-states to choose their own members) to an emphasis on justice as responsibility to relationships. Rather than framing immigration in an already-established ethical framework, Rajendra begins with the immigrants' diverse narratives, which resist shallow reductionism.

With migration active from anywhere to anywhere, Rajendra focuses on just three destinations of migration: the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Moreover, she directs the reader to three specific flows of migration: colonial, guest-worker, and foreign-investment-driven migration. Along the way, Rajendra critiques advocates of universal human rights and of Liberation theology's preferential option for the poor to ask, "Who actually has responsibility for specific populations of migrants?" Likewise, she critiques theories of migration such as Neoclassical migration theories (which assert that migrants are rational actors who make autonomous, rational decisions) and structure-dominant migration theories (which overemphasize structures of migration at the expense of individual agency).

Rajendra's account of justice as responsibility to relationships rejects broad theories of migrant justice, as each country has specific

responsibilities to specific populations. In the United States, America's involvement throughout Central America—such as capitalist investment and political intervention—has left millions of people displaced and economically destitute. Because of this specific relationship, the U.S. has a responsibility in our relationship to, say, Guatemalan migrants, who require the specific response of hospitality. In Germany, their guest-worker program recruited thousands of Turkish migrants who were valued purely for the labor; Germany has a specific responsibility to those Turks whom they exploited. In the United Kingdom, their history of colonialism irrevocably altered the definition of a Brit, such that Indians can claim to be royal subjects, free to migrate “home” to the United Kingdom.

Rajendra's approach is laudable. Combining the narratives of individual migrants and weaving in Biblical concern for the foreigner in both the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament, she draws the reader's attention to specific persons and peoples. By employing a narrative approach to ethics, she brings the conversation down to the level of actual people. This is the given the current political climate, but it also corrects lofty ethical frameworks that ignore the myriad reasons that cause people to migrate. The only shortcoming is that Rajendra deals firstly with Christians whose main identity is their nationality. Thus, it is American Christians who are responsible for immigrants who cross the border into their country. This book would likely be dramatically different were it to address Christians whose main identity is the Church, an ecclesiological ethics of migration. However, given that many Christians in America *do* identify themselves firstly as Americans, this is an important work for rehumanizing immigrants and reframing the immigration debate.

Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness

Jeffrey D. Arthurs

Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press

2017, 192 pp., paperback, \$18.00

ISBN: 978-0-8308-5109-4

Reviewed by Scott Donahue-Martens

Preaching as Reminding: Stirring Memory in an Age of Forgetfulness by Jeffrey Arthurs envisions the task of preaching in terms of reminding and remembering. Arthurs, a professor of preaching and communication at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary utilizes his expertise to encourage preachers to be confident preaching biblical stories. The work is supported by Arthurs' utilization of biblical theology, neuroscience, and communication theory. Preachers will find this work informative and practical. It offers a vision of faithful preaching while providing insight into ways preachers can improve. Arthurs shows the reader why remembering is so important to the Christian faith and how remembering can be central to preaching.

The central images of the work are preaching as reminding and viewing the preacher as a "remembrancer." The image of a remembrancer comes from the history of the British royal court where the remembrancer was tasked with remembering important information for the monarch. Arthurs supports the centrality of this image through biblical theology and the many ways that remembering is highlighted throughout scripture. Herein is a strength of the work. He explores what biblical concepts of remembering and forgetting look like and applies these concepts to preaching. The scriptural and theological explorations offer support to his overall argument and are compelling.

The first three chapters focus on God, people, and the preacher as each relates to remembering and forgetting. Ultimately, he asserts that remembering is more than mental recall of the past. Remembering involves will and emotion in the process of re-actualizing the past and envisioning the future. Arthurs emphasizes that preaching as reminding fosters "participation" in the events being remembered. This is done through the Spirit's power and the performative nature of words. This link between speech-act theory and homiletics offers insight into what happens in preaching. Throughout the work, Arthurs comments that he hopes this

view of preaching offers liberation to those who feel that they must preach something novel each Sunday. The book reclaims that there is power in telling the old stories and helping others remember them. Here, Arthurs utilizes his knowledge of communication theory to guide preachers on how to tell the story. The final four chapters are devoted to the methods and practices of reminding. He explores style, story, delivery, and ceremony and symbol as tools for reminding in preaching.

Forgetting also has a prominent role in the work. Part of why reminding and remembering are so important is because of a human propensity to forget. Like remembering, Arthurs explores the concept of forgetting biblically, theologically, and neurologically. Remembering and forgetting are formative processes that impact the way people think and act. Preaching can be a time of reminding so that remembering and forgetting are utilized in Christian formation. Arthurs offers insights into the process of remembering from a neurological standpoint that is accessible to theological readers. The neurological aspect of the work is especially noteworthy as it helps preachers understand how shifts in technology shape modern listeners and how preaching can adapt in light of technology.

Arthurs acknowledges that the task of preaching is shifting, especially as the setting of the United States is increasingly secular. At the same time, the central images of reminding and remembering could benefit from further consideration of what preaching as reminding looks like to biblically illiterate persons. He advises preachers to utilize materials that non-Christians would recognize to make comparisons with biblical concepts and stories. Thus, he shows how reminding and remembering can be important in preaching to new believers and non-Christians; however, the gravity of the shift in biblical illiteracy warranted more attention in homiletical approach and method. This is especially true if preaching as reminding is going to have such a prominent place. The image of preaching as reminding fits well with congregations comprised of people who already identify as Christian. More attention to what preaching as reminding looks like in post-Christian settings would improve the work by allowing the central image to relate to a current contextual need.

Arthurs work contains a number of illustrations from literature, sermon vignettes, and personal experiences that illuminate the theoretical propositions. *Preaching as Reminding* offers a compelling view of preaching that seeks to form faithful preachers, who in turn help form faithful Christians. Preachers may benefit from the practical wisdom that

Arthurs offers and the homiletical vision. The author takes seriously that preaching matters to God and that reminding can be a faithful means of proclaiming the stories of faith. The work contains wisdom gleaned from years of preaching and teaching preaching. *Preaching as Reminding* helps God's remembrancers understand and undergo the task of preaching.

The Letter to Philemon

Scot McKnight

New International Commentary of the New Testament Series

Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

2017, 159 pp., hardback, \$25.00

ISBN: 978-0-8028-7382-8

Reviewed by Timothy J. Christian

Renown NT scholar, Scot McKnight, presents a very accessible, thought provoking, exegetical, and timely commentary on Paul's epistle to Philemon. His introduction (46 out of 114 pages) is perhaps the greatest contribution McKnight makes to Philemon studies, particularly his research on slavery in the ancient world (6-29), the New World, and today (30-36). His concerns are pastoral, ecclesial, and societal. Contrary to prior analyses, McKnight contends that Paul's main goal in Philemon is not the manumission of Onesimus, but rather reconciliation between "a slave owner (Philemon) and a slave (Onesimus)" (1). Moreover, he believes that Paul does not use indirection (*insinatio*) to make his point—as many other studies maintain—but rather that Paul directly appeals and requests Philemon to send Onesimus back to Paul for his useful service in the gospel. Moreover, McKnight contends that Paul did not see there being a moral problem with slavery in the Roman world. Rather, he thinks that Paul's Magna Carta (e.g. Gal. 3:28) was strictly for the church. Thus, "Paul's vision [of freedom and manumission] was not for the Roman Empire but for the church" (10). And again, "For Paul the social revolution was to occur in the church, in the body of Christ, at the local level, and in the Christian house church and household" (10-11).

The commentary is accessible to pastors, teachers, and students with all the Greek transliterated. Furthermore, McKnight does not get

bogged down in jargon and meaningless debates, but the commentary demonstrates the utmost discipline in terms of succinctness and brevity. Scholars, however, would have wished for more technical conversations, for example, textual criticism or grammatical analysis (though these are available in other commentaries). Concerning slavery, McKnight pushes against those who downplay the atrocities of ancient slavery. Moreover, his historical summary of slavery in the New World and today is superb and shocking, though there is a slight hint of critique of early Christianity for needing to have known better and done something revolutionary (politically) about slavery like we have in the past few centuries. Such a critique is anachronistic in my opinion, and early Christianity did not have any political power in the Roman Empire, often being viewed with suspicion as a superstition. I appreciate that McKnight strongly highlights elsewhere that the social revolution that Paul calls for is to occur in the church. Concurring, Paul is not much concerned about changing the politics and society of the Roman Empire (cf. 1 Cor. 5:12-13), but more so the church. In addition, McKnight is creative and imaginative, particularly in his insights regarding the oral performance of the epistle (85-88). Moreover, he makes an important distinction between anti-empire and supra-empire critiques, clarifying that Paul makes the latter (52-53, 61-62, 100). Lastly, McKnight provides excellent syntheses of the many possibilities of interpretation that exist in Philemon due to the limited data about the historical situation.

One major issue that I take up with McKnight is that he oddly sees a problem with Paul using indirection or *insinuatō* (my own dissertation topic) in Philemon. He thinks that Paul most often says what he means and has no problem being direct and to the point (44). While that is certainly true of Paul (see Gal. 2), that does not therefore mean that Paul is direct in every instance. In fact, in my dissertation ("Paul and the Rhetoric of *Insinuatō*"), I observe that *insinuatō* is a Pauline rhetorical tendency, as he uses it in undisputed epistles: Rom. 9—11, 2 Cor. 10—13, Gal. 4, Phlm. 4-7, Acts 17 and 24 (Luke's portrayal of Paul), and my dissertation argues also 1 Cor. 15. Another issue concerning *insinuatō* is that McKnight argues against Paul indirectly ingratiating that Philemon should manumit Onesimus. However, McKnight sees Paul as requesting Philemon that he send Onesimus back to Paul for his gospel ministry, yet Paul never directly states such a request in the epistle. If Paul did make such a request, then it was indirect and subtle, something that McKnight himself sees as uncharacteristic of Paul. Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. Even if Paul was not

formally trained in rhetoric—and I grant that possibility, though Stanley E. Porter and his brigade claim that Paul most certainly *was not and could not* have been educated in rhetoric—McKnight himself elsewhere admits that rhetorical conventions are possible in Paul’s letters due to natural talent (43-44). It is quite odd then that McKnight will admit the possibility of rhetoric in Philemon, yet sternly reject the possibility of rhetorical indirection (*insinuatio*), especially when his thesis about the situation (that Paul requests Philemon to return Onesimus to Paul) is entirely missing in the text of Philemon and requires one to read the hints in between the lines. It seems that McKnight’s underlying assumption was that Paul was stationary in his direct approach to issues. Certainly Paul was direct and had no problem addressing issues head-on (see especially Gal. 1—3). But McKnight reveals his own ignorance of ancient rhetoric regarding this issue of indirection and its usage in Paul’s epistles. All the more, while trying to demonstrate that Paul is not using indirection (*insinuatio*), McKnight in fact unknowingly describes exactly what *insinuatio* is in his own words (avoiding rhetorical terms) and in fact demonstrates even more that Paul was using *insinuatio*. For example, he says that v. 17’s “appeal is direct, clear, and the climax” of the letter (102). Yet according to Greco-Roman rhetorical conventions, for something to be direct, it was stated at the beginning of the discourse. *Insinuatio*, on the other hand, was when the orator waited until the end to address the difficult topic directly, clearly, and even climactically. In other words, *insinuatio* is indirect in that it delays the contentious or prejudiced topic until the end of the speech, but when it gets to the end, the orator is direct about it, just at the closing of the argument. There are other examples of this, but I think this demonstrates enough that while McKnight aimed somewhat at accounting for the rhetoric of Philemon, that he really has fallen short, primarily—in my opinion—because he decides to cut himself off from Greco-Roman rhetorical terminology (both from handbooks [theory] and actual speeches [practice]).

Will Willimon's Lectionary Sermon Resource: Year B, Part 1

Will Willimon

Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press

2017, 322 pp., paperback, \$24.99

ISBN: 978-1-5018-4723-3

Reviewed by Zachariah S. Motts

A good sermon is a tightrope walk. A pastor must balance the multiple possible audiences present while drawing on a centered and real experience of her or his own faith. A good sermon can carry along the new person who walks in off the street for the first time as well as that deep, thoughtful elder sitting in the front row week after week waiting to be taken seriously, engaged, and challenged. Producing a quality sermon every week, though, can become a burden at times. There are times when a pastor can use some direction and inspiration.

Will Willimon has provided a welcome resource for those times. The thirty-six entries in this volume are each rich, little pieces that could spin out in a thousand different directions. Each entry has illustrations and suggestions that can be taken or left depending on need, but the general thrust of each sermon help is consistently interesting, thought provoking, and enjoyable enough assist a wide variety of pastors. You do not need to be an academic to use this book, but there is plenty here for the academic pastor also. Willimon is never trite, and he is willing to confront his reader/congregation while, at the same time, maintaining a gentle warmth and generosity as he guides the example sermon to its conclusion. Following in Willimon's footsteps, one can feel the unpretentious artistry and attentive skill in the way he explores a biblical passage and creates a sermon.

One of my favorite entries is the sermon help for New Year's Day on Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 called "Joy in the Time Being." Preaching on Ecclesiastes may seem like it would be depressing at the opening of the year, especially a passage that ends in a reflection on whether work is really worth it. However, Willimon does something refreshing with the passage. He guides us along to the recognition that, though we really want our work to be enduring and ultimately meaningful in some way, it is not. If we strive to make our efforts secure, lasting, and truly meaningful, we lose the joy in the moment, the pleasure of the process. "We are therefore invited

to live each day and to work, not seeking results, but rather enjoying the process of the toil. Only God knows where all of this leads, what is finally adds up to" (80-81). While this is a sermon help, it also seemed to be very applicable to pastors. I have heard many preachers legitimize projects and ministries with "eternal values," "divine calling," and place an absolute sort of meaning on the task they are endorsing. Yet, Willimon's sermon applies to the work of the missionary, the preacher, the factory worker, and the nurse. It was encouraging to see a pastor pull back from endorsing drive, the need for strong meanings, and the absolute rightness of "our cause." That call to humility and enjoying the task at hand was personally helpful and I hope this sermon gets preached a hundred different ways in a hundred different pulpits.

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.

Aldridge, Boone

2018 *For the Gospel's Sake: The Rise of the Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Studies in the History of Christian Missions.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7610-2. Price: \$45.00.

Anderson, Kenton C.

2017 *Integrative Preaching: A Comprehensive Model for Transformational Proclamation.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-9887-1. Price: \$22.99.

Baker, Frank, Richard P. Heitzenrater, and Randy Maddox, eds.

2018 *The Journal Letters and Related Biographical Items of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A.* Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books. ISBN: 978-1-5018-5496-5. Price: \$74.99.

Barram, Michael

2018 *Missional Economics: Biblical Justice and Christian Formation.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7507-5. Price: \$26.00.

Begbie, Jeremy S.

2018 *A Peculiar Orthodoxy: Reflections on Theology and the Arts.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-9957-1. Price: \$32.00.

Briggs, Richard S.

2018 *Theological Hermeneutics and the Book of Numbers as Christian Scripture.* Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press. ISBN: 978-0-2681-0373-6. Price: \$55.00.

- Brown, Jeannine K. and Kyle Roberts
2018 *Matthew. The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. ISBN: 978-0-8028-2566-7. Price: \$38.00.
- Campbell, Ted A., ed.
2018 *Wesleyan Communities and the World Beyond Christianity.* Nashville, TN: Wesley's Foundry Books. ISBN: 978-1-9459-3522-0. Price: \$39.99.
- Capes, David B.
2018 *The Divine Christ: Paul, The Lord Jesus, and the Scriptures of Israel.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. ISBN: 978-0-8010-9786-7. Price: \$24.00.
- Carter, Kenneth H., Jr.
2018 *Embracing the Wilderness: The Shared Convictions of The United Methodist Church.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. ISBN: 978-1-5018-7156-6. Price: \$17.99.
- Chatraw, Joshua D. and Mark D. Allen
2018 *Apologetics at the Cross: An Introduction for Christian Witness.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN: 978-0-310-52468-7. Price: \$34.99.
- Cowart, Jim
2018 *Leading From Horseback: Lost Lessons Every Church Leader Needs.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. ISBN: 978-1-5018-0338-3. Price: \$15.99.
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2018 *A Redemptive Theology of Art: Restoring Godly Aesthetics to Doctrine and Culture.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. ISBN: 978-0-310-53436-5. Price: \$24.99.
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