Contents

Paternoster: making faith

WEA
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
Theological Commission

0144-8153(201801)42:1;1-H

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY VOLUME 42, NO 1, January 2018

Evangelical Review of Theology

A Global Forum

WEA
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
Theological Commission

Volume 42 No. 1 January 2018

ABSTRACTS/INDEXING

This journal is abstracted in Religious and Theological Abstracts, 121 South College Street (P.O. Box 215), Myerstown, PA 17067, USA, and in the Christian Periodical Index, P.O. Box 4, Cedarville, OH 45314, USA.

It is also indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, published by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606 USA, E-mail: atla@atla.com, Web: www.atla.com/

MICROFORM

This journal is available on Microform from UMI, 300 North Zeeb Road, P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346, USA. Phone: (313)761-4700

Subscriptions 2018

*Sterling rates do not apply to USA and Canada subscriptions. Please see below for further information.

	Institutions and Libraries		Individuals	
Period	UK	Elsewhere Overseas*	UK	Elsewhere Overseas*
One Year:				
hard copy	£86.00	£93.00	£49.00	£53.00
electronic version	£86.00	£93.00	£49.00	£53.00
joint subscription	£102.00	£110.00	£57.00	£61.00
Two/Three Years, per year				
hard copy	£78.00	£83.00	£44.00	£47.00
electronic version	£78.00	£83.00	£44.00	£47.00
joint subscription	£93.00	£99.00	£53.00	£57.00

All USA and Canada subscriptions to:
EBSCO Subscription Services, P.O. Box 1493, Birmingham, AL 35201-1943, USA

All UK and International subscriptions to:
Paternoster Periodicals, c/o AlphaGraphics, 3.2 Clarendon Park, Nottingham, NG5 1AH, UK
Tel: UK 0800 597 5980; Fax: 0115 704 3327
Tel Overseas: +44 (0)115 704 3315; Fax: +44 (0)115 704 3327
Email periodicals@alphagraphics.co.uk

Subscriptions can be ordered online at:
www.paternosterperiodicals.co.uk (Non USA and Canada subscriptions only)

Special Offer
All orders placed via our websites will receive a 5% discount off the total price.
Rates displayed on the websites will reflect this discount

Important Note to all Postal Subscribers

When contacting our Subscription Office in Nottingham for any reason
always quote your Subscription Reference Number.

Evangelical Review of Theology

A Global Forum

Volume 42 · Number 1 · January 2018

See back cover for Table of Contents

WEA

WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

Theological Commission

Published by

Paternoster:
thinking faith

ISSN: 0144-8153
Volume 42 No. 1 January 2018

Editorial Policy

The articles in the *Evangelical Review of Theology (ERT)* reflect the opinions of the authors and reviewers and do not necessarily represent those of the Editors or the Publisher.

The Editors welcome both unsolicited submissions and recommendations of original or previously published articles or book reviews for inclusion in *ERT*. Manuscripts, reviews, queries and other communications may be addressed to the Executive Editor at bruce.barron0@gmail.com.

Printed and bound in Great Britain for Paternoster Periodicals
by AlphaGraphics, 8-9 Vanguard Court, Preston Farm, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3TR

Thank You, Dr David Parker

ERT will go on without David Parker, but it will never be the same. Its existence as a consistently high-quality journal attracting worldwide interest is due primarily to David's faithful service in producing four issues a year for more than sixteen years.

David brought a rare combination of skills to this work. He was a visionary collector of vital authors and articles from around the globe, and a penny-pincher when editing texts and finding spelling mistakes. The large picture and the very small one were on his mind always.

A retired Baptist minister living in Brisbane, Australia, David has maintained his considerable productivity in theology and church history. He started as an assistant to Dr Bruce Nicholls in the mid-1990s and, besides many other roles and tasks, was executive director of the WEA Theological Commission from 2007 to 2009. After a short break during which the incoming chair of the Theological Commission, Thomas Schirrmacher, realized how indispensable he was, David returned as ERT executive editor from 2010 through 2017.

David is author of *Discerning the Obedience of Faith: A Short History of the WEA Theological Commission* (2014). Within this work he describes his own involvement with the Theological Commission and with its major actors. The pdf of the book is available on the Internet, but you may also order a free printed copy from Thomas@iirf.eu or fax +49 228 9650389.

David edited the WEA volume *Jesus, Salvation and the Jewish People* (2011). In addition, he has served the Baptist Church in Queensland as archivist for its historical collection, as editor of the *Queensland Baptist Forum*, and by publishing numerous monographs on Baptist history. He authored a book celebrating the role of women in Baptist churches in Queensland and one commemorating the denomination's 150th anniversary in that Australian state.

David has also taught classes and has given guest lectures at the college and seminary levels in Australia and globally in theology, ethics, New Testament and Christian worship.

David's website describes him as being in 'active retirement'. Indeed, he has been more prolific in his so-called retirement years than most Christian scholars in mid-career. We are deeply grateful for his enormous contributions to the WEA and hope that he will continue to observe and sharpen our work for many more years.

Bruce Barron, Executive Editor
Thomas Schirrmacher, General Editor
Rosalee Velloso Ewell, Director of the Theological Commission

ERT (2018) 42:1, 4-20

Missions and Money: Revisiting Pauline Practice and Principles

Craig Ott

Few topics raise the temperature of a conversation among missionaries and mission leaders as quickly as money. The question of how to best allocate funds for the missionary enterprise is widely debated. Moreover, positions on many other theological and practical questions such as ecclesial unity, Christian generosity, stewardship, and understandings of wealth and poverty are often expressed most concretely in the use of money and how it is deployed in Christian mission and international ecumenical relations.

In global missions, the complexity of money management rises exponentially as money moves from one location to another—crossing oceans and cultures, often distributed by foreign agents with foreign agendas, and impacting local ministry in a host of beneficial and detrimental ways. The practical questions that emerge as a result are almost endless.

The answers to these questions will depend on local circumstances and conditions. But are there biblical-theological guidelines that can provide general guidance? More specifically, what can we learn from the practice and teachings of the apostle Paul regarding such matters?

The literature on these issues has presented a wide range of divergent and often contradictory proposals. Considerable empirical and historical research has been conducted on the use of foreign funds for advancing mission-related ministries. But relatively few New Testament scholars or missiologists have attempted a comprehensive discussion of Paul's views regarding the use of money in his missionary undertakings.[1]

The present essay summarizes the most salient features of Paul's practice and teaching regarding money and the missionary task. It identifies broad principles but does not attempt to generate specific implementation strategies.

It is difficult to draw direct parallels between Pauline practices in the first century and missionary practice today

1 Noteworthy examples include Christopher R. Little, *Mission in the Way of Paul* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005); Verlyn D. Verbrugge and Keith R. Krell, *Paul and Money: A Biblical and Theological Analysis of the Apostle's Teachings and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015); and David E. Briones, *Paul's Financial Policy* (New York: Bloomsberry T&T Clark, 2013).

Craig Ott (MDiv, PhD, Trinity Evangelical) is professor of mission and intercultural studies and director of the PhD program in intercultural studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, USA. He has authored and edited numerous books, including most recently The Mission of the Church: Five Views in Conversation *(reviewed elsewhere in this issue).*

regarding the use of money, for several reasons. First, the gap between rich and poor nations is much greater today than it was in the first century. This inequality complicates international financial relations between wealthier and poorer churches.

Furthermore, Paul's example does not neatly fit the categories or practices of typical mission work today. For example, Paul received financial support from the church that he had founded in Philippi (Phil 4:14–19), but he also worked at times to support himself, and most leaders of the early mission churches were not paid. Moreover, the churches met in private homes. Therefore, they had minimal need to pay salaries and building costs, and most church-giving was devoted to charitable causes.

Today's mission activity also includes a host of ministries not reflected in Paul's pioneer mission work, such as theological education and medical work.

Finally, missions in the twenty-first century are 'from everywhere to everywhere', making distinctions between sending and receiving churches ambiguous. Ironically, the only clear New Testament example of funds moving from one church to another was not from a sending church to a mission church but in the reverse direction: the Gentile churches of Macedonia and Achaia contributing relief funds to the Jerusalem church (hereafter 'the Jerusalem collection').

In view of all these gaps between the early church's situation and ours, we need to approach the discussion of Pauline mission and money in a principled manner in terms of underlying motivations and goals, rather than merely attempting to imitate Pauline practice as it appears on the surface.

I will approach the topic first by considering money as a means of demonstrating compassion, followed by an examination of the extent to which such giving should lead to financial equality among all Christians. I will then discuss the responsibility of financial self-sustenance in relation to giving, and I will close by examining various aspects of financial support for itinerant missionaries in light of Paul's example.

I. Money as a Means of Demonstrating Compassion

Both the Old and New Testaments repeatedly call for compassion regarding the needs of the less fortunate. As Bruce W. Longenecker has amply demonstrated, the concern for the poor so evident in the Old Testament was also practised in the New Testament church.[2] In Titus 3:14, Paul calls believers 'to provide for urgent needs', and in Romans 12:13 he exhorts; 'Share with the Lord's people who are in need'. He gladly remembered the poor in Jerusalem (Gal 2:10) and practised the giving of alms (Acts 24:17). New Testament churches provided financial support for orphans and widows locally (Acts 6:1; 1 Tim 5:3–16; Jas 1:27). A virtue of hard work is that one 'may have something to share with those in need' (Eph 4:28).

The collection of funds in Gentile churches to assist the poor in Jerusa-

2 Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2010).

lem is the only New Testament example of one church giving to meet the needs of the poor in another church. There were at least two such collections: one in Antioch, in response to the prophecy of an impending famine in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27–30), and a larger collection among the churches in Macedonia and Achaia (Rom 15:26–28; 1 Cor 16:1–4; 2 Cor 8–9).

The Jerusalem collection had several unique features, indicating that charity was not the only and perhaps not even the primary purpose of the offering.[3] The Antiochene and Macedonian churches were probably experiencing the same famine and similar persecution as the Jerusalem church. Thus they gave 'in the midst of a very severe trial … and their extreme poverty' (2 Cor 8:2).[4] The Gentile churches were no doubt stretched in providing for their own poor. Although some members of the churches were better off, generally Christians 'shared fully in the bleak material existence that was the lot of the non-elite inhabitants of the Empire'.[5] This may explain why, apart from the Jerusalem collection, we do not read in the New Testament of churches taking collections to assist other churches. It also reinforces the view that the Jerusalem collection had reasons beyond charity.

One reason explicitly mentioned in Romans 15:27 is the material payment of a spiritual debt that the Gentiles owed to the Jews. The collection also indicated unity between Gentile and Jewish Christians. Bengt Holmberg writes; 'The real significance of the Collection is not the money as such or the amount of help it will bring, but the demonstration of unity between Jews and Gentiles within the Church.' He concludes, 'The Collection for the Jerusalem church is thus to be understood as a sign that Gentile Christians have been converted to the same faith as the Jewish Christians and are incorporated into the same new covenant.'[6]

Whatever other reasons there may have been for the Jerusalem collection, it was still also an expression of compassion with the goals of alleviating the needs of the 'poor' in Jerusalem (Rom 15:26, Gal 2:10) and 'supplying the needs of the Lord's people' (2 Cor 9:12).

Despite the unique features of the Jerusalem collection and the lack of other New Testament examples of inter-church financial aid, we cannot conclude that churches today should never send financial aid to another church. Paul's lengthy exhortation encouraging the Corinthian believers to participate in the Jerusalem collection demonstrates that such giving is a work of sincere love (2 Cor 8:8, 24), an expression of worship and thanksgiving (8:5; 9:11–13), a reflection of the grace of Christ (8:6, 9; 9:14), and a sign of Christian unity (8:13–14).

Exhortations such as 1 John 3:17–

3 See Verbrugge and Krell, *Paul and Money*, 130–46, for a summary of the suggested purposes of the collection.

4 See Keith F. Nickle, *The Collection: A Study in Paul's Strategy* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1966), 138–39.

5 Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 153.

6 Bengt Holmberg, *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 38, 40. See also Verbrugge and Krell, *Paul and Money,* 141.

18 cannot be limited to caring only for local needs: 'If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.' Similarly, Galatians 6:10 exhorts, 'Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to *all people*, especially to those who belong to the family of believers'. The terminology of 'doing good' (*to kalon poiountes*) carried in the ancient world the sense of bestowing material benefit.[7]

Once we have established the moral obligation to assist the poor and disadvantaged, there remains the practical question of what *kind* of giving actually helps those in need and does not actually disempower or victimize them, thus further aggravating their situation.[8] We might make further distinctions between immediate emergency relief and longer-term reconstruction or economic development efforts. But the New Testament does not explicitly address these questions.

Notably, financial assistance or charitable aid was nowhere used in the New Testament for the purposes of persuading unbelievers to become followers of Christ. In the case of the Jerusalem collection, the recipients were already Christians. Of course, numerous biblical texts commend giving alms and caring for those in need, even to those who might be considered enemies (e.g. Lk 10:25–37; Rom 12:19–21). But there is no direct linkage between such acts of compassion and evangelism. In any case, charitable giving without the expectation of receiving something in return was virtually unknown in the Greco-Roman world,[9] so any Christian charity would have been a powerful testimony to the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

II. Sharing Money with the Goal of Equality

In 2 Corinthians 8:13–15, Paul appeals to the Corinthian believers to contribute to the Jerusalem collection:

> Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality, as it is written: 'The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little'.

Attempts to overly spiritualize this passage ignore the obvious context of financial giving, supplying material need in the face of hardship.[10] It would

7 Longenecker, *Remember the Poor,* 142.

8 Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *Helping Hurts: How To Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor—and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody, 2009); Robert D. Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (and How To Reverse It)* (New York: HarperOne, 2011).

9 John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1986), 64.

10 For example, Dieter Georgi, *Remembering the Poor: The History of Paul's Collection for Jerusalem* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1965), 87–88, argues that the two Greek terms translated 'equality' in verses 13–14 carry primarily a sense of juridical equality between Jew and Gentile, not financial equality.

seem inconsistent with the principle of compassion for one church to live in abundance while ignoring the needs of another church facing poverty or hunger.

But how far does this call for equality among Christians reach? Does the call to share apply only to cases of severe poverty, emergency or crisis? Or should wealthier churches always send money to poorer churches to equalize any economic imbalance, whatever the specific nature or cause of the need may be?

Before addressing Paul's call for 'equality' directly, let us consider the pooling of wealth and possessions that occurred in the communal life of the early Jerusalem church. This indeed led to at least some equalizing of rich and poor, so that 'there were no needy persons among them', as wealthy Christians sold their possessions and distributed money 'to anyone who had need'. All this was a sign of God's grace at work among them (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37).

This somewhat idealized depiction of the Jerusalem church may reflect a fulfilment of the Old Testament's Promised Land promise that there would be no poor among the people of God (e.g. Deut 15:4),[11] or it could mirror a Greek ideal of friendship.[12] At least some Christians in Jerusalem did continue to possess private property (Acts 5:1; 12:12).

Although, as noted above, other churches in the New Testament cared for financial needs of the disadvantaged, they do not appear to have engaged in communal sharing to the same extent as that described in the Jerusalem church. Acts 11:29 indicates that giving in Antioch for the Jerusalem church was 'as each one was able', indicating the existence of private property and, apparently, no common fund. Believers were expected to work to provide for their own families.

Since the process of collecting funds from the Gentile churches for Jerusalem continued over several years, the need was probably ongoing, though not devastatingly acute. Greater urgency would surely have been evident in Paul's call for offerings had the Jerusalem Christians been facing starvation. Thus, the call for equality in 2 Corinthians 8 does not seem to apply only to dire emergency situations. The context speaks also of a reciprocity, in that the recipient would in some way also supply the donor's need (v. 14).

In this text and others, the focus of financial sharing in the New Testament is consistently on meeting the need of those unable to provide for themselves. The poverty in the Jerusalem church was attributable in part to famine (Acts 11:28) and in part to persecution, both causes largely beyond their control.

As radical as this Christian charity was, the New Testament contains no call for a general redistribution of wealth. However, it does clearly presume a moral obligation to alleviate suffering through sharing by those who have abundance. 'Mutual interdependence' may be a better way than 'equality' of framing the financial relationship

11 David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 205–6.

12 Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sharing Possessions* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 111–22.

between Christian communities.[13]

Were these offerings for Jerusalem isolated, temporary acts of charity to meet a specific need or part of an ongoing effort to support the poor in Jerusalem? The collection described in Acts 11:27–29 was clearly in response to the prediction of a famine, which may also have been the case for the later Jerusalem collection. David J. Downs writes:

> There is reason to believe, in fact, that the Pauline collection for Jerusalem was a one-time caritative project. In his discussion of his plans to deliver the fund in Rom 15:25–32, Paul does not indicate that he plans to continue his fundraising efforts after this journey to Jerusalem, nor does he encourage the church in Rome to begin gathering a follow-up offering for Jerusalem.[14]

Yet Longenecker argues that the Jerusalem collection was not an isolated case but a typical example of charitable giving in the early church.[15] Second Corinthians 9:13 speaks of 'generosity in sharing with them and *with everyone else*', which may indicate a sharing with churches other than the Jerusalem church. In either case, the Jerusalem collection had the purpose of alleviating the suffering of others, which should not be confused with a general redistribution of wealth between rich and poor churches.

We can conclude from the example of the Jerusalem collection that churches can be expected to share their abundance with others who have need. The situation need not be severely acute to warrant assistance, but neither does it necessarily entail an ongoing subsidy or wealth redistribution. The next principle to be discussed, that believers should generally provide for their own needs, places the principle of equality in a larger perspective.

III. The Responsibility of Financial Self-Sustenance

The Jerusalem collection was intended to alleviate suffering and poverty that was not the church's own fault. By contrast, we read stern exhortations under threat of church discipline that individuals must work to provide for their own families (2 Thes 3:6–15; 1 Tim 5:8). Even widows were expected to provide for themselves. Only older widows without family members able to provide for them were eligible to receive financial support from the church (1 Tim 5:3–16).

Thus, financial assistance, even when motivated by compassion, should not undermine individual willingness to work and provide for one's own needs. Christian charity should be marked by voluntary generosity (2 Cor 9:5–6, 11), especially among the wealthy (1 Tim 6:17–18). But this generosity should be directed towards those genuinely in need and unable to provide for themselves.

Paul presents his own example of self-support as evidence that one should not look to others for sustenance (2 Thes 3:7–10; cf. 1 Thes 2:9). Working with one's hands has the

13 Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival,* 157–64.

14 David J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles*, WUNT 2:248 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 25.

15 Longenecker, *Remember the Poor,* 141–56.

added benefit 'that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders' (1 Thes 4:11–12). Thus, hard work and self-sustenance commend the gospel.

Verbrugge and Krell comment; 'The upper classes of Rome and Greece despised manual labour. That is why they owned so many slaves. They hated to work with their hands. But Christianity brought in a new ethic-based on personal responsibility and hard work. Jesus was a carpenter and Paul himself was a tentmaker/leatherworker.'[16]

This view reflects the teaching of the Old Testament. The Proverbs continually praise hard work, diligence and planning while condemning sloth and wastefulness (e.g. Prov 10:4; 14:23; 19:15; 21:5). In addition, the prophets decried practices that enslaved the vulnerable and called for reforming systemic injustice or corruption that creates poverty and exploits the poor.

Sloth and wastefulness are not the only sources of poverty. The Old Testament unequivocally condemns corrupt leaders and those who exploit workers and keep them in poverty (e.g. Prov 14:31; 22:22–23; Is 10:1–2; Amos 5:10–12). The way towards equality of material wealth is not through redistribution, but rather by creating equal opportunity for honest work at a fair wage.

It would seem consistent to apply this principle of self-sustenance not only to individuals, but also to churches. This means that each church should provide for its own ongoing needs, including providing for its own poor. Only exceptional circumstances, such as an emergency or ongoing crisis, justify outside assistance. But in such cases, the goal would always be to alleviate immediate need and then to help the church (or believers in the church) soon to become financially self-sufficient again.

In the world of mission funding, giving to crisis relief is consistent with the principle of compassion; giving to economic development (seed funding, micro-loans, development projects, job training, etc.) aimed at helping people to become financially self-sustaining would be in keeping with this principle of self-support. Facilitating self-help empowers and does not create ongoing dependency.

As I will discuss below, ministers of the gospel are worthy of financial remuneration for their service. Most itinerant missionaries would need financial assistance due to their mobile lifestyle. In Paul's case, the necessary tools for his trade of leatherworking were easily portable, allowing him to take his trade with him and support himself during his missionary travels.[17] But those formerly employed in fishing (like the apostle Peter) or farming would not have this option available and would have depended on others for support.[18]

Accordingly, it is acceptable for local church leaders either to be self-supporting or to receive support from

16 Verbrugge and Krell, *Paul and Money,* 209.

17 Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 25.

18 See Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 37–38; J. Andrew Kirk, 'Did Officials in the New Testament Church Receive a Salary?' *Expository Times* 84, no. 4 (1973): 108.

their congregations. Whatever remuneration they receive should come from those who are served by their ministry (Gal 6:6; 1 Tim 5:17–18). This also keeps leaders locally accountable.

In pioneer mission work, there is not yet a local constituency of believers who could support their leaders through their offerings. Such a setting might warrant outside support for the initial establishment of a church. However, once a ministry has been started by outside funding, making the transfer to self-support can be difficult. Local believers must be taught and motivated to sacrificially take up the responsibility of supporting their own ministries. That is why many have suggested that it is better not to provide any outside financial support for indigenous ministries (imitating Paul's practice), but instead to grow the ministry solely on the basis of the resources available locally.[19]

The ideal of self-support, as part of the three-self goal for mission churches—self-propagation, self-support, and self-governance—has been critiqued as rooted in the Western value of independence rather than in biblical teaching.[20] But the biblical instructions cited here caution against rejecting the self-support goal too cavalierly as a Western invention.

The principle of self-sufficiency admittedly stands in tension with the goal of financial equality. It is not always easy to discern when sharing of resources is justified and when restraint for the purpose of promoting self-sufficiency is the more expedient and loving response. This tension fuels the fires of many debates about missions and money. Based on the biblical evidence, we should differentiate between inter-church aid to alleviate poverty (for which there is precedent in the Jerusalem collection) and mission giving to support local leaders (for which there is no clear biblical precedent).

But as indicated above, rigidly imitating Paul's practice from the first century will not always contribute towards accomplishing biblical purposes under the radically different conditions prevailing today. These tensions will not always be easily resolved, and we must seek the Lord's guidance and wisdom to discover the best means to accomplish biblical ends.

IV. Money to Send Missionaries and Support Spiritual Leaders

I turn now to the use of funds in supporting cross-cultural missionaries and Christian workers, with a focus on pioneering situations. Although Paul doubtless lived modestly, the cost of his travels, correspondence and books would have been considerable.[21] 'Paul's expenses may have been modest by today's standards, but compared with the financial requirements of the original

19 For example, Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962 [1912]), 52; Little, *Mission in the Way of Paul*, 46.

20 For a brief history and critique of the three-self formula, see Peter Beyerhaus, 'Three Selves Formula: Is It Built on Biblical Foundations?' *International Review of Mission* 53, no. 212 (1964): 393–407.

21 See Verbrugge and Krell, *Paul and Money*, 100-102.

mission in Palestine, his missionary activity was expensive indeed.'[22] What can we learn about missionary funding from Paul's example? Several underlying principles can be observed.

1. Missionaries and ministers are worthy of financial support

Paul made a strong case to the Corinthian church that he had the right to receive financial support from them (1 Cor 9:1–14). He declared; 'The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel' (v. 14). Galatians 6:6 also seems to affirm the appropriateness of spiritual leaders in a local church receiving remuneration from the beneficiaries of their teaching.

1 Timothy 5:17–18 makes the strongest argument: 'The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For Scripture says, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." ' Verse 18a quotes Deuteronomy 25:4, which Paul also quotes in 1 Corinthians 9:9 with reference to financial remuneration. Verse 18b speaks of a worker deserving wages, a proverb also quoted in Luke 10:7 with the clear meaning of material provision.

These considerations suggest strongly that the 'double honour' does not refer simply to high respect. Andrew Kirk has argued, however, that full support was given only to itinerant missionaries who would have had limited capacity for self-support.[23] Local resident elders would not have received regular salaries, but only something like honoraria for specific services.

Paul received financial support from the Philippian church while in Thessalonica (Phil 4:16), although it was apparently not enough to fully support him, since he also laboured there to support himself (1 Thes 1:9). Paul initially supported himself while in Corinth, but 'When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah' (Acts 18:3–5). The reason was that, as Paul states, 'the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed' (2 Cor 11:9a).

By implication, Paul preferred to devote his energy full-time to gospel ministry. However, he did so only when support was available *not* from the Corinthians or Thessalonians themselves, but from other churches (a curiosity that we will address below).

The concept of *koinōnia* and related terms describes the Philippian church's partnership with Paul in the gospel, which included financial assistance and was unlike that of any other church (Phil 1:7; 4:14–15). This language of partnership or fellowship was used also to describe the 'contribution' (*koinōnian*) of the Gentle churches to the Jerusalem collection (Rom 15:26), and of the grace of giving towards the collection as 'the privilege of sharing [*koinōnian*] in this service to the Lord's people' in 2 Corinthians 8:4.

22 Jouette M. Bassler, *God's Mammon: Asking for Money in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1991), 64.

23 Kirk, 'Did Officials?'

Several authors have suggested that the somewhat technical, business terminology used in Philippians 4 points to a formal financial partnership between Paul and the Philippian church.[24] This view probably overstates the evidence.[25] We have no details as to the amount or frequency of funds sent. Paul's reluctance to presume upon the generosity of the Philippians would speak against such a business-type partnership. Their partnership included the financial gift, but it was more than the gift alone.[26]

More importantly, the partnership was not merely between Paul and the Philippians, but a partnership (or fellowship) in the gospel (Phil 1:5; 4:15). Gerald W. Peterman compares the language of Philippians 1 and 4 and concludes from the similarity of terminology, 'This similarity demonstrates the importance of *koinōnia humōn eis to euangelion* as that which is primary in the apostle's evaluation of the meaning and significance of the gift.'[27] As we shall see below, the progress of the gospel is the foremost consideration in Paul's mind, regarding his acceptance or refusal of financial assistance from the churches.

Paul sought support also from churches to assist with travel expenses for himself and others. He appealed to the church in Rome to send him onward to Spain (Rom 15:24). In fact, many commentators believe that this was a primary purpose for writing the letter to the Romans.[28] Paul also expressed the expectation that during a passing visit the Corinthian church would help him further on his journey to the next location (1 Cor 16:6; 2 Cor 1:16) and possibly do the same for Timothy (1 Cor 16:10–11).

A similar request is made for other itinerant ministers in Titus 3:13: 'Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need.' Indeed, the verb *propempō* ('accompany' or 'send off') in these and similar passages may have become a technical term in the early church for providing funds for missionaries on their continuing journeys.[29]

Clearly, Paul solicited funds for himself and others, at least to help with their travel expenses. In this regard, Paul did not strictly follow Jesus' instruction in Mt 10:9–10 that the disciples should not take money with them on their preaching tour. 'This confirms that the dominical saying in Mt 10:9–10 had limited significance in a specific historical setting.'[30]

Thus we have in Pauline practice both a rationale for financially supporting minsters of the gospel and a precedent for supporting itinerant missionaries, including ones who did not originate from the donor church. A

24 Bassler, *God's Mammon*, 77; J. Paul Sampley, *Pauline Partnership in Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 52–53.

25 Gerald W. Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 65, 123–27.

26 Peterman, *Paul's Gift*, 99–103.

27 Peterman, *Paul's Gift*, 92.

28 Ann L. Jervis, *The Purpose of Romans* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 19–20; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), xv, 3.

29 Holmberg, *Paul and Power,* 86–87.

30 Eckhard Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Paul and the Early Church,* vol. 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 1149.

pioneer missionary typically does not have enough local believers to support the work financially. That missionary will thus need either to be self-supporting through some form of employment or to receive outside support from other churches or believers. We see that Paul did both, working at times as a tentmaker (or more accurately a leatherworker)[31] and at times receiving financial gifts from other churches.

Paul, however, refused financial support from those whom he was attempting to reach; in those situations, he generally supported himself. He argued in 1 Corinthians 9 that he had the right to receive support (vv. 4–6), and in fact 'other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas' received it (v. 5). But Paul voluntarily chose to surrender that right (vv. 15–18). He supported himself in Corinth as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3; 1 Cor 4:12); in Thessalonica by hard work, labouring and toiling, day and night (1 Thes 2:9; 2 Thes 3:7-8); and in Ephesus by his own hands, even providing also for his co-workers (Acts 20:34). This was most likely also his practice during his first missionary journey with Barnabas (1 Cor 9:6).

Why did Paul accept support in some situations and refuse it in others? A partial answer is that Paul refused financial aid when *present* in a pioneer church-planting situation (as in Corinth), whereas he accepted it while *absent* from the church (as with the Philippian gift) or when soliciting funds for *onward travel* (as in the requests of churches in Corinth and Rome). These are qualitatively different types of support.[32] Holmberg explains; 'Only when Paul has left a church he has founded does he accept any money from it, in order to stress the fact that it has the character of support in his continued missionary work.'[33]

But what was the logic behind refusing support from those he was presently serving? This leads to my next points.

2. Pioneer missionaries should not be a burden

In pioneer mission settings, missionaries should not be a financial burden to those being reached. Paul repeatedly mentioned that he did not want to be a burden to those whom he was serving (2 Cor 11:9; 12:13, 16; 1 Thes 2:9). Although Paul was bold in asking churches to give sacrificially to the Jerusalem collection, he was reluctant to solicit funds for himself. Even as he gave thanks to the Philippian church for the support that it had sent him, he was quick to relieve them of any pressure to continue sending funds. He clarified that he had learned to be satisfied in abundance and in want (Phil 4:11–13, 17), and that God would supply their needs (4:19).

The place of an artisan in the Greco-Roman world was one of particularly low social status, near that of a slave, with low pay for long hours. These workers were also viewed as incapable of virtue and uneducated.[34] However,

31 See Hock, *Social Context*, 21–22.

32 Peterman, *Paul's Gift,* 163–67.

33 Holmberg, *Paul and Power*, 91; see also Briones, *Paul's Financial Policy,* 101.

34 Hock, *Social Context*, 31–37. Joel N. Lohr has argued that one reason why Paul worked as a tradesman was to identify with the poor

among Jews manual labour was esteemed and considered normal.[35] F. F. Bruce notes; 'Many rabbis practised a trade so as to be able to impart their teaching without charge.'[36]

Indeed, Paul's practice of self-support was consistent with the rabbinic teaching that one should not profit from teaching the Torah. One such teaching stated; 'Whosoever derives a profit for himself from the words of the Torah is helping on his own destruction' (*Pirḳe Avot* 1:13:7).[37] The tradition that some rabbis received payment for teaching may have developed after the time of Paul.[38] Some Greek philosophers were also known to support themselves through manual labour.[39]

Paul's willingness to surrender his rights and not be a financial burden to those whom he was evangelizing thus came at a high personal cost. Working long hours in a social context that looked down upon artisans would have been difficult for him and was a remarkable sign of humility.[40] Ronald F. Hock's summary is worth quoting at length:

> The position of Paul that has emerged thus far is hardly enviable. … Traveling and plying a trade were always exhausting and were frequently painful; … Paul's travels, like those of other itinerant artisans and teachers, were often punctuated by delays, difficulties, and dangers. Once he was in a city there were days, perhaps weeks, of staying in inns before Paul found lodging in a household; and instead of simply becoming its resident intellectual, as was his apostolic right, he refused to be a financial burden. … Making tents meant rising before dawn, toiling until sunset with leather, knives, and awls, and accepting the various social stigmas and humiliations that were part of the artisans' lot, not to mention the poverty—being cold, hungry and poorly clothed.[41]

Justin J. Meggitt describes Paul as 'a man who shared fully in the destitute life of the non-elite in the Roman Empire, an existence dominated by work and the struggle to subsist'.[42]

The appropriate missionary standard of living has long been a difficult question.[43] Unfortunately, many popular preachers today have profited financially from their ministry in ways that burden others and blemish their

and lowly of the church. But this was at best a secondary consideration. Lohr, 'He Identified with the Lowly and Became a Slave to All: Paul's Tentmaking as a Strategy for Mission', *Currents in Theology and Mission* 34, no. 3 (2007): 179–87.

35 Derek Tidball, *The Social Context of the New Testament* (Carlisle and Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 1997), 94.

36 F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 220.

37 See also F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 391; A. E. Harvey, ' "The Workman Is Worthy of His Hire": Fortunes of a Proverb in the Early Church', *Novum Testamentum* 24, no. 3 (1982): 213–14.

38 Briones, *Paul's Financial Policy*, 11; Verbrugge and Krell, *Paul and Money*, 38.

39 Hock, *Social Context,* 39–41, 56–58; Briones, *Paul's Financial Policy,* 11–12.

40 Hock, *Social Context*, 35–36.

41 Hock, *Social Context*, 37.

42 Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival,* 96.

43 Jonathan J. Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem*, rev. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2006).

motivation for ministry. They live in opulence at the expense of sincere believers of humble means who give sacrificially to their ministry. Such behaviour is contrary to the Pauline example and that of Jesus, who came to serve and not to be served (Mk 10:45). This observation leads to the next lesson from Paul.

3. Refuse financial support that might compromise one's character

Paul's concern for his reputation as a representative of Christ and the gospel outweighed in importance his concern not to burden local believers. Paul's ultimate reason for refusing remuneration from the Corinthians is that he did not want to 'hinder the gospel of Christ' (1 Cor 9:12b).

Receiving local funds for ministry could have compromised Paul's reputation and credibility in two primary ways. First, he would have opened himself up to accusations of greed and of personally profiting from the gospel. In the early Mediterranean world, travelling teachers or philosophers would solicit funds from local patrons, charge fees, or even beg, although there was also a tradition that the truly wise would not accept remuneration for teaching.[44] Paul wanted to avoid any accusation of peddling the gospel for personal profit (2 Cor 2:17), of coveting the wealth of those whom he was evangelizing or serving (Acts 20:33), or of being greedy (1 Thes 2:5). Thus he preached the gospel 'free of charge' (1 Cor 9:18; 2 Cor 11:7).

Even in the administration of the Jerusalem collection, Paul went to great effort to be above reproach: 'We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of man' (2 Cor 8:20–21).

The second potentially compromising feature of receiving local funds was the possibility of entanglement in social obligations to benefactors. Even after a church was formed, Paul resisted receiving remuneration from local believers as long as he was with them.

Some have argued that soliciting support from local patrons, especially unbelievers, could have placed Paul under obligation to them in a social system of benefaction based on reciprocity, which was common in that time.[45] According to this interpretation, Paul would have desired to preach the gospel without having to cater to the interests of wealthy benefactors.[46] Others, however, question whether this was one of Paul's motivations. David Briones argues; 'Paul refused monetary support, not because he detected the Corinthians' motive to patronise him,

44 Peterman, *Paul's Gift*, 208–15; Briones, *Paul's Financial Policy,* 164–67.

45 Peterman, *Paul's Gift*, 3–7; Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1.

46 Phoebe, mentioned in Romans 1:1–2, is called a 'benefactor' (NIV) of many, including Paul. The term here, *prostatis*, could possibly be translated 'patroness' (ESV), but might also mean merely 'helper'. Lydia in Philippi (Acts 16:14–15, 40) was probably wealthy and might also have been a patroness of Paul. But these cases seem inconclusive. In any event, both were already believers when Paul received gifts from them; see Verbrugge and Krell, *Paul and Money*, 81–103.

as many assume, but because he evaded any associations with the monetary practices of itinerant Sophists and philosophers, who avariciously capitalised on their initial visits into cities.'[47]

Although Paul was entitled to financial support in principle, if receiving such support jeopardized his credibility in any way, he would surrender that right. Indeed, by some accounts, in the Greco-Roman world it could enhance the credibility of a philosopher to work for his own living, not depending on others or receiving remuneration for teaching, and demonstrating through his labour the lessons of philosophy.[48]

In some settings today, as in the first century, the source of financial support of missionaries or local Christian workers can raise questions regarding their motives. Is a missionary or evangelist preaching the gospel out of personal conviction or for personal gain? Are they missionaries or mercenaries? Some foreign Christian workers have been accused of being instruments of foreign imperialism. On the other hand, ministers of the gospel who maintain secular employment sometimes have greater credibility than full-time paid ministers.

Paul's resistance to receiving funds from wealthy patrons also raises the matter of money and power in the missionary enterprise and in international partnerships. Whether funding is provided locally or from afar, a recipient of funds becomes accountable to the donor. Both itinerant missionaries and resident spiritual leaders must weigh wisely to whom they are willing to be accountable and how that accountability may influence their ministry, for good or ill. Each situation must be prayerfully and honestly assessed as to what will best advance the gospel.

4. The progress of the gospel as foremost consideration

We have seen that Paul considered the financial gift of the Philippian church a fellowship or partnership in the gospel. It was not merely a personal favour or kindness to Paul, but was about advancing the gospel through Paul's mission. We have also seen that Paul refused to receive support from the Corinthians because doing so might compromise his character and potentially constrain his ministry. Thus, the message and credibility of the gospel were again foremost in his mind.

Paul concluded his argument in 1 Corinthians 9 for refusing support by stating that he wanted to be an example of surrendering his rights (vv. 12, 15); 'to win as many as possible' (v. 19). He declared, 'I do all this for the sake of the gospel' (v. 23). On the other hand, Paul *requested* financial assistance from the Roman church to travel onward to Spain (Rom 15:24) and 'to preach the gospel where Christ was not known' (15:20).

Thus one key factor (perhaps the crucial factor) in understanding why Paul accepted gifts in one situation but not in another is the impact that his action would have on the progress of the gospel into unreached regions and winning others for Christ. Bassler summarizes:

47 Briones, *Paul's Financial Policy*, 177. Briones argues at length in chapter 2 that not all giving and receiving of gifts in the ancient world can be subsumed under the patron-client rubric.

48 See Theissen, *Social Setting*, 37–39.

> [Paul] did not ask for or accept money from a community in which he was actively working to establish a church. The basic reason he gives for this is his concern about hindering the forward movement of the gospel, whether by giving offence or by burdening fledging churches. Once a church was established, however, he expected it to finance his travel to the next town. Clearly the concern for the gospel is paramount in Paul's expectations here as well.[49]

V. Worship Offerings as the Source of Ministry Funding

Today, many creative ideas have been proposed to raise funds for mission work and to provide economic resources for emerging churches in the context of poverty. Does Pauline missionary practice offer us any guidelines in discerning the wisdom of such proposals?

The Old Testament teaches that the tithes of God's people were to support the priests and Levites who had no land as a source of income, as well as to aid the foreigner, the fatherless and widows (Deut 14:28–29). It was an act of worship by both rich and poor, given in addition to various other forms of providing for the disadvantaged, such as leaving the harvest gleanings for the poor (Lev 19:9). Although the New Testament does not speak of a tithe *per se*,[50] the principle still applies: God's work should be supported by the gifts and offerings of God's people.

These gifts are not merely financial arrangements to pay bills, but acts of worship and thanksgiving (Is 19:21). Paul described the financial gifts of the Jerusalem collection as literally 'a service of worship' that overflowed in thanksgiving to God, causing others to praise God (2 Cor 9:12–13). He called the Philippian church's gift for him 'a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God' (Phil 4:18b).

Paul, along with Priscilla and Aquila, had a tentmaking 'business' (Acts 18:1–3), but this was in no way comparable to the church-owned businesses sometimes undertaken in modern times. Some churches or mission projects have attempted to fund their ministries through church-operated business endeavours. This approach is not only fraught with practical difficulties, distracting energy and turning the church into a business undertaking, but violates the spiritual dynamic of ministry. When churches or mission agencies become directly responsible for business undertakings, the danger of compromise and conflict of interest grows.

Much as Paul avoided any form of funding that would cast doubt on his character and motives, so too churches that become entangled in running businesses are in danger of compromising their character and reputation. The church enters a minefield of potential accusations—greed, nepotism, profiteering, paying unfair wages, etc.—all of which could potentially impair the progress of the gospel. Furthermore, a business can quickly become a financial or legal liability, actually costing money and jeopardizing the church's viability altogether.

49 Bassler, *God's Mammon,* 85.

50 For a discussion of Paul's silence regarding tithing, see Verbrugge and Krell, *Paul and Money,* 269–72.

The better way to assist resource-poor churches or missions in financing their ministries is to enable local believers to increase their earning power and thus be able to contribute offerings to support the work. Job training can provide modern 'tentmaker' missionaries with a livelihood. Economic development projects, micro-loans, job training, and 'business as mission' efforts can contribute to a community's financial health by providing individuals with employment and an honourable means of earning a living. These individuals are then in a position to support church and mission ministries through their offerings.

Ministry should be sustained and advanced by its members' acts of worship, which include financial offerings. Mission churches need to teach new believers the joy of giving as an act of worship, which is much more than a pragmatic necessity to pay church bills.

VI. Conclusion

This survey of the biblical material has yielded a somewhat complex picture of how finances were employed in the apostle Paul's mission work and in inter-church relations during the first century. Throughout history, Christians have given generously to advance the gospel, to assist emerging churches, and to alleviate poverty. Such acts are surely a sign of God's gracious work in the hearts of those who give.

Clearly, Christians are to provide relief and financial assistance to fellow believers in emergency or crisis situations and to those unable to provide for themselves. Helping others to obtain sustainable and profitable employment and attain a worthy standard of living is empowering. Corruption, racism, and economic systems that exploit, discriminate or enslave people in poverty must be reformed. Such efforts are evidence of compassion, signs of solidarity, and acts of worship.

At the same time, charitable giving must not undermine local initiative and responsibility. The expectation that individuals should provide for their own families and not become dependent upon others applies logically to churches as well. This conclusion is consistent with the fact that apart from charitable relief, Paul never brought financial aid from one church to another. It would also align with the view that church ministries should be supported by the offerings of believers served by that church, including any financial support provided for local church leaders.

Paul's teaching and example regarding financial support of missionaries present a diverse picture. In some situations, Paul chose to be self-supporting so as to not burden others, to remain above reproach, and to be free of encumbrances. This was especially the case in pioneer situations where a local church had not yet come into existence. In other situations, he received financial support and expected churches to assist his further missionary travel.

Paul commended the support of itinerant ministers as well as local leaders who are locally accountable to those whom they serve. Yet in every situation, any appearance of impropriety must be avoided, even if that means surrendering one's personal rights. Ultimately, the progress of the gospel remained foremost in Paul's decision as

to whether to accept financial support.

Discerning the best practices for any given setting today is more than a merely pragmatic decision. We cannot simply imitate Paul's example rigidly, as we live in a very different world and must remain sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit who may guide us in fresh directions. But we ignore Paul's example at our own peril. The principled wisdom inherent in his practices can provide guidance that may at times seem counterintuitive, but will ultimately advance the cause of the gospel.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 21-34

The Ecosapiential Theology of Psalms

Andrea L. Robinson

Ecosapiential theology articulates the connectedness of all elements within God's created order as presented in biblical wisdom literature. In a previous article, I explored the implications of an ecosapiential approach for modern believers and proposed that understanding ecosapiential theology can help to restore the divinely ordained relationship between God, humanity and the natural world.[1]

Through an examination of ecological themes in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job, I proposed that each book offers slightly different yet complementary perspectives. Proverbs teaches that God orders his creation and sets boundaries to ensure its proper operation. Both the human and the natural world are endowed with a purpose and a role within the functioning whole. Rejection or transgression of the created order results in a destructive trajectory for the whole natural world, including humanity.

The wise teacher of Ecclesiastes explains that progress isn't inherently beneficial. A respect for the value and dignity of other creatures is more important than the values of consumption and comfort. The book of Job, meanwhile, vividly portrays an omniscient and omnipotent God who cares for every element of his creation. The intimate relationship between humans and God is counterbalanced by a non-anthropocentric view of God's relationship with his creation. Humans are not the centre of the universe, and God has purposes for his creation that sometimes have nothing to do with mankind.

All three books also teach that we experience a deeper understanding of self through nature. Human beings do not have a monopoly on wisdom. Ecosapiential wisdom teaches that creation can, in fact, impart wisdom to humans. Learning from God's creation may break through to hearts hardened to the natural world. Indeed, a proper response to the ecological teachings of

1 Andrea L. Robinson, 'The Ecosapiential Theology of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 41 (2017): 134–49.

Andrea L. Robinson (MA, ThM, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, USA) is currently a PhD candidate and adjunct instructor at the same school. Andrea also works at the Tel Gezer Water System excavation in Israel during the summers. The primary focus of her research is ecotheology and creation theology, spanning both Old and New Testaments, specifically with regard to the relationship between theology and ecology in wisdom literature, prophetic literature, and apocalyptic literature. In addition to her academic pursuits, Andrea is an ordained minister and occasional conference speaker.

biblical wisdom literature calls humanity to address abuses of the environment as well as the underlying spiritual causes.

The present article complements the previous one by illuminating the ecosapiential perspective of Psalms. An investigation of key psalms reveals that ecological references in the Psalter present God as creator and sustainer of the natural world with the intent of inspiring mankind towards a greater reverence for God and his creation. Such reverence, in turn, should stimulate individuals to engage in a more profound commitment to humanity's role as steward of the earth.

Due to the high frequency of ecological references in the Psalter, three representative psalms (8, 29 and 104) have been chosen for analysis. The three offer distinctive yet complementary perspectives on the relationship between God, mankind and the environment. Before examining each one individually, I will briefly discuss overarching themes.

I. The Problem and the Solution: Ecosapiential Perspectives

Biblical wisdom breaks down the division between sacred and secular. Through wisdom humans encounter the cosmic ordering power in creation in all areas of life.[2] Biblical wisdom shares with ancient Near Eastern (ANE) wisdom a conception that all of life is ordered by the divine.

In the ANE world, sacred and secular were one and the same,[3] but in the Bible, nature remains distinct from its creator. Humans may perceive God through nature, but nowhere is nature spiritualized. God is active in nature, but always distinct from it.

According to R. E. O. White, 'In the ancient world Israel alone kept healthily clear of Nature worship.'[4] In doing so, she also avoided the perversions that typically accompanied nature religions: the fertility rites of the Baal cult and sexualized worship of Greco-Roman religion.

Biblical wisdom is also distinctive in its claim that God is the source of all wisdom. Wisdom is the key to drawing near to God and his purpose for both individuals and all creation. Creation has intrinsic worth because it was created by God and is valuable to him. Creation has its own right, bestowed by God, to flourish and accomplish its created purpose.[5]

Nature's rights should not be denied or claimed in the self-interest of humans because such rights are given by the creator. Nonetheless, through technological advances, the rise of the experimental method, and the all-encompassing value of progress, science

2 Craig G. Bartholomew and Ryan P. O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom Literature: A Theological Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 99; Gerhard Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, trans. James D. Martin (London: SCM, 1972), 71–73.

3 Harvey H. Guthrie, Jr., *Israel's Sacred Songs: A Study of Dominant Themes* (New York: Seabury, 1966), 91.

4 R. E. O. White, *A Christian Handbook to the Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 14.

5 Howard A. Snyder and Joel Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed: The Ecology of Sin and Grace: Overcoming the Divorce between Earth and Heaven* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011), 154.

has been set over nature as the dominant entity.[6]

Yet the devaluation of nature is not a modern phenomenon; after all, 'there is nothing new under the sun' (Ecc 1:9). The Greek philosophy of Platonism tended to prize spirit over matter and exalt the spiritual world over the material world.[7] Platonic philosophy entered the church very early, most notably in the form of Gnosticism. Despite the early polemics against Gnostic philosophy, modern believers have frequently continued to devalue nature.[8]

Wisdom does not present a lofty, ethereal spirituality, but a theology of human experience. As part of the physical universe, humans are part of nature. Yet humans have the capacity to impact the web of creation in a more intense and pervasive manner than other creatures due to their image-bearing.[9] The *imago dei* relates humans to their creator and makes them 'morally responsible to him for fulfilling their calling in ruling the earth for his glory'.[10]

Humans reflect the image of God when they subdue the earth by moving all creation towards its fullest potential.[11] The dominion of humans should reflect God's dominion in a relationship of care rather than an economy of use.[12]

The Old Testament depicts the relation of mankind to his environment along two avenues. The first is the dominion model, in which humans are responsible for stewarding the earth. The second is the integration model, in which humans are one among many creatures. Both models are established in the opening chapters of the Bible and are found in parallel throughout. In Genesis 1, humans are one among many created entities, whereas in Genesis 2 humans are granted dominion.

When interpreters veer too far in either of these two directions, Scripture can be misunderstood and misapplied. Dominion has been distorted too often and abused 'in a radically anthropocentric manner'.[13] However, regarding humans as no more than beasts deni-

6 Michael S. Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, NSCE (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 63.

7 Bartholomew and O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 232, 265; Snyder and Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, 8–9.

8 N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: Harper One, 2008), 88, 197; Snyder and Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, 61.

9 Terrence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2005), 19; Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Recovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 89–90.

10 D. C. Jones, 'Nature, Theology of', *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 817–18.

11 Terrence E. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed: The Bible, God, and Natural Disasters*, TECC (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 33; Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 94–95; Amy Plantinga Pauw, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, BTCB (Louisville, KY: Westminster, John Knox, 2015), 130; Bartholomew and O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 122.

12 Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 18–19, distinguishes dominion over the land from dominion over creatures. Man subdues (*kbš*) the earth but only rules (*rdh*) creatures.

13 James Limburg, 'Down-to-Earth Theology: Psalm 104 and the Environment', *CTM* 21 (1994): 344.

grates their God-given rulership over the earth.

In the book of Psalms, both the anthropocentric dominion model and the ecocentric integration model can be found. Humans simultaneously take their place in the symphony of creation and rule over it, but God stands as sovereign over man and nature alike, as creator and sustainer. Psalmic refrains that praise God as creator often transition naturally into acknowledging God as the one who makes continued existence possible.[14]

In the Psalms, nature is the handiwork of and a reflection of God. Indeed, few works of ancient literature mirror the natural world in such detail as Psalms. The world was brought into existence by God; creation belongs to God because he created it. The world is sacred because of its intimate connection to God. In short, creation is the object of God's continual presence, love and provision and, as such, is included in his plan of redemption.[15]

II. Psalm 29

1. Ascribe to the Lord, O sons of the mighty;
   Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
2. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name,
   Worship the Lord in holy adornment.
3. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters,
   The glory of God thunders,
   The Lord is over many waters.
4. The voice of the Lord in strength,
   The voice of the Lord in majesty.
5. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars,
   The Lord shatters the cedars of Lebanon.
6. He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
   And Sirion like a young wild ox.
7. The voice of the Lord hews flames of fire,
8. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness,
   The Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
9. The voice of the Lord causes the deer to calve,
   And strips the forests bare,
   And in his temple everything says, 'Glory'.
10. The Lord sat as King at the flood,
    And the Lord will be seated as King forever.
11. The Lord will give strength to his people,
    The Lord will bless his people with peace.[16]

The literary setting of Psalm 29 is a thunderstorm, but the content is not limited to meteorological phenomena. Through the power of nature, the power of God is revealed. Everything in the visible world is rooted in the invisible power of God.[17] In the light of God's sovereignty, no fear is expressed regarding the violent storm.

14 Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms,* trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981), 127.

15 Christopher J. H. Wright, 'The World in the Bible', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 34 (2010): 207–19.

16 All scripture passages are translated by the author.

17 Franz Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Francis Bolton, 3 vols., BCOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955), 1:368.

The Psalmist sees God as enthroned above the tempest. Further, such great power is available as strength for God's people. White queries, 'Why do we imagine God is only in the peace, and never in the storm?'[18]

The psalm begins with a series of imperatives calling for praise to God. The verses that follow parallel the voice of God with powerful acts of the natural world. The term, *qôl*, is repeated seven times for poetic effect. Such repetition is rare in the psalter and should therefore receive close attention.

The sevenfold voice of Yahweh may be an intentional device used to express the omnipotence of God in creation.[19] The reference to the 'voice over many waters' also reinforces the connection to God's creative activity, as when his Spirit hovered over the primordial waters in Genesis 1:2.

Verses 5–9 express the wrathful side of God's glory. The voice of God shakes the created order and even the most imposing features totter at the sound. The 'flames of fire' in verse 7 are probably bolts of lightning that accompany the preceding thunder. These bolts serve as an accusative of means by which the wilderness is shaken.[20] The intensity of the violence may also imply an earthquake, which often accompanies a theophany.[21]

As the storm moves though the mountainous regions of Lebanon and Sirion, the psalm implies that God brings low what man finds impressive.[22] Such great violence occurs that the storm strips the cedars of Lebanon, which were famed for their strength and durability.

Rollin Walker laments that modern scientific understandings have caused man to lose a sense of awe over nature. We now understand lightning as the discharge of electricity caused by ionic build-up in a cloud. Yet why should such knowledge diminish man's appreciation of God's role? Instead, an understanding of the intricate processes that underlie natural phenomena should only increase man's wonder. As Psalm 8 also urges, man should regard God's handiwork with childlike jubilation.[23]

Verses 8 and 9 further develop the power of the divine voice in nature. Deserts, forests and their inhabitants are all in view.[24] Further, Yahweh's power over birth and death is on display. First, he causes the deer to calve. Then he 'strips the forests bare', which may contain a play on words. The verb *ḥśp* has the nuance of miscarriage, perhaps an intentional contrast with the idea of birth. The lines imply that God

18 White, *Christian Handbook*, 14.

19 Claus Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, trans. J. R. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 232; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:371.

20 Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms I: 1–50*, AB 16 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 178.

21 Charles Augustus Briggs and Emily Grace Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), 1:253.

22 Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1–72: An Introduction and Commentary on Books I and II of the Psalms* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity, 1973), 126.

23 Rollin H. Walker, *The Modern Message of the Psalms* (New York: Abingdon, 1938), 31.

24 The text implies that the storm's geographical path begins over the sea, travels over the mountainous region of Lebanon/Sirion, and then travels south through Israel to the wilderness beyond. Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50,* WBC 19 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 247–48; Kidner, *Psalms 1–72*, 126.

has power over life and death, creation and destruction.

The final lines of the psalm direct the reader to the perceived seat of God's power: the temple. The verses probably refer to the heavenly temple, and the mythical setting evokes the idea of God enthroned over the primeval waters.[25] The floods may also have a mythical overtone as the audience of the psalm would have seen a re-enactment of the struggle between chaos and order in the storm.

The term 'flood' (*mbûl*) is significant because its only attestation in Scripture is Genesis 6–11. The implication is that even the most extreme natural disaster in history is not outside the sovereignty of God. Therefore, God is sovereign over the heavens, the earth, and even the most hostile elements of nature. Such an interpretation also explains the seemingly odd exclamation of 'glory' after he 'strips the forest bare'.

The most significant aspect of the temple is the presence of God. The psalm may imply that the source of God's power is himself, an idea already implied in verse 2, when worshippers ascribe to God the glory due to his name. Because his name represents his nature, the totality of creation and God's salvific action can be seen. Nothing in heaven or on earth can thwart God's purpose because he is sovereign over all. In the light of such power, Yahweh can easily give his people victory over their adversaries. Therefore, peace is the foreordained outcome.

25 Briggs, *Psalms*, 254; Dahood, *Psalms 1: 1–50*, 179; cf. Is 6:1–4.

III. Psalm 8

1. O Lord, our God, how mighty is your[26] name in all the earth;[27]
   I will worship your majesty above the heavens.
2. [28]From the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have established strength,
   Because of your enemies,
   To stop the enemy and vengeful one.
3. When I see your heavens, the works of your fingers,
   The moon and stars which you have established,
4. What is man that you are mindful of him,
   And the son of man that you have concern for him?
5. Yet, you make him a little lower than God,

26 The use of the second person here and throughout emphasizes the personal relationship between man, God and creation. Steven J. Kraftchick, 'Plac'd on This Isthmus of a Middle State: Reflections on Psalm 8 and Human Becoming', *Word and World* 35 (2015): 122.

27 To draw out the distinctions between perfect and imperfect verb forms, the perfects have been translated as past action with continuing effect, and the imperfects have been translated as present action.

28 This verse causes problems for translators. The primary problem is whether 'infants and babies' qualifies the preceding verse or the following lines. Dahood places the phrase at the end of verse 1, but most interpreters stay closer to the Masoretic Text. See Dahood, *Psalms 1: 1–50*, 49; Craigie, *Psalms 1–50,* 105; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:149; Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, 260; Briggs, *Psalms*, 61. For a critical analysis of the various solutions, see J. Alberto Soggin, 'Textkritische Untersuchung von Ps 8:2–3 und 6', *Vetus Testamentum* 21 (1971): 565–71.

And with glory and majesty you crown him.
6. You give him rule over the works of your hands,
All things you have set under his feet.
7. All sheep and oxen,
And also the beasts of the field,
8. The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea;
Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.
9. O Lord, our God, how mighty is your name in all the earth.

The opening words of Psalm 8 form an inclusio that brackets the entire psalm.[29] The sovereignty of God over his creation is thus identified as the central theme. In the light of God's power, the relationship between creation, humanity and God is explicated as the Psalmist strives to answer the perennial question, 'What is man?'

The answer to the Psalmist's question is given in terms of man's place and function in the world. Humanity is higher than other living creatures but a little lower than God. Psalm 8 claims that God vests humans, who are insignificant in relation to the universe, with authority over the earth's creatures. As God cares for humans, humans care for creation. As creation is 'husbanded' by man, it is 'enriched and sustained by his presence'.[30]

The psalm also contrasts the glory of God with the glory of man. Man is sovereign over creatures, but God is sovereign over all creation. Delitzsch asserts, 'For the primary thought of the Psalm is this, that the God, whose glory the heavens reflect, has also glorified Himself in the earth and in man.' Not surprisingly, then, the psalm's description of the glory of God in man is often associated with Christ.[31]

The psalm begins by asserting that the God who is great in the heavens is also great in the earth below. Like Psalm 29, Psalm 8 invokes the name of the Lord, which calls into view the vast scope of his person and power, in the face of which the Psalmist can but babble like an infant.

Yahweh uses feeble instruments to overcome whatever might oppose his glorification. The wise and powerful remain unenlightened before God while seemingly facile infants are privy to his power. Redemption demands that man become as a child before God.[32]

What was hinted in verse 1 becomes more explicit in verses 3–4 as the psalm directs the reader to Genesis 1. The heavens are kept in place not by pillars or magical words, but by the power of Yahweh. The cosmos bears witness to his skill, wisdom, and power. The stars also contribute to the awesome effect.[33]

---

29 Robert L. Alden goes further, arguing that the entire Psalm is structured chiastically in 'Chiastic Psalms: A Study in the Mechanics of Semitic Poetry in Psalms 1–50', *JETS* 17 (1974): 11–28; cf. Geoffrey W. Grogan, *Psalms,* THOTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 52.

30 Kraftchick, 'Plac'd on This Isthmus of a Middle State', 123.

31 Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:156.

32 C. Hassell Bullock, *Encountering the Book of Psalms: A Literary and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 92; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:157; cf. Matt 11:25; 18:3; 21:16.

33 Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, trans. Timothy J. Hallett (New York: Seabury, 1978), 33.

Yet, as inspiring as the cosmos is, astronomical entities pale in comparison with God himself. In the light of God's great power, man would seem to be nothing. The amazing truth that God is mindful of humans despite their smallness amidst the vast cosmos brings the Psalmist to exultation.

Verse 5 begins a new flow of thought as the Psalmist hints at the *imago dei* in man.[34] The splendour of God is on display as man bears God's image. Being created in the image of God, man is nearly divine. The crowning of verse 5 signals the 'manifestation and completion' of the king's enthronement in his temple. In ANE thought, a king's dwelling could be constructed only after his adversaries are subdued.[35] However, in Psalm 8 no more effort is needed to subdue enemies than the squealing of babies, which in effect requires no effort at all.

Man is thus created to be a king over his territory, the earth. That man is made in the image of God and crowned with glory indicates that he is endowed with sovereignty over the earth's creatures. The series of imperfect verbs followed by the perfect may provide a subtle reference to what God has accomplished through man in the past and what he will continue to do in the future.[36] The phrase, 'set under his feet', in verse 6 is a paraphrase of Genesis 1:26–28 and the most explicit reference to the creation account thus far. Man's created purpose is to rule as God's regent over the earth.

The dominion of man over nature is one of the greatest human callings.[37] Westermann asserts that all modern technological capabilities pale in comparison to man's calling to steward the earth. He also suggests that man may be failing in this calling in view of the number of animal species that have become extinct.[38] Modern interpreters would be wise to consider what kind of rule humans are currently engaging in—that of a benevolent sovereign or a brutal despot.

Through the incarnation, Christ provided the ideal model of kingship. It is thus suitable that verses 4–6 are often associated with Christ, who himself quoted from the psalm.[39] The christological significance was quite foreign to the original context, but when viewed through the lens of Christ 'it is a natural development for the thought of the Psalm'.[40] All the power that Jesus provided for his followers is described here in Psalm 8.[41]

Although man rules over every living thing, God's sovereignty remains central. The creatures described in verses 7–8 evoke the categories of creation. The inventory of created beings functions as praise of the creative power of Yahweh. Thus, the psalm re-

34 Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 215.

35 Keel, *Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 258–59, asserts that the crowning was considered the climax and most important moment in an enthronement ceremony. See also Dahood, *Psalms 1: 1–50*, 50–51; Ps 89:11–12.

36 Craigie, *Psalms*, 105–6.

37 Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, 264.

38 Briggs, *Psalms*, 64; Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, 264; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:155.

39 Ps 8:2 in Mt 21:15–16; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 1:156.

40 Craigie, *Psalms*, 110.

41 Walker, *The Modern Message of the Psalms*, 39.

turns to precisely where it began, with the power of God.

IV. Psalm 104

(This psalm is not reproduced here because of its greater length.)

Like Psalm 8, Psalm 104 is bracketed by an inclusio. The phrase, 'bless the Lord', provides an immediate indication of the psalm's purpose, which is praise. More specifically, it declares God's greatness through a biological and ecological lens. Fred Gottlieb asserts; 'The poet's beautiful description of the valleys, mountains, and streams illustrates the Divine harmony throughout nature.'[42]

A subsidiary purpose of the psalm is to express the hope that those far from God will take note of his greatness and turn to him. Contemplating the beauty of creation prompts man to glorify the creator and enter into deeper fellowship with him. The psalm provides a panoramic view of the heavens, the earth, the water, and the inhabitants of creation as all join together in praise of the creator.[43]

An echo of the seven days of creation can be identified as the psalm progresses. The opening verses introduce light, while the closing verses provide an allusion to the divine Sabbath. However, creation is not presented in the orderly manner of Genesis 1–2. Rather, the psalm co-mingles all of finished creation.[44]

Of the three psalms analysed in this article, Psalm 104 is the most ecocentric, regarding humans as one among the many creatures cared for by God. The world is a shared home for a vast array of life forms, each of which has a divinely established place. In Psalm 104, humans are part of creation, not above it.[45]

Verses 1–9 survey the first two days of creation: the division of light from dark and the separation of the firmament from the water.[46] Present participles are utilized throughout, possibly to imply that what began at creation continues as God sustains the world. Numerous spatial terms are also present, emphasizing God's omnipresence throughout creation.[47]

Verses 5–11 may evoke the ANE idea of creation via divine defeat of chaos.[48] In the ANE, waters were the embodiment of chaos, and verse 6 implies that primordial waters fled from God's voice. The post-flood narrative may also be in view. In verse 9, God re-

42 Fred Gottlieb, 'The Creation Theme in Genesis 1, Psalm 104 and Job 38–42', *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 44 (2016): 32.

43 Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:156; Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, 248.

44 Gottlieb, 'The Creation Theme', 29; Limburg, 'Down-to-Earth Theology', 340; Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, 247; White, *A Christian Handbook*, 157; William P. Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 141.

45 Richard Bauckham, 'Stewardship and Relationship', in *The Care of Creation: Focusing Concern and Action*, ed. R. J. Berry (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 99–106.

46 Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:128. On the other hand, Leslie Allen, *Psalms 101–150,* WBC 21 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 26, argues that the light is not a reference to creation, but an aspect of God's self-manifestation.

47 In (*bə*), between (*bên*), over (*'l*), among (*mbên*).

48 Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:130–31; Dahood, *Psalms III: 101–150*, 36; Gottlieb, 'The Creation Theme', 32; Allen, *Psalms 101–150*, 26.

strains the waters, just as he promised in his covenant with Noah.

Further, God's promise to preserve creation was made not just with Noah, but with all life on earth (Gen 8:21–22; 9:8–17). In Psalm 104, the waters have been not only subdued but turned into life-giving sustenance. Yet underlying the joyous refrain is the implication that the watery chaos could return if God withdrew his hand.

Verses 10–18 move to the third day of creation, during which God provides suitable habitats for living creatures. The world's present-day functioning is described as the Psalmist moves beyond Genesis 1 to his own time. Such functionality is portrayed as a harmonious co-existence between all elements of creation.

The verses further imply that God's provision of nourishment for man and animals goes together.[49] Nevertheless, the idea of God's provision is accompanied by the possibility of famine and drought. Just as the removal of God's hand could re-introduce chaos, so also the removal of his provision could result in deprivation and death.

Man's enjoyment of nature is depicted in verses 14–15. The bountiful earth contrasts with the cursed ground of Genesis 3:17–18. The anti-parallel continues in Psalm 104:23, where labour is portrayed as a natural part of God's established order rather than a punishment for sin. The Psalmist implies that the earth is productive when man works in accordance with God's order.

The psalm may even be portraying something of a utopian state, wherein the presence of God is fully present in creation. The Lord doesn't just give humans enough to live, but provides wine to add joy to life. He also provides oil to add fragrance and beauty, as well as to enhance the 'savouriness and nutritiveness' of food.[50]

The comments about oil and wine and the description of the cedars of Lebanon imply that creation should be enjoyed in its own right, apart from simple questions of provision. The great trees were a valuable resource for building projects in the ancient world. However, the trees are praised not for their usefulness to humans, 'but for their majestic stature and their hospitality: the cedars are literally for the birds!'[51]

In verse 19, the Psalmist progresses to the fourth day of creation. After the previous discussion of living space, the rhythm of time is now in focus. The earth shares in its creator's quality of reliability.[52] The sun and moon demarcate chronological rhythms, but nothing more. Samuel Terrien asserts that the portrayal of the sun is in stark contrast to ANE solar worship. According to the Psalmist's perspective, the sun plays the role 'of an obedient slave who knows exactly the moment when he must get off the stage'.[53]

49 Limburg, 'Down-to-Earth Theology', 342; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:131–32; Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, 249–50; White, *A Christian Handbook*, 158; Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 132–37.

50 Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:132; cf. Limburg, 'Down-to-Earth Theology', 342.

51 White, *A Christian Handbook*, 146.

52 Wright, 'The World in the Bible', 210.

53 Samuel L. Terrien, 'Creation, Cultus, and Faith in the Psalter', *Theological Education* 2 (1966): 116–28.

All created things work in accordance with their design and in accordance with each other. Beasts seek their provision by night, and man works during the day. In contrast to the anthropocentrism of Psalm 8, Psalm 104 portrays the animal kingdom as sustained by God. Lions seek their food directly from God, while man works for his own provision.

In verses 24–30, the Psalmist moves to the fifth and sixth days of Genesis 1, in which God created living beings. The Lord is praised as a custodian of the order established from the beginning. Even death is portrayed as part of the natural cycle, not as something evil. Thus, the rhythm of life and death is added to the rhythm of the luminaries. Both are a part of creation.

The Psalmist also pauses to marvel at the Lord and his works. Through wisdom, creation was established, and through wisdom God continues to sustain creation. Wisdom, as a divine attribute, is also an attribute of the earth insofar as creation reflects God.[54] Thus, through the innate wisdom present in nature, man can see something of God.

In verse 25, the waters of chaos contribute to creation rather than threatening it.[55] The sea contains swarms of creatures as well as a playful Leviathan. Then as now, the Leviathan had the reputation of a fearful sea monster,[56] associated with combat and destruction rather than play. However, in Psalm 104 the fearsome beast frolics playfully in the sea as one among many creatures. It is depicted as a created being, not a mythical monster.[57] God does not struggle with the representative of chaos but enjoys its play and possibly even plays with it.[58] The imposing Leviathan seems to serve no purpose aside from providing joy to his creator. Even the chiasm of verses 24–25 evokes the playfulness of the sea with the rocking back and forth from 'here' to 'there'.

The contrast between the Leviathan below the water and the ships above is striking. The vulnerability of man is on display as he ventures into the realm of the great monster. Yet God has subdued the threat of chaos, and no danger is present.[59]

In verses 29–30, the breath of life in animals continues to challenge an anthropocentric worldview. Theodore Hiebert contends that in glossing *rûḥ* as 'spirit' interpreters have created a false dichotomy 'between spirit and matter, between body and soul, between human and nonhuman'.[60] The

54 Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel*, 155–56; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:134; Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, 250.

55 Gottlieb, 'The Creation Theme', 33.

56 See Ps 74:12–15; Is 27:1; Job 41.

57 Allen, in *Psalms 101–150*, 27, postulates that the creature might be a whale.

58 Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 149; Limburg, 'Down-to-Earth Theology', 343.

59 Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 71.

60 Theodore Hiebert's position verges upon pantheism. He writes; 'In fact, [*rûḥ*] not only signifies that humans and the rest of nature are inseparable; it also claims that the atmosphere and respiration are really aspects of God's own being and therefore sacred. It dissolves the sharp distinction between creator and creation that Western theologians have so staunchly defended.' Although his theology is extreme, he correctly identifies a modern dichotomy between matter and spirit that the OT does not promote; Hiebert, 'Air, the First Sacred Thing: The Conception of *rûḥ* in the Hebrew Scriptures', in *Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics*, ed. Norman C. Habel and Peter

concept of *rûḥ* in the Hebrew Bible indicates that the authors of the Scriptures held a deep appreciation for the interconnectedness of all life and the environment upon which it depends. Numerous biblical passages, most notably the creation account, equate God's breath with creaturely life.[61] Life is both initiated and continued by God's breath. Psalm 104:29 describes the inverse: the withdrawal of God's breath results in death.[62]

The Psalmist reaches day seven of creation with a meditation on the divine Sabbath in verses 31–35. The phrase, 'Let the Lord rejoice in his works', should probably be read in parallel with the conclusion of the creation account, in which the Lord rested and looked upon his creation with pleasure (Gen 1:31; 2:1–3).[63] Continuing the utopian impression, creation is sustained by God's joy in the created order. Such theology seemingly stands in contrast to the covenant of Genesis 8–9, in which the continuation of creation rests upon the restraint of God's anger (Gen 8:21; 9:11, 15).

Verses 32–35 take on a sombre tone as the destructive power of God is on display. Yahweh's ability to casually touch a smoking mountain (i.e. a volcano) is an image of his imperviability.[64] The verses may also portray a theophany, wherein God's presence is so powerful that a physical manifestation occurs. The darker side of God's power has already been alluded to in the flaming fire of verse 4 and the thunderous voice of verse 7. Such undercurrents remind hearers that Yahweh is not a God to be trifled with. His fearsome side is simply one aspect of his continuing involvement in the world. As Psalm 29 demonstrates, even destructive events are not beyond his control.

While the overall tone of the psalm has been joyous, in the final verses the Psalmist acknowledges the reality of sin and wickedness in the world. Limburg explains that the mention of sinners 'is an indication that the Psalmist's theology is down-to-earth, revelling and rejoicing in God's good gifts but also aware of the pain and hurt that people, even God's people, must endure'.[65] As the Psalmist hopes that God himself will take pleasure in creation, he concomitantly wishes that those who take pleasure in wickedness will perish. Sinners are contrary to God's purposes for his good creation. Bauckham points out that human sin is the greatest distinction between humankind and its environment. The real dangers in creation are not imaginary chaos monsters, but monstrous humans.[66]

V. Conclusion

Each of these three psalms offers a different perspective on the relationship between God, man and nature. Psalm

Trudinger, SBLSS 46 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 9–20.

61 Gen 2:4; cf. Zech 12:1; Is 42:5; Job 12:10; 33:4; Ezek 37.

62 Cf. Ecc 12:7.

63 Grogan, *Psalms*, 175; John Goldingay, *Psalms*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 3:194.

64 Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, 218; Westermann, *The Living Psalms*, 249–51.

65 Limburg, 'Down-to-Earth Theology', 344.

66 Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 70; Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 145; Delitzsch, *Psalms*, 3:136.

29 provides the most theocentric viewpoint, depicting God's power through the medium of a violent thunderstorm. God is explicitly described as king over the flood and king forever.[67]

Because Yahweh is king, he has power over all nature and that which it contains. The power of God inspires reverence and helps creation understand her proper place in relation to the creator. Both man and nature are insignificant before Yahweh's might. Nonetheless, God's presence is available for his people. Those who submit to God are granted both strength and peace.

Psalm 8 is the most anthropocentric of the three. The Psalmist queries, 'Who is man?' and finds his answer in nature. In the light of the majesty of creation, man is as weak as an infant before God. Unexpectedly, then, man also finds that he has been appointed king over creation, serving as God's regent. Unlike Psalm 29, where only God is described as king, in Psalm 8 man is the ruler of creation. The bestowal of such an undeserved role should thus inspire humans toward greater reverence for the creator and for the purpose granted to them.

Although Psalm 104 is primarily theocentric, ecological issues emerge more clearly than in the other two psalms. The Psalmist describes the glory and beauty of God's creation with great wonder, but the natural world is never divinized or made equal to the creator. Instead, creation, when fully submitted to God's created purpose, flourishes like the Garden of Eden. At the opposite end of the spectrum, sin and wickedness are contrary to God's created order.

Based on the ecosapiential theology of Psalms, the underlying cause of environmental degradation is man's failure to submit to God's sovereignty. Instead of the prideful sin portrayed in Genesis 3, Psalm 104 describes a world where man and nature harmoniously co-exist.

Whereas Psalm 8 identifies man as king, Psalm 104 describes the kind of king that man should be. The psalm reminds man that his own existence has more in common with plant and animal life than with God. Man is a part of the natural world, whether he acknowledges his place or not. In the New Testament, Christ himself provided an ideal model for man's 'kingship' in the incarnation. Ruling in God's image, man should care humbly for the natural world as an integral part of creation.

Psalm 104 also reminds hearers that ruling over the earth is not just a vocation of functionality, but also one of joy and beauty. Unfortunately, as Brown points out, 'We are destroying precisely that which the Psalmist celebrates and commends to God's enjoyment: habitats and their diverse inhabitants.'[68] Moreover, destruction of the natural world is also harmful to humanity. Given the evidence that we can draw closer to God through experiencing the wonders of creation, is the increasing destruction of the natural world also increasing the rift between God and man?

God's sovereignty over creation is the primary ecosapiential message

67 Yahweh is not explicitly called king over the flood, but the line's parallelism implies this.

68 Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation,* 159.

conveyed in the selected psalms. Each one alludes to God's creative activity and emphasizes his continuing activity in the natural world. God is seen as delighting in creation, even the elements that man perceives as fearful.

To form an accurate portrait of man's place in creation, the dominion model of Psalm 8 must be balanced with the integration model of Psalm 104. Brown aptly summarizes: 'God's delight in creation requires reciprocal engagement on the part of the creature.'[69] Man should assume his rightful task of ruling over creation, but with full submission to God. Viewing creation through the eyes of God—recognizing its beauty and wonder—should inspire man to be the kind of ruler he was created to be.

69 Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation,* 159.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 35-40

Is Islam Compatible with Western Civilization?

Christine Schirrmacher

Vague hopes and generalizations are insufficient with regard to the compatibility of Islam with Western civilization and its institutions, one of the most crucial theological questions of our time. In this regard, careful research makes possible clear, differentiated answers.

Essentially, forms of Islam based on Sharia law are not compatible with Western civilization because they are not compatible with democracy, whereas Islamic religious and ethical systems not based on Sharia are compatible with democracy and with Western definitions of human rights and civil liberties.

In this article, I substantiate the above statement through six theses and a conclusion.

1. The types of Islam that reject the social and political claims of Sharia law are compatible with democracy and with the institutions of Western civilization.

Those Muslims who believe that the foundational principles of our legal and political system do not need to be configured on the basis of Sharia law are following a type of Islam that is compatible with democracy. One good example of this type of Islam would be the Alawites.

Muslims who reject the political and legal claims of Sharia law can honestly affirm democracy without internal reservations; they do not believe that they have to make a decision either to follow their faith or to follow the principles of democracy. Rules regulating fasting and prayer are formally part of the Sharia, but they do not comprise a political program.

Although officially established Muslim theology does not accept a distinction between faith and rituals on one hand and Sharia law on the other hand, many Muslims practise such a distinction. Those who do distinguish between following the rules of their religion and the application of the political part of Sharia law are true friends of democracy; sometimes, they become the most vocal supporters of democracy.

Muslim intellectuals, theologians, progressive thinkers, women's rights activists, and human rights activists are appealing for a freedom-oriented Islam that does not apply Sharia law

*Dr **Christine Schirrmacher** is currently professor of Islamic studies at the Evangelisch-Theologische Faculteit (Protestant University) in Leuven, Belgium and at the University of Bonn, Germany, where she also teaches Middle Eastern history and languages. She has visited many countries of the Middle East, is head of the International Institute of Islamic Studies (IIIS) of the World Evangelical Alliance, and lectures on Islam and security issues for the German parliament as well as other government and EU institutions.*

to society and politics. However, such people are reaping criticism and intimidation—even death threats—from those who do not want to give up the claims of Sharia law on European societies. These threats deserve our attention, and the recipients of such threats need our full support and solidarity.

Threats can silence even tough-minded intellectuals, suffocating their reform efforts. Such threats have no place in an open society. If we cannot have a rational discussion about the future development of Islam within Europe and the rest of the free world in the twenty-first century, where is such a discussion possible?

A political Islam (i.e. one seeking to apply Sharia law to society and politics) that does not experience resistance will become even bolder in making increasingly explicit political demands on society and on the state, to the extent that any resistance to such demands may be branded as restricting the religious freedom of Muslims. The state and public institutions must be careful about how partners are chosen from among non-state actors in an open society. Any organization that wants to abolish human rights and civil liberties for other religions should itself encounter resistance in the public square, not recognition by the state.

2. Whoever regards the political actions of Mohammed as establishing a permanent role model for Muslims today represents a type of Islam that is incompatible with Western civilization.

A type of Islam that follows Mohammed not only in his religion but also in his political activities, his law-giving and even his conduct of war (as the jihadist groups do) is not compatible with Western civilization. Even a type of Islam that does not call for violence but pursues purely political means to establish and enforce Islam while regarding all aspects of Sharia law, as interpreted in classical Islamic theology, as binding on the Muslim community and beyond is not compatible with Western civilization and law.

The classical interpretation of Sharia law, as established in the very centres of Muslim theology, does not allow equal rights for women, prescribes the death sentence for people who have lapsed from Islam, and accords Jews and Christians only an official second-class status as publicly subjugated groups.

This last point arises largely from Sura 9:29, where it is written about people who possess 'the Scripture' (Jews and Christians): 'Fight those who do not believe in Allah, nor in the latter day, nor do they prohibit what Allah and His Messenger have prohibited, nor follow the religion of truth, … until they pay the tax in acknowledgment of superiority and they are in a state of subjection' (Shakir translation).

Whoever accepts the theocracy established by Mohammed in Medina (622–632 AD) as an authoritative role model to be imitated in the present can see democracy only as a temporary emergency solution with which one might have to conclude a temporary truce, but which must be replaced, in the long term, by an Islamic social order.

While in Medina, Mohammed led his people in multiple wars in which their fallen warriors were promised paradise as a reward for their martyrdom. He stated:

> So when you meet in battle those who disbelieve, smite the necks; then, when you have overcome them, make (them) prisoners, and afterwards (set them free) as a favour or for ransom till the war lay down its burdens. That (shall be so). And if Allah please, He would certainly exact retribution from them, but that He may try some of you by means of others. And those who are slain in the way of Allah, He will never allow their deeds to perish. He will guide them and improve their condition. And make them enter the Garden, which He has made known to them (Sura 47:4–6, Maulana Muhammad Ali translation).

Given that some Muslim theologians view these verses as valid for today and that extremists quote this passage to justify their actions, it is simply false to claim that violence and terror in the name of Islam have nothing to do with Islam.

Sometimes it has been (and still is) argued that the use of force is legitimate in order to defend Islam. But then the question arises: when is it required to defend the Islamic community? Can force of arms be a legitimate response to the publication of cartoons of Mohammed? What means are legitimate in response to each type of threat?

Some movements affirm only nonviolent protests as proportionate responses to cartoons, but others endorse intimidation or even violence against non-Muslims. Some other groups promote violent attacks against cartoonists and artists. Although some groups condemn attacks against people who are not individually guilty, other groups regard everyone as guilty unless he or she belongs to the one 'true' Islam. Some Muslims even regard police officers in non-Muslim countries as always being legitimate targets for a violent attack.

It should be clear that how one interprets the defence of Islam varies considerably among the multiple Islamic groups and movements, but this internal theological distinction among Muslims is quite important for everyone else in Western civilization. A protest march in response to a cartoon would be a normal part of democracy; a call for violence is a form of extremism and terrorism.

3. Those types of Islam that accept the role of Mohammed as the lawgiver, and therefore accept the laws given by Mohammed as eternally binding, are not compatible with Western civilization.

Whoever accepts the system of laws given by Mohammed, as they were laid down in the Koran and Islamic tradition (as interpreted by the official theologians from the seventh to tenth centuries A.D., forming Sharia law), as irreplaceable and binding in all times and places is practising a type of Islam that is not compatible with Western, democratic civilization.

Sharia law requires amputation for theft, stoning for adultery, and beheading for apostasy. Those who see these laws as unalterable commands of Allah will see democratically accepted laws as reprehensible, human-made laws that must be replaced. Voices of political Islam claim that democracy is a human system of rule by the people and for the people, in direct contrast to Sharia law which comes from Allah, the Sublime and Almighty. Further, they claim, true Muslims cannot accept

laws from any human entity; the system of democracy is, therefore, a modern system of polytheism composed of laws coming from multiple sources.

From this perspective, freedom of religion is a one-way street that can be used to allow for one's own propaganda, but which will not be granted to others when Islam is the majority religion. And in societies where the Koran and tradition become the exclusive foundation and standard not only for faith but also for society, law and politics, there can be neither a separation of powers nor the rule of law with an independent judiciary, the hallmarks of democracy. There will also be no room for freedom of speech, civil liberties, equality among genders and religions, or self-determination.

Where Sharia law is implemented, one loses the freedom of having no religion, as well as the ability to conduct independent research or to express oneself freely through art or science.

4. The question of a form of Islam that is compatible with democracy is not really a question related to religion; it has to do with politics carried out in the name of a religion.

Absolute truth claims exist in all religions and worldviews, as well as in many political and secular movements. Peace in society does not arise when religions are totally restrained from participation in public life. Possessing absolute truth claims does not make a worldview radical; rather, the *political enforcement* of an absolute truth claim is dangerous and radical.

Threats and efforts to intimidate people of other opinions, so that it becomes impossible to criticize a religion or worldview and its representatives, are marks of a totalitarian manner of governance. This tendency is especially apparent in the attitude shown by political Islamic movements towards other Muslims who do not share the same perspective. Conservative piety is not a threat to our democratic institutions and way of life, but a claim to political and social domination in the name of Islam must be considered a threat to society.

5. The Sharia-oriented Islam preached in mosques across Europe is an import from the Middle East. Conversely, there is no truly European Islam yet.

We must not think that Islam as practised in Europe is having an influence on the varieties of Islam seen in the Middle East. On the contrary, Islam from the Middle East is having an immense influence in Europe by means of the people, funds, and key ideas coming through well-established organizations.

In conjunction with these multiple dependencies on sources in the Middle East, the powers of Sharia-obligated Islam are leaving no stone unturned in their efforts to destroy every tender root of a democracy-compatible Islamic theology in Europe. Threats, disparagements and pressure are brought to bear against the few individual Muslim voices in Europe who dare to call for enlightenment or who distance themselves from political Islam.

One recent example among many others is the Palestinian-born Austrian sociologist, Mouhanad Khorchide (b. 1971), who has publicly called for a new interpretation of Sharia law and since then has received multiple death threats.

A freedom-oriented Islam simply cannot be expected to arise from the Middle East in our days, for such an interpretation of Islam is not taught at a single mosque or university there. Is it merely an accident that there is no freedom of speech or religion in the entire region? In the Middle East, turning away from Islam is punished with discrimination, persecution and social exclusion—sometimes even with the death penalty.

Nowhere in the region does one find true political freedoms, such as freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, or the accompanying separation of religion and state. Even Turkey is following its Arab neighbours in important ways.

6. Freedom is a primary human good. The millions of people coming to Europe are fleeing not only from war and terror, from nepotism and corruption, from economic stagnation and a lack of prospects for the future. They are also simply lacking the freedom to breathe. They are fleeing from autocratic regimes, from arbitrary and violent regimes, from all-powerful secret intelligence services, and from extremist threats.

As freedom is necessary for human flourishing, the crisis in the Middle East is also a crisis of the lack of freedom. And one of the creators of this lack of freedom is a theology that takes the laws and form of government from Mohammed as the foundation for the social order today. This theology has become a functioning part of the apparatus of power in the Middle East. It teaches the complete validity and authority of Sharia law as divine law for the twenty-first century, even if only a few countries today fully implement Sharia in their criminal law.

Sharia law declares that wives have a duty to obey their husbands, and that husbands have the right to punish their wives if they disobey:

> Men are the managers of the affairs of women for that God has preferred in bounty one of them over another, and for that they have expended of their property. Righteous women are therefore obedient, guarding the secret for God's guarding. And those you fear may be rebellious admonish; banish them to their couches, and beat them (Sura 4:34, Arberry translation).

This right to chastise one's wives, even with physical violence, is still taught by established Islamic theology.

This same Sharia law teaches that the death penalty should be imposed on people who fall away from Islam, basing this claim in part on the tradition that, according to Sahih Bukhari, comes from Mohammed himself: 'Whoever changes his Islamic religion, kill him' (Hadith volume 9, book 84, number 57). Another prominent definition of the official tradition through Bukhari asserts that there are three situations in which it is permissible to shed the blood of another Muslim: if the person is guilty of defection from Islam after accepting Islam, adultery, and committing a murder that is not a revenge killing.

Of course, there are different interpretations within Muslim theology. Nevertheless, in principle, traditional established theology affirms the right of husbands to punish their wives, the execution of people who commit apostasy, and physical punishment for adul-

terers, the unruly, thieves, rebels and street criminals. These rights remain largely uncontested within established theology, even if the majority of Muslims worldwide have not chosen to live in a country that fully applies Sharia law.

This established mainstream theology, which is taught at universities and mosques, at best ignores any attempt to move towards a more progressive theology; at worst, it condemns or persecutes anyone who thinks differently or affirms freedom. When this type of theology is imported into Europe, conflict with democracy, freedom and the rule of law is inevitable.

Conclusion

The real confrontation over Islam within Europe is not about the burqa or a veil over a woman's face; it is about the minds, hearts and ideas of people. Western societies should not be satisfied with a vague hope that all people can somehow, on their own, perform a balancing act between traditional Middle Eastern roles for women and equal opportunities and rights for women, or between a pre-modern Middle Eastern form of society and a secular democracy.

It is time for us to engage in a new effort to communicate and teach the foundations of democracy and its advantages. Representatives of all religions and worldviews must accept the rules of constitutional democracy. Whoever opposes the legal foundations of democracy opposes the state and cannot then, with any claim of moral consistency, make use of the freedom of religion, which is an essential part of the foundations of democracy. Imams and religious teachers who warn their followers not to accept the principles of a democratic society do not themselves fit into a democratic society.

It is only proper to expect all citizens to affirm and promote human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and the legal tolerance of other religions, along with equality of rights and opportunities for all. This is neither racism, xenophobia nor Islamophobia; it is simply a statement of self-evident truths. A form of Islam that limits the application of Sharia law to matters of prayer and fasting is compatible with Western democracy; one that demands the full acceptance and public application of Sharia law as God-given is not compatible with Western civilization and its institutions.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 41-56

Religious Extremism and Christian Response in Pakistan

Maqsood Kamil

One of the most painful issues that have touched the global conscience in the twenty-first century is the unimaginable scale of religious extremism. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, extremist acts that are (or appear to be) religiously motivated have seemingly become a daily event.

In financial terms, the fight against terrorism and extremism has eclipsed the cost of the two world wars combined. It has been estimated that by 2020, the war on terror will have cost the US $5 trillion.[1]

The toll of casualties from religious extremism around the world cannot be reliably estimated, but the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Europe and America have all been targeted. One Vatican official has estimated that 100,000 Christians a year are dying for their faith.[2] And the carnage is not limited to Christians; for example, some victims of Islamic extremism are Muslims.

I. Defining Extremism

Just what is extremism? The definition depends on who is defining the term. One controversial US military briefing classified evangelical Christians alongside Al-Qaida and the Muslim Brotherhood as extremists, on the basis that an organization is extremist if its goals 'are inconsistent with the Army's goals'.[3]

Merriam-Webster defines extremism as 'belief in and support for ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable.[4] But I would tend to agree with Charles Liebman's argument that extremism

1 Mark Thompson, 'The $5 Trillion War on Terror', *Time,* 29 June 2011, http://nation.time.com/2011/06/29/the-5-trillion-war-on-terror/.

2 Tara Brady, '100,000 Christians Are Killed Every Year for Their Faith', *Daily Mail*, 28 May 2013, www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2332338/100-000-Christians-killed-year-faith-says-Vatican-archbishop-Monsignor-Silvano-Maria-Tomasi-Iran-shuts-countrys-biggest-Pentecostal-church-arrests-pastor-mid-service.html.

3 Janet Parshall, 'How Do You Define an "Extremist"?' *Christian Post*, April 15, 2013, www.christianpost.com/news/how-do-you-define-an-extremist-93956/.

4 *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* (2015), www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/extremism.

*Rev Dr **Maqsood Kamil** is vice principal of Gujranwala Theological Seminary in Gujranwala, Pakistan and a PhD student at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.* *This article is revised with permission from his presentation at the July 2015 Stott-Bediako Forum in Amman, Jordan.*

is a religious norm and that religious moderation, not extremism, needs explanation.[5]

Liebman points out that religious extremism could be defined as either a process or an institution. He quite helpfully identifies three dimensions of religious extremism, which include the imposition or expansion of religious laws, a harsh attitude towards those who do not accept extremist norms, and the rejection of cultural forms and values considered not indigenous to the religious tradition.[6]

Total commitment to a religious tradition, by itself, is not normally a threat to society. In fact, it is an essential component of Christian faith. However, religious extremism in its dangerous form occurs when a group or institution holds that a particular religious tradition is divine truth for all humanity *and tries to impose it, whether peacefully or violently, on all who do not agree with their norm.*

Such extremists view all cultural or religious values that do not conform to their version of religious truth as openly hostile to their goals and thus justify removing these non-conforming elements from society, even if by violence.

In Pakistan, religious extremism exists at individual, group and institutional levels and is undergirded by an orthodox interpretation of Sunni Islam. It has evolved over the last sixty years and continues to do so. As for the Christian minority's responses, they have varied considerably, from retaliatory violence to Christ-like grace. In this paper I will discuss the history and theological underpinnings of both extremist activity and Christian responses.

II. Religious Extremism against Christians in Pakistan

Pakistani Christians have suffered a great disappointment, even a betrayal, from their compatriot Muslims. Promised by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the father of the Pakistani nation, that freedom of religion and the equality of all citizens before the law would be preserved,[7] Christian politicians played a crucial role in the decision to make western Punjab state part of Pakistan rather than India.[8]

Jinnah was a Shia Muslim, the minority Muslim denomination in Pakistan.[9] The Pakistani government has officially tried to conceal his Shia affiliation, and Shias have suffered greatly from Sunni extremism, as have the Ahmadis, another Muslim sect that was declared non-Muslim by an act of parliament in 1974.

Along with this intra-faith strife between Muslims, Christians, Hindus,

5 Charles S. Liebman, 'Extremism as a Religious Norm'. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 22, no. 1 (1983): 75–86.

6 Liebman, 'Extremism'.

7 Ammar Shahbazi, 'Was Jinnah's Promise to the Minorities Honoured?' *The News* (Pakistan), 25 December 2012; Khaled Ahmed, 'The Fractured Image of Muhammad Ali Jinnah', *Himal*, October 1999, http://old.himalmag.com/himal-feed/53/2413-the-fractured-image-of-muhammad-ali-jinnah.html.

8 Munir-ul-Anjum, 'The Role of Christians in the Freedom Movement of Pakistan: An Appraisal', *Pakistan Journal of Social Studies* 32, no. 2 (2012): 437–43.

9 Khalid Ahmed, 'Was Jinnah a Shia or Sunni?' *Friday Times*, 24–30 December 2010, www.thefridaytimes.com/24122010/page27.shtml.

Sikhs and Zoroastrians have all suffered at the hands of Muslim extremists. As a result, the portion of non-Muslims in Pakistan's population has shrunk from 40 percent in 1947 to 4 percent today.[10]

III. Types of Extremism

In Muslim nations, religion dominates all aspects of existence. Life is not compartmentalized into political, religious, social and cultural domains but is understood as a single whole that is undergirded by Islam. Nevertheless, I believe that the following distinctions are helpful in sorting out the various types of Muslim 'extremism'.

1. Intellectual Extremism

Intellectual extremism is the least discussed form of Muslim extremism, but it is also the most dangerous type because it provides a basis for and legitimizes other forms of extremism.

Muslim intellectuals, traditionally known as imams, have formulated—based on their understanding of the Qur'an, Hadith and practices of the four caliphs—the rules of engagement for Muslims with non-Muslim citizens in an Islamic state. Sunni Muslim states follow one of the four schools of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Pakistan, which is 80 to 85 percent Sunni, largely follows the Hanfi school.

One of the most influential Muslim intellectuals of the twentieth century was a Pakistani of Hanfi leanings, Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903–1979). Mawdudi influenced Hasan al-Bana, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood; his disciple, Sayyid Qutb of Egypt; and Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran.

Mawdudi's ideology contended that the predicaments faced by Muslims in his day resulted from forsaking their faith and that Muslims of his time were no better than non-Muslims in terms of their neglect and disobedience of Allah. He called Muslims to become true to their faith by letting Islam shape every aspect of their lives.

Mawdudi's political ideology included violent jihad as a means of seizing power from non-Muslims as well as from so-called Muslims. He argued that Islam wishes to overthrow the kingdoms of the world and to establish the kingdom of God. His ideological Islamic state has no boundaries. Thus global jihad is needed to establish a pan-Islamic state, because Allah claims the whole earth and not just parts of it.

Mawdudi argued that all other religious duties are geared towards preparing Muslims for jihad:

> Briefly speaking, it would be enough to state that the real objective of Islam is to remove the lordship of man over man and to establish the kingdom of God on Earth. To stake one's life and everything else to achieve this purpose is called jihad while Salah, fasting, Hajj and Zakat are all meant as a preparation for this task.[11]

10 'Pakistan's Minority Population Is Shrinking', *UCA News*, 25 June 2012, www.ucanews.com/news/pakistans-minority-population-is-shrinking/53801.

11 Abul Ala Mawdudi, 'Let Us Be Muslims', quoted in Ami Isseroff, 'Abul Ala Mawdudi', *Encyclopedia of the Middle East*, 20 December 2008, http://mideastweb.org/Middle-East-Encyclopedia/abul-ala-maududi.htm.

In another book, Mawdudi wrote:

> Islam wishes to do away with all states and governments which are opposed to the ideology and program of Islam. The purpose of Islam is to set up a state on the basis of this ideology and program, regardless of which nation assumes the role of standard-bearer of Islam, and regardless of the rule of which nation is undermined in the process of the establishment of an ideological Islamic state. Islam requires the earth—not just a portion, but the entire planet—not because the sovereignty over the earth should be wrested from one nation or group of nations and vested in any one particular nation, but because the whole of mankind should benefit from Islam, and its ideology and welfare program. It is to serve this end that Islam seeks to press into service all the forces which can bring about such a revolution. The term which covers the use of all these forces is 'jihad'.[12]

Mawdudi understood Islam as seeking to take over the whole world, including its religious, philosophical, economic, social, cultural and political spheres, and as advancing only by the power of the sword. Ami Isseroff explains how he extolled the virtues of violent jihad:

> The Messenger of Allah invited the Arabs to accept Islam for 13 years. He used every possible means of persuasion, gave them incontrovertible arguments and proofs, showed them miracles and put before them his life as an example of piety and morality. In short, he used every possible means of communication, but his people refused to accept Islam. When every method of persuasion had failed, the Prophet took to the sword. That sword removed evil mischief, the impurities of evil and the filth of the soul. The sword did something more—it removed their blindness so that they could see the light of truth, and also cured them of their arrogance; arrogance which prevents people from accepting the truth, stiff necks and proud heads bowed with humility. As in Arabia and other countries, Islam's expansion was so fast that within a century a quarter of the world accepted it. This conversion took place because the sword of Islam tore away the veils which had covered men's hearts.[13]

Mawdudi's political organization, Jamat-e-Islami (JI), played an extremely important role in providing ideological and organizational structure to the Afghan jihad against the former Soviet Union. He also helped to shape the thinking of Sayyid Qutb, of whom Ayman al-Zawahiri, founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and current head of Al-Qaida, was a follower.

JI exercised its greatest religious and political influence during the regime of dictator, General Zia al-Haq (1978–1988), who most vigorously pursued the Islamization of Pakistan. Zia dissolved the national and provin-

12 Quoted in Rafi Aamer, 'Cartoon Crises', http://familyofheart.com/DOC/FOS/Comments_AR02.htm. 'Maulana Maududi', as Aamer refers to him, is another name for the same person.

13 Isseroff, 'Abul Ala Maududi'.

cial assemblies and set up national and provincial *majlis-e-shuras*, or parliamentary councils. Islamic banking and courts consistent with Sharia law were also created.

Under Zia's rule, blasphemy and related laws were given new vigour and interpretation, resulting in frequent persecution of Christians. Non-Muslims were excluded from holding key posts or participating in mainstream politics. Over 10,000 men from JI were appointed to key positions to implement Zia's program of Islamization, which in fact was Mawdudi's conception of an Islamic state.

The Islamization of education in Pakistan led to the introduction of new curricula that promoted an extreme version of Islam. The study of Islamics became compulsory, even for Christian students; the books used were overtly anti-Christian.

Educational curricula are one of the leading sources of extremism in Pakistan. As one report stated, 'Curriculum and textbooks include hate material and encourage prejudice, bigotry and discrimination toward women, religious minorities, and other nations, especially India.'[14]

Pervez Hoodbhoy, an avid critic of Pakistan's education system, wrote in *Foreign Affairs* in 2004; 'Pakistani schools—and not just madrassas [i.e. explicitly Islamic teaching centres]—are churning out fiery zealots, fuelled with a passion for jihad and martyrdom.'[15] Mawdudi and hundreds of other Muslim intellectuals and imams have provided an intellectual basis for religious extremism.

2. Constitutional and legal extremism

Pakistan's 1956 constitution was secular and guaranteed the freedom of profession and propagation of faith to all its citizens. In fact, the country was originally called the Democratic Republic of Pakistan.

However, constitutional amendments adopted in 1962 determined that Islam should be the state religion.[16] The 1973 constitution was overtly Islamic and determined the scope and freedom of the Legislative Assembly. It required the Islamization of existing laws deemed antithetical to Islam, stating that legislation must be in accordance with the Qur'an and the Sunnah (the orally transmitted record of Muhammad's teachings). It also barred non-Muslims from becoming heads of the government.[17]

As Stephen Cohen observed in *The Idea of Pakistan*, 'Although the constitution includes adequate accommodation for Pakistan's religious minorities, in practice non-Sunni Muslims face religious discrimination in both public

14 Jayshree Bajoria, 'Pakistan's Education System and Links to Extremism', Council on Foreign Relations, 7 October 2009, www.cfr.org/pakistan/pakistans-education-system-links-extremism/p20364.

15 Pervez Hoodbhoy, 'Can Pakistan Work? A Country in Search of Itself', *Foreign Affairs*, November–December 2004, , https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2004-11-01/can-pakistan-work-country-search-itself, quoted in Bajoria, 'Pakistan's Education System'.

16 Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2006), 58.

17 Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, 58.

and private spheres.'[18]

Zia's subsequent amendments quietly removed the word 'freely' from the clause promising that minorities would be able 'freely to profess and practise their religion'. Christian protests against the change were ignored, and an appeal to Pakistan's Supreme Court was also unsuccessful.

These events judicially reduced Christians to second-class citizens and strengthened constitutional extremism. However, the trend had begun just two years after Pakistan's independence when the Objectives Resolution, adopted by the nation's Constituent Assembly in 1949, stated that 'the future constitution of Pakistan should be based on the Islamic principles of freedom, social justice and equity.'[19]

Zia tried to legitimize his 1978 coup by promising to turn Pakistan into a purer Islamic state as envisioned in the Objectives Resolution. He implemented a number of Islamic Sharia laws and set up a federal Sharia Court parallel to the Supreme Court. Zia introduced Islamic banking, restricted leadership of governmental institutions to practising Muslims, and declared Friday a holiday rather than Sunday, making it difficult for Christians to attend church.

Moreover, Zia implemented anti-blasphemy laws that contradicted all the established and ratified covenants and conventions of international human rights to which Pakistan is a signatory. Zia's policy of Islamization, his unrestricted use of religion for his own political agenda, and his open alliance with Jamat-e-Islami contributed to the victimization of minorities.

Pakistan's anti-blasphemy laws, which have been constantly used to restrict non-Muslims' freedom of religion, are the most vivid example of the country's legal extremism. These laws prescribe life imprisonment for desecrating the Qur'an and a mandatory death sentence for insulting Muhammad.

Many Christians have been falsely accused of blasphemy, arrested, imprisoned or killed. Sawan Masih was given a death sentence for his alleged blasphemy, which became a pretext for the 2013 burning and looting of the Joseph Colony, a Christian neighbourhood in Lahore.[20]

In 1993, three Christians were accused of blasphemy. They were attacked after a court hearing, and one of them was killed. The lower court handed down death sentences to the other two, but a higher court acquitted them since they were illiterate and did not know how to write Arabic. Following the decision, Islamic religious parties decried the acquittal and called for a nationwide strike. One of the justices was later murdered in his chamber, and the assassin confessed that he acted because of the judge's acquittal of the accused blasphemers.[21]

Frank Crimi summed up Muslim

18 Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan*, 58.

19 Patrick Sookhdeo, *A People Betrayed: The Impact of Islamization on the Christian Community in Pakistan* (Ross-Shire, Scotland, UK: Christian Focus, 2002), 28.

20 BBC News, 'Sawan Masih: Pakistani Christian Gets Death Penalty for Blasphemy', 28 March 2014, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-26781731.

21 'High-Profile Blasphemy Cases in the Last 63 Years', *Dawn*, 8 December 2010, www.dawn.com/news/589587/high-profile-blasphemy-cases-in-the-last-63-years.

mobs' thirst for the blood of those accused of blasphemy:

> Perhaps part of Pakistan's enchantment with its blasphemy laws stems from the fact that many Pakistani Muslims believe killing a blasphemous person earns a heavenly reward, a holy perk that may help explain why at least 30 Christians accused of blasphemy since 2009 have been killed by mobs of Islamist vigilantes.[22]

Crimi's article highlighted a startling case that caught the world's attention, in which an eleven-year-old girl suffering from Down's syndrome was jailed and accused of blasphemy.

Some Muslim clerics have declared that the Bible is a blasphemous book, because immoral acts of certain prophets are recorded in it, which they assert are deeply offensive to Muslims. They have even demanded that the Supreme Court of Pakistan should ban the Bible in Pakistan.[23]

The plight of minorities in Pakistan has been widely recognized. 'A Pew Research Center report named Pakistan … one of the most hostile nations for religious minorities. Pew placed the country among the top five overall for restrictions on religion, singling out its anti-blasphemy statutes.'[24] Similarly, in 2014 a US panel called for adding Pakistan to a blacklist of violators of religious freedom, stating that the country 'represents the worst situation in the world of religious freedom among the countries that are not already on the US blacklist and that the conditions in the past year hit an all-time low'.[25]

3. Social extremism

In many instances, Muslim mobs have picked up where the government left off. For example, on 6 February 1997, a mob of 30,000 to 35,000 attacked a Christian village called Shanti Nagar (Village of Peace), looted it and reduced it to ashes.

In October 2001, Muslim extremists armed with AK-47 assault rifles attacked Christian worshipers in St. Dominic Church, Bahawalpur. Sixteen Christians and a policeman were killed and hundreds of others were injured.

In March 2002, the Protestant International Church of Islamabad was attacked with grenades. Five people died and nearly fifty were injured.[26] I had preached the previous Sunday in that very church.

---

22 Frank Crimi, 'To Jail a Down's Syndrome Girl', *Front Page*, 23 August 2012, www.frontpagemag.com/2012/frank-crimi/to-jail-a-downs-syndrome-girl/.

23 Kumar Anuragh, 'Now Bible Faces Blasphemy Charges in Pakistan', *Christian Post*, 3 June 2011, www.christianpost.com/news/now-bible-faces-blasphemy-charges-in-pakistan-50789/; Rahman Atkia, 'JUI-S Urges SC To Ban Bible within 30 Days', *Express Tribune*, 9 June 2011, http://tribune.com.pk/story/185452/jui-s-urges-sc-to-ban-bible-threatens-consequences/.

24 Kaleem Jaweed, 'Religious Minorities in Pakistan Struggle but Survive amid Increasing Persecution', *Huffington Post*, 20 June 2014, www.huffington post.com/2014/02/10/religious-minorities-pakistan_n_4734016.html.

25 Agence France-Presse, 'US Panel Urges Action on Pakistan Religious Freedom', 30 April 2014.

26 LaTonya Taylor, 'Bloody Sunday', *Christianity Today*, 25 March 2002, www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/marchweb-only/3-25-33.0.html.

In August 2002, a church in the Christian hospital at Taxila was attacked with grenades; three nurses died and twenty-three others were injured.[27] In the same month, Murree Christian School came under fire from extremists and six Christians were killed.[28]

In 2009, nearly a hundred Christian houses were looted and then torched in the village of Bahmani Wala; the same thing happened in Korian, a village near Gojra; and in the Christian Colony of Gojra, sixty homes were torched and eight Christians were burned.[29]

In March 2013, more than 150 Christian homes and two churches were burned in Joseph Colony, Lahore. Two suicide bombers then carried out a horrific attack on 23 September 2013, at All Saints Church in Peshawar, killing 98 and seriously injuring hundreds of others. Christians in Peshawar had been receiving threats from extremist Muslims to convert to Islam or face the consequences.

On 5 November 2014, a poor Christian couple and his pregnant wife were brutally killed by a mob and their bodies were then burned over a false accusation of desecrating the Qur'an.[30]

At the popular level, a general understanding prevails among Muslims that Pakistan is for them and minorities have no place in it. Pakistan and Islam are considered synonymous. Therefore, if religious minorities want to live in Pakistan they should convert to Islam.

In all these destructive incidents, governments have declined to punish the perpetrators of violence. One religious freedom advocate wrote, 'The lack of an adequate government response contributed to an atmosphere of impunity for acts of violence and intimidation committed against minorities.'[31]

4. Religious extremism

All the extremist actions described above are inspired by a prima facie and plain reading of the primary sources of Islam and the conservative interpretations given by scholars like Mawdudi.

A number of verses in the Qur'an speak quite highly of Christians. Christians are called *ahl al-Kitab* (people of the Book) and thus viewed as equal to Muslims; they are described as believers like Muslims who will not have to fear in the day of judgement (2:62; 5:69). Muslims are also advised that they will find Christians nearest to them in terms of displaying love (5:82).

However, the overwhelming major-

27 'Nurses Killed in an Attack on Christian Hospital', *The Telegraph*, 9 August 2002, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1403992/Nurses-killed-in-attack-on-Christian-hospital.html.

28 David Rhode, 'Gunman Kills 6 in a Christian School in Pakistan', *New York Times*, 6 August 2002, www.nytimes.com/2002/08/06/world/gunmen-kill-6-at-a-christian-school-in-pakistan.html.

29 Kharal Asad, 'Looking Back: Not a Single Person Convicted for Gojra Riots', *Express Tribune*, 10 March 2013, http://tribune.com.pk/story/518585/looking-back-not-a-single-person-convicted-for-gojra-riots/.

30 Jillani Shahzeb, 'Pakistan Christian Community Living in Fear after Mob Killing', BBC News, 8 November 2014, www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-29956115.

31 Edward P. Lipton, *Religious Freedom in Asia* (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2002), 39.

ity of relevant passages in the Qur'an condemn Christians. Sura 2:120 alerts Muslims; 'Never will the Jews nor the Christians be pleased with you till you follow their religion'.

The mere presence of Christians among Muslims is considered a threat to their faith. The Qur'an warns, 'And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers' (3:85).

The Qur'an apparently forbids Muslims from socializing with Christians:

> O you who believe! Take not as your helpers or friends those outside your religion since they will not fail to do their best to corrupt you. They desire to harm you severely. Hatred has already appeared from their mouths, but what their breasts conceal is far worse. Indeed, we have made plain to you the verses if you understand (3:118).

On the basis of such verses, strict Muslims avoid befriending Christians. They are afraid that Christians may corrupt their beliefs and Islamic ways of life. Therefore, extremist groups try to eradicate this would-be source of corruption from Islamic societies.

The command not to befriend Jews and Christians is given with such force and clarity that those Muslims who seek such friendship are considered non-Muslims:

> O you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians as friends; they are but friends to one another. And if any amongst you takes them as friends, then surely he is one of them. Verily, Allah guides not those people who are the wrongdoers (5:51).[32]

Many hadiths (sayings accepted as inspired) in Islam forbid Muslims from befriending non-believers. Revered Muslim scholars like Ibn Kathir, Ibn Taymiyah, Ahmad Sarhindi and others have taken this view.[33]

On the other hand, Christian beliefs in the Trinity and the divinity of Christ are described as *kufr* (unbelief; 4:44–59, 5:17) and *shirk* (association of God with things that are not God). Those who accept these falsehoods are called unbelievers and assigned to hell (5:73).

Finally, Muslims are plainly commanded to fight against those, including the 'people of the book', who do not submit as Muslims, and to bring them to submission, payment of *jizya* (reli-

32 Some Muslims are embarrassed by verse 5:51 and have gone to elaborate lengths to modify its intent by interpreting the word 'friend' as 'guardian' or 'protector', which are just two of several legitimate translations of the Arabic word. According to these apologists, the verse is referring to a Muslim's allegiance to a non-Muslim government (which is not all that comforting either). However, the word *awliyaa* is used in verse 5:51 instead of other words that would be more appropriate if the meaning were 'protector', such as *hamin*. In fact, the politically correct translations that do use the word 'protector' translate the same word as 'friend' in other places, such as verse 10:62. This latter verse proves that the word *awliyaa* truly means 'friend' in the Qur'an and not 'guardian' because it refers to associates of Allah. If the word means 'guardian' there, then it would mean that Allah has guardians, which is blasphemy.

33 WikiIslam, 'Qur'an, Hadith and Scholars: Friendship with Non-Muslims', wikiislam.net/wiki/Qur%27an,_Hadith_and_Scholars:Friendship_with_Non-Muslims#Ibn_Kathir, accessed 1 July 2015.

gious tax), and humiliation:

> Fight against those who (1) believe not in Allah, (2) nor in the Last Day, (3) nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger (4) and those who acknowledge not Islam as the religion of truth among the people of the Scripture, until they pay the *jizya* with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued (9:29).

These messages create an environment of intolerance. Muslims generally assume that they and their religion are superior to Christians, and the low socio-political condition of Christians in Pakistan makes it easier for religious fanatics to take extreme steps against them and commit violence with impunity. In the northern part of the country, extremist groups have been harassing Christians to convert, leave or be killed.

Religious *ghairat* (an Islamic concept that encompasses honour, jealousy and zealotry)[34] wreaks havoc against minorities. Religious zealots incite hatred in the name of Islam. Calls are given from mosques that a certain person has desecrated the Qur'an or has blasphemed against the prophet of Islam. In response, hordes of Muslims attack Christian colonies, churches and institutions, not hesitating to loot, arson, pillage and kill.

Some extremist groups, such as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, send suicide bombers and other trained killers to destroy churches and kill Christians. For example, suicide bombers attacked Roman Catholic and Anglican churches in Youhanabad, near Lahore, on 15 March 2015.[35] Twenty Christians were killed and hundreds were injured.

A thirteen-year-old boy was set on fire in broad daylight by two motorcyclists because he confessed to being a Christian.[36] On 24 May 2015, after an accusation that a Christian had desecrated pages of the Qur'an, a Christian colony in Gulshan-e-Ravi was attacked.[37]

Religious extremism is rampant and manifests itself in social, intellectual, legal and constitutional forms. Christians are constitutionally reduced to the status of second-class citizens, and the Pakistan Penal Code's religious clauses have proved to be legal mousetraps. Widespread, religiously motivated discrimination exists throughout Pakistan and culminates in violent attacks by Muslim mobs and trained extremists.

Anglican Bishop, Michael Nazir-Ali,

34 *Ghairat* is a peculiar concept that involves shame, jealousy and honour at the same time. In religious terms, it is an irrational type of reaction intended to protect the sacredness, holiness or honour of religious persons, places, books and other artifacts that are considered to be holy. Muslims react violently against anything or any person deemed to be insulting or bringing shame on Islam or the Muslim community. Hundreds of people, including many women throughout Pakistan, have been killed in the name of *ghairat*.

35 'Crucial Time for Christians in Pakistan after the Churches Attacked in Youhanabad Lahore', *Christians' True Spirit*, 31 March 2015, http://christiantruespirit.com/?p=89.

36 'Pakistan: 13 Year Old Boy Set on Fire for Being Christian', *Independent Catholic News*, 13 April 2015, www.indcatholicnews.com/news.php?viewStory=27193.

37 Wilson Chaudhary, 'Lahore Christians Face Further Attack after Man Accused of Blasphemy', 25 May 2015, www.britishpakistanichristians.co.uk/blog/tag/Gulshan_Ravi/.

observed in 2015: 'There is such a lot that the Christian community does in Pakistan, in spite of the terrible persecution and discrimination that it suffers. All of these [Christians] are sitting ducks for any kind of terrorist to do whatever they like.'[38] In a desperate appeal, Nazir-Ali asked for the Pakistani army to protect churches and Christian institutions.

IV. Christian Responses

1. Living in a state of fear

Ever since the Iranian revolution and the unspeakable suffering that Christians in that country endured, I have feared that a similar situation could arise in Pakistan. The possibility certainly cannot be ruled out, especially since one main inspiration of the Iranian revolution was a Pakistani religio-political ideologue, Mawdudi.[39]

Pakistani Christians have responded to this appalling situation in many different ways, among which fear is perhaps the most common. Soon after the creation of Pakistan, Christians began to feel insecure. A renowned Christian scholar, lawyer, and politician, Joshua Fazl-ud-din, noted; 'As a matter of fact, right from the beginning, minor officials had been harassing Christians in Pakistan and openly asking them to leave Pakistan, which they characterized as a homeland exclusively for Muslims.'[40]

Consequently, 'loyalty of the non-Muslims to the state of Pakistan is doubted even by the moderate Muslims'.[41]

Twenty-five years ago, a survey found that 80 percent of Christians felt they were treated as second-class citizens in Pakistan.[42] With the ever-rising tide of persecution, Christians do not see any future for themselves in the country. Self-preservation, security of Christians and church institutions, and simple survival are their main concerns.

2. Mass migration

National newspapers have widely reported the mass migration of Pakistani Christians who are seeking asylum in Thailand, Sri Lanka and Malaysia, waiting for their turn to be examined in UN camps.[43] Nazir Bhatti, who has long

38 Ruth Gledhill, 'Michael Nazir-Ali: Christians in Pakistan Are "Sitting Ducks" for Terrorist Attack', *Christian Today*, 18 March 2015, www.christiantoday.com/article/michael.nazir.ali.christians.in.pakistan.are.sitting.ducks.for.terrorist.attacks/50239.htm.

39 David Emmanuel Singh, 'Integrative Political Ideology of Mawlana Mawdudi and Islamisation of the Muslim Masses in the Indian Subcontinent', *Journal of South Asian Studies* 33, no. 1 (2000): 129–48.

40 Joshua Fazl-ud-din, *The Future of Christians in Pakistan* (Lahore: Punjabi Darbar Publishing House, 1949), 68.

41 Theodore Gabriel, *Christian Citizens of an Islamic State: The Pakistani Experience* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2007), 37.

42 Patrick J. Roelle, *Christians under Siege* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2009), 50.

43 Rabis Ali, 'Packing Their Bags: Christians Moving to Thailand to Escape Violence, Insecurity', *Express Tribune,* 15 July 2014, http://tribune.com.pk/story/735724/packing-their-bags-christians-moving-to-thailand-to-escape-violence-insecurity/; 'Pakistani Christians Moving to Foreign Countries out of Fear', *Deccan Chronicle*, 15 July 2014, http://www.deccanchronicle.com/140715/world-neighbours/article/pakistani-christians-moving-foreign-

been advocating for Christians through his paper, *Pakistan Christian Post,* claimed in a letter to the UN Secretary General that 90 percent of Pakistani Christians favoured receiving refugee status.[44]

This claim might be somewhat exaggerated, but Christians do not feel safe nor do they have equal rights as citizens of Pakistan. Therefore, those who are able, especially middle-class Pakistani Christians, are emigrating.

3. Agitation and protests

Constant suffering at the hands of extremists and denial of justice in the courts (among all the atrocities committed against Christians, no one has been convicted or punished by the courts) have driven some Christians to take to the streets in the hope that authorities and the international community may take notice of their plight, forcing the government to take some action.

In May 1998, Bishop John Joseph took an extreme step and committed suicide in front of the court in Sahiwal that had given a death sentence to young Ayub Masih, falsely accused of committing blasphemy.[45] This sparked further protests from demonstrators who were manhandled by police and Muslim gangsters. Hundreds or Christians were severely beaten, arrested and put in jail. Even government hospitals refused to treat injured protesters.

After twin suicide bombers killed 20 worshippers in Youhanabad on 15 March 2015, Christian seized two terrorists and burned them (see section 8 below). In response, hundreds of Christians were arrested, beaten and harassed. A large number of residents of Youhanabad have fled and have still not returned. Many protesters are still in prisons and are reportedly being pressured to convert if they want to get out of jail.

4. Living in ghettoes

Social, political, constitutional and religious hostility coupled with extreme socio-economic and political weakness seems to have turned Christians into a ghetto community. Nearly half a century of growing persecution and constant betrayal from the country's very beginning have seriously affected Christian-Muslim relations. Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali wrote:

> These [blasphemy] laws have not just muzzled freedom of belief and of speech but they have made Christians and other non-Muslims perpetually fearful about being targets of the next accusation. It has created a ghetto mentality amongst them and further removed them from the ambit of public life. The removal of the moratorium on the death penalty, ostensibly to deal with terrorism, raises the real prospect of someone now being executed for blasphemy. This would be a tragic development indeed.[46]

countries-out-fear.

44 Nazir S. Bhatti, '90% Pakistani Christian [sic] Favour Refugee Status from UN after Rising Violence', *Pakistan Christian Post* (2008), www.pakistanchristianpost.com/vieweditorial.php?editorialid=112.

45 Owen Bennett-Jones, 'Despatches: Karachi', BBC News, 7 May 1998, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south-_asia/88890.stm.

46 Michael Nazir-Ali, 'Persecution of Pa-

5. A messianic response

One thing that distinguishes Christianity clearly from other faiths is its message of forgiveness. Islam, as a religion and native culture, justifies taking revenge. Tribal, sectarian and family feuds have taken thousands of lives as the vicious spiral of revenge continues to grow. However, the New Testament teaches Christians not to take revenge, as judgement belongs to God (Rom 12:19).

Christ's unimaginable suffering and his prayer for forgiveness for those who crucified him have always inspired Pakistani Christians to follow their Saviour and forgive the perpetrators of violence against them. After the massacre of 15 worshippers in October 2001 in Bahawalpur Church, where thousands of Muslims were attending a funeral, pastors and bishops announced that they forgave the killers.[47]

After the 2013 suicide bombing of All Saints Church in Peshawar, the response by the bereaved families was amazing. A veteran South Korean missionary and personal friend interviewed 337 Christians regarding their reaction to the killers and their surviving fellow perpetrators, finding that 91.4 percent were willing to grant forgiveness. Following are some typical comments:

> 'I believe God will do all the judging. So I trust God for his judgement and I forgive them.'
>
> 'They don't know what they are doing. Even a beast doesn't do this. I already forgive them and I pray to God to show them his mercy so that they would repent and be restored back to good human beings.'
>
> 'I forgive them and pray for them that they would know how precious life of a human is.'
>
> 'Jesus Christ shed his blood to forgive such a sinner as I am. … Human blood is so sinful and filthy, which is nothing compared to the precious blood of Jesus … why can't I forgive them?'
>
> 'I forgive. But I wish and pray for them to repent, begin to love other people and stop killing.'[48]

This song of forgiveness has been sung by choirs of wounded souls, under the direction of the Crucified, for the last two thousand years. Pakistani Christians are proud to add their voice to Jesus' choir of the cross.

6. Audacious tenacity of faith

One of the most unexpected and stunning responses by ordinary Christians in the face of tremendous suffering has been to remain firmly grounded in their commitment to and faith in Christ.

After horrible carnage in many of the churches, Christian leaders were afraid that their congregations might desert. However, the response has

kistan's Christians by Fanatical Islam Is a Betrayal of Jinnah and Founding Fathers', *International Business Times*, 12 June 2015, www.ibtimes.co.uk/persecution-pakistans-christians-by-fanatical-islam-betrayal-jinnah-founding-fathers-1505766.

47 'Beth', 'Pakistani Christians Bury Massacre Victims, Forgive Killers', Famvin, 29 October 2001, http://famvin.org/en/2001/10/29/pakistani-christians-bury-massacre-victims-forgive-killers/.

48 Matthew Jeong, 'Report to the Diocese of Peshawar and All Donor Friends about Our Visit to Victims of the Bomb Blasts on 22 April 2014' (unpublished, quoted with permission).

been exactly the opposite. Pakistani churches are filled with people of all ages.

The believers recognize that their persecution actually testifies to the truthfulness of Christ's teachings: 'You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved' (Mt 10:22). 'Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me' (Mt 24:9).

These Christians take seriously the challenge to remain faithful until death and the promise of the crown of life (Rev 2:10). Thus, they demonstrate a remarkable tenacity of faith in the face of intense persecution emanating from religious extremism.

7. Intellectual response

Although forgiving one's enemies, even when they don't seek forgiveness, is a unique and powerful Christian virtue and Pakistani Christians have demonstrated it quite regularly, it does not necessarily inspire love for them in the enemies' hearts, nor does it create peace. Christians need to engage Muslims at socio-political and religio-cultural levels to create mutual understanding and an environment for peaceful, respectful and accommodative co-existence.

This requires a comprehensive dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Unfortunately, Muslims in Pakistan do not feel such a need.

Bishop Nazir-Ali contends that Muslims and Christians have 'grave responsibility for maintaining peace' through dialogue and cooperation, and that committed and genuine dialogue naturally requires critical evaluation of other faiths by Christians and allows others to critically evaluate Christian faith.[49] He further asserts that the catholicity of the church demands its participation in dialogue with and mission to the rest of the world.

Nazir-Ali argues that if the church, in John Knox's words, is an 'ever-widening sphere and ever-deepening reconciliation … then the church must always be in dialogue with the community, with the people of other faiths and with all those of goodwill.'[50]

Nazir-Ali refers to four types of dialogues: the dialogue of life, the dialogue of deeds, the dialogue of specialists and the dialogue of the interior life. Regarding the third kind, he writes, 'People, sometimes, do not give enough value to the dialogue of specialists. In some cases this *has* been sterile: where it has been overly concerned with classical issues and there has been a danger in some respect of a merely antiquarian interest.'[51]

Although dialogue of life and deeds is unavoidable (and, to some extent, desirable) on a daily basis, it lacks intentionality and Christian moorings. As for the dialogue of specialists, Christians suffer from the lack of such specialists who can engage with Muslim scholars. Christian leadership training institutions are largely responsible for such a dearth. None of the major theological institutions teaches courses on

49 Michael Nazir-Ali, *The Unique and Universal Christ* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 2012), 86–87.

50 Michael Nazir-Ali. *Mission and Dialogue: Proclaiming the Gospel Afresh in Every Age* (London: SPCK, 1995), 72.

51 Nazir-Ali, *Mission and Dialogue*, 82.

Islam or Christian-Muslim relations.

Sadly, Christians have no voice and no influence in Pakistan, constitutionally, politically, socially or intellectually. They constantly look towards the Western world to save them from their appalling and life-threatening situation. However, in many cases, this hope for help from the West proves counter-productive.

8. Acting like the extremists

Peaceful protest is not only justified but also necessary to challenge unjust authorities and injustices (Jn 18:22). However, anger at Muslim extremists has caused some Christians to become extremists as well. Reacting to the violence committed against them, Christian demonstrators have sometimes turned violent and destroyed public property.

The most shocking incident took place right after the twin suicide attacks in Youhanabad on March 15, 2015. Reportedly, police arrested two Muslim suspects at the scene. Angry Christians snatched them from the police, killed them and set them on fire. As the fire engulfed them, Christians shouted 'Hallelujah' and '*Khudawand Yasu Masih ki Jai*' (praise God and victory to the Lord Jesus Christ), apparently as a parallel to Muslim chanting of 'Allahu Akbar' (God is great). Chaudhary Nisar Khan, the interior minister, quickly condemned the Christian reaction as the 'worst act of terrorism'.[52]

From time to time, certain Christian leaders have threatened to set up militant organizations to defend Christians against Muslim militant groups. This is a very sad and totally un-Christian response.

V. Following the True Extremist

Instead of being influenced by Muslim religious extremism, Christians ought to respond with a different kind of extremism: they should whole-heartedly follow the True Extremist, Jesus Christ.

Christ could be considered an extremist in two ways: what he actually taught and did, and what people thought about him. Jesus' opponents, as they understood his teachings and his claims about himself, viewed him as an extremist so dangerous that they must eliminate him. At his first preaching in Nazareth, his audience tried to kill him by throwing him from the top of the mountain (Lk 4:28–30).

When Christ claimed that he and God, whom he called his father, were one, the Jews called him a blasphemer and tried to stone him (Jn 10:30–33). At one point, even his disciples thought his teachings were too extreme, to the extent that many of his followers left him and never came back (Jn 6:60–66). Jesus' cleansing of the Temple was certainly interpreted as the act of an extremist, after which the Temple authorities determined to kill him (Mk 11:15–18).

Christ was the True Extremist in ways that his opponents could not grasp. His taking on humanity and becoming one of us, being born as a vulnerable baby, and offering himself as a sacrifice to save humanity and honour his Father were extreme acts. His teaching to 'love your enemies and

52 Ali Khan, 'Mob Lynching Is "Worst Kind of Terrorism", Says Nisar', *Dawn*, 18 March 2015, www.dawn.com/news/1170157.

pray for those who persecute you' (Mt 5:44) goes beyond our normal mental and ethical boundaries. And Christ's instruction that his would-be disciples must deny themselves and carry their cross daily is an extreme demand.

Thus, in my view, the most appropriate Christian response to religious extremism is Christian extremism, or perhaps messianic extremism. Christian moderation ultimately leads to the betrayal of Christ. It is somewhat similar to Peter's walking at a distance behind Christ after his betrayal. Soon he denied that he even knew Christ, rather than confessing that he was one of Jesus' closest disciples.

Our response to religious extremism should entail not only an extreme commitment to Christ but also living out a call to extreme, radical discipleship. Only messianic extremism can counter religious extremism. Only extreme love can overcome extreme hatred. Only carrying the cross can deliver us from the fear of death and assure us of the victory that Christ has already won over the powers of destruction, including destructive religious extremism.

Only by losing our lives for Christ and the gospel can we find life (Mt 10:39; Mk 9:34–35; Lk 9:23–25). This is the way of the cross, of the crucified and resurrected Lord, and of all his true disciples and apostles. May the Triune God help us to respond to religious extremism in this most appropriate way.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 57-64

A Place at the Table: Christian Political Engagement in a Post-Christian Context

Richard L. Smith

Imagine several chairs around a table. Each chair represents an irreconcilable position, a worldview that rejects on principle the other perspectives. The table represents common concerns or the presupposed commonalities between all positions.

Those commonalities are actually quite extensive. People who hold what may seem to be diametrically opposed worldviews almost always agree, for example, that their society needs reliable food sources to keep people from starving and a protective force that can ensure their public safety, as well as on certain legal and ethical assumptions. This presumed common ground between worldviews provides a basis for political and social engagement for the common good.

But the table is also a place where each player competes for power. Each worldview tends towards dominance and tribalism, routinely seeking to exclude others from exerting influence.

Liberals exclude conservatives. Secularists exclude persons of religious conviction. Straights exclude gays. Traditionalists reject feminists. The wealthy overlook the poor. Whites exclude minorities. The young disregard the elderly. The educated ignore the ignorant. And just about everyone tends to overlook the powerless and disadvantaged.

What might happen if Christians could uniquely promote and model the virtues of cooperative table participation—respect, empathy, access, and tolerance? What if we were explicitly willing to share power for the common good?

Amidst the post-Christian transformation of many cultures worldwide, evangelicals need to reconsider whether the goal of their public engagement should be to define their culture in accordance with a biblical worldview.

What if, instead, we focused on championing an open table in which all legitimate viewpoints are included? Every worldview presumes a social, economic, legal, ethical, intellectual, educational and environmental context for collaboration for the common good. Every worldview offers insights

Richard Smith *(PhD, Westminster Theological Seminary) formerly taught in Prague, Czech Republic and was a co-founder of the Komenský Institute there. He now serves as South American senior advisor for Global Scholars, writes curriculum for use in Latin America, and operates the Cosmovisión Bíblica Spanish-language website (www.cosmovisionbiblicaesp.net).*

regarding these often unspoken commonalities that are required for constructive communication and mutual benefit.

What if we sought to cooperate with other worldviews based upon a deeper, broader common ground than personal salvation or Christian culture? What if we sought to be a blessing to all, derived from general revelation and common grace? What if we engaged in social discourse and public advocacy based upon a careful analysis of the entire biblical worldview, including creation (Genesis 1–2) and restoration (Revelation 20–21) and not merely the fall into sin and personal redemption (Genesis 3–Revelation 19)?

I. The Presuppositions of Table Participation

What is the presupposed commonality of table participation? Various assumed conditions are necessary to enable any encounter between worldviews. Even before we argue or reject, welcome or exclude, wield power or share it, we presuppose many critical social, existential and ontological realities.

When you enter a building, you assume that the structure is secure. When you eat at your favourite restaurant, you assume that the kitchen is clean and sanitary. Before you begin arguing with your opponent, you assume a common language, logical and grammatical norms, conscious and sane minds, and an at least partly shared sense of right and wrong.

When we schedule a meeting at the table, we presume all the necessary conditions for travel to and for communication at the location. We also presuppose the legal and moral norms that enable mutual access and protection. We presume both the validity of our perspective and the dignity of those representing other perspectives.

The common good, then, encompasses the network of underlying preconditions that facilitate table fellowship. These conditions must exist *before* any political and social engagement that aims to achieve mutual understanding and agreement and thereby extend the common good further.

For this reason, each table participant is a stakeholder in the preconditions that foster human rights, freedom of religion and worldview, legal norms and law enforcement, economic and educational opportunity, environmental wholeness, public works, and the provisions that enable human beings to flourish. These commonalities are presupposed by every worldview, even those that are irreconcilable in other aspects. This common ground is presumed and required for dialogue and collaboration. It is the necessary surface upon which the table and chairs rest.

II. Applying a Biblical Worldview to the Table

1. The age to come

God's mission in creation is the same as it was in the beginning: to prepare a realm and community for his Son, Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:22–26). Because of God's great love, he created a physical environment in which to tabernacle with the crown of creation, mankind. Ever since the entrance of sin, all that God does is redemptive and re-creative, seeking to make us holy so that we can

dwell with him in a holy environment forever (Tit 2:11–14).

The incarnation, ministry, and sacrifice of Jesus Christ enable this plan to succeed, because Christ will finish the work that Adam failed to do. The project manager, so to speak, is the Holy Spirit, who will bring about restoration in a 'new heaven and new earth in which righteousness dwells' (2 Pet 3:13). In other words, one day, God will unveil his cosmic empire, a homeland free of sin and Satan in which human beings can truly flourish through Christ, their redeemer and Lord.

God is in the process of populating his church, and someday there will be a cosmic reversal. God will dwell with us forever in his kingdom: the everlasting tabernacle, the entire earth, the renewed creation. We look forward to Eden restored to its greatest potential, a nexus of divine presence, peace, and prosperity forever.

Until that time, every re-enactment of gospel love and every manifestation of economic and social justice in this life points forward to the restoration and reversal yet to come in God's cosmic empire. In the meantime, however, we must share this planet until the Lord returns. If it prospers, we also prosper. If it suffers, we also suffer, 'for in its welfare you will find your welfare' (Jer 29:7).

2. The present evil age

Both biblical revelation and personal experience constantly remind us that God's edenic plan was interrupted by the stratagems of Satan and the advent of sin. We now live in this 'present evil age' (Gal 1:4) or 'under the sun' (Ecc 1:3). Concurrent with God's re-creative mission, Satan attempts to create a counterfeit kingdom with himself as the head, ruling over fallen mankind in a curse-filled physical environment.

The expulsion from Eden and the resulting curse mean hostility and frustration, ambivalence and enigma in every arena of existence (Gen 3:14–19; Mk 7:21–22; Rom 1:28–32). Cultural and civilizational development is skewed by sin and idolatry. Humans try to replicate Eden and re-establish religious centres, but often settle for visions of utopia, theocracy, unending progress and empire.

We are by nature worshipping beings, *homo adorans*. Sadly though, this spiritual orientation is often directed to unworthy objects (would-be god-kings) and destructive purposes (ideologies of acquisition and empire, for example). God expects his human stewards to protect and develop creation, but sadly, they often abuse and neglect the natural world and one another.

We use creation positively to make great things from the raw material God has provided: artwork, architecture, artificial limbs, and software. But we often fail to extend the benefits of this creativity and productivity fairly to everyone who has a need or right. Similarly, the cultures and societies we create often have cruel, unjust and oppressive aspects.

The drastic changes introduced in Genesis 3 as result of sin and judgement amount to a reversal of creation. The mission of fallen mankind is the re-creation and globalization of the divine milieu (Eden)—but on sinful assumptions. All our cultural policy and practice, production and consumption are twisted and problematic. Our economic systems are often tainted by idolatry

and corruption. As we extend our economic prowess, the result is often conquest, oppression and exploitation.

Thus, we must be realists and permit our worldview to shape our cultural expectations: before the end of this age, Humpty Dumpty will not be put back together again.

3. Common grace

However, the creator did not abandon creation or his mission. 'God has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy' (Acts 14:17; cf. Mt 5:45). In the interim period between creation and the 'renewal of all things' (Mt 19:28), God's common grace makes life bearable, even sweet.

Common grace in culture restrains evil. Generally, we are not as bad as we could be. In fact, we sometimes do much better than expected. Through common grace, God enables human beings to develop technologies and systems to better humanity's lot. Through common grace, civic institutions and public policy restrain evil. Compassion and care are extended to the community. Humankind manifests artistry of all types: beauty in the arts, utility in science and technology.

Most importantly, because of common grace, the world does not self-destruct, enabling God's redemptive and restorative plan to unfold within history. As a result, although the post-fall situation is typified by trauma and paradox, at the same time the world explodes with God's mercy and human beings are enabled to achieve noble aspirations.

We sometimes witness, for example, extraordinary deeds of beneficence, stewardship and economic justice. Sometimes the wealthy share their resources with amazing abundance and creativity. Sometimes armed forces refrain from pillage and plunder, and nations from colonial exploitation. Sometimes states enact sustainable policies that protect and care for the needy, as well as the earth.

III. Implications

1. The cultural mandate (Gen 1:26–28; 2:15)

First, east of Eden and under the sun, the human project is clearly flawed. Existence is conditioned by finitude, fallenness and God's curse (Gen 3:14–19; Ps 90).

In this present evil age, utopia will never be achieved through any ideology or worldview: communism or socialism, democracy, capitalism or consumerism, Islam or any of the myriad alternative spiritualities. Never will there be a truly 'Holy (fill in the blank) Empire'.

History is full of failed and tragic experiments in culture-building, a litany of tragic quests for paradise lost or for utopia on earth. Humans create endless substitute religiosities, group identities and social policies, many of which deserve description as a kind of hell on earth, a foretaste of dreadful things to come.

Second, because human beings are the *imago Dei*, we are hard-wired for extension, development, growth, even globalization. But because we are fallen, the usual results are conquest,

empire, mono-culturalism, subjugation, exploitation, plunder and extinction. By necessity and design we must consume, but in today's economy, consumption has become a kind of plunder and an implicit religion. 'God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes' (Eccl 7:29).

Third, Christians should be continuously wary of sinful incarnations of the cultural mandate gone awry. Whenever we hear a neo-Babelite battle cry, 'Let us build ourselves a city … that we can make a name for ourselves' (Gen 11:4); whenever would-be Pharaohs exclaim, 'Who is the Lord?' (Ex 5:2); whenever God's people mix political power and religion, declaring, 'Give us a king to lead us' (1 Sam 8:19–20); or whenever an ideology proposes utopia, the church should take heed.

Whether the impetus behind such cries is religious or philosophical, the social and economic manifestations are usually totalitarian. The forms can be explicitly religious (theocracies like radical Islam, medieval Catholicism or even forms of early Protestantism), ideologically secular (totalitarianisms such as communism, National Socialism, Imperial Japan or North Korean Juche), or implicitly religious (secularism or consumerism).

Fourth, since God is the creator and householder of all that exists, every sphere of life, every aspect of existence, and every goal, motivation, structure, academic discipline, ideology and system must be evaluated in relation to Scripture and the mission of God. Everything we do culturally occurs within the context of sin, but also within common grace and the divine plan. This context affords us redemptive opportunities and areas of common ground that we should embrace for the sake of God's mission in creation.

Fifth, we must never forget that anything we do as sinners is problematic. Everything and everyone in this age is subject to Murphy's Law and to the law of unintended consequences.

Finally, our interest in promoting constructive table participation should drive us to consider what actions could facilitate such participation. Are the roads safe to travel? Are the logistics of communication adequate? Is the immediate location safe and healthy? Does everyone associated with the endeavour have fair and just access to material resources and social services? Are equity, opportunity and justice available for each participant?

Regarding the subjective conditions necessary (respect, empathy, access and tolerance), we should approach the table like missionaries engaging a foreign culture. What cultural biases do I and others bring to the table? How were my assumptions and theirs formed? Is there any validity in their critique of my position? How are the virtues of table participation reflected in my attitudes and behaviour towards others who sometimes vehemently disagree with me?

2. Exiles and pilgrims

Jeremiah's counsel to the Hebrew exiles in Babylon (Jer 29:4–14) is wise and useful in helping us to consider how we can pursue common ground and the common good in a pluralistic, often post-Christian context:

> Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and

> live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream. … I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. … I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

In this passage, Jeremiah calls for submission to God's sovereignty over human history and the wisdom of his mission. The Jews were not instructed to resist with force of arms, attempt a precipitous return to Israel, or even proselytize the Babylonians in search of cultural dominance. Instead, their sustainability relied upon critical engagement and maintaining their distinct identity as pilgrims within God's long-term plan. This is apparent in the negative injunctions in the text: 'Do not let your prophets and your diviners … deceive you' and 'do not listen to the dreams that they dream' (v. 8).

The Jews were commanded to take what they would have considered counter-intuitive actions: 'seek the welfare of the city' and 'pray to the Lord on its behalf' (v. 7). The rationale provided was that 'in its welfare you will find your welfare'.

In fact, Jeremiah encouraged his listeners to prosper and flourish in exile. This is clear from the positive injunctions: build houses and live in them, plant gardens and eat their produce, take wives and have sons and daughters, multiply there (vv. 5–6). The broader context of the passage expresses hope for future renewal and restoration (vv. 11–14).

Thematically, the parallel between their day and ours is striking. The Jews were in exile, longing for restoration and a return to the promised land; in the meantime, they were tempted to assimilate and syncretize with Babylon. We too are in a sort of exile, longing for cultural restoration and challenged by forces of assimilation.

The Jews were instructed to flourish in their place of exile (common ground), for their own benefit as well as that of their captors (common good), and as a foretaste of better things to come. We should do the same. As we do so, we must never forget that we are ambassadors for another nation, a cosmic civilization, and another epoch. Heaven is our home and we are pilgrims and exiles here.

3. A guiding strategy

Our biblical worldview must mould our social and political expectations. We must never forget our presuppositions derived from Scripture. We should embrace biblical realism and eschatological hope in the present evil age and under the sun. Christians ought

always to think long-term and serve in the present (1 Thes 1:9–10). We should view our present historical moment within the ebb and flow of God's mission in the world (Jn 20:21–22).

Our cultural influence will vary according to the social-religious setting in which we find ourselves. Some social contexts are too messy for positive influence on a grand scale. Sometimes, tragically, there is so little common ground and little notion of common good. (South Sudan, Yemen, Syria, and the former Yugoslavia come to mind.)

Sometimes, hostile ideologies inhibit what is possible. The Hebrew exiles in Babylon were granted a degree of self-expression and religious distinctiveness; the early Christians in the Roman Empire were not. Neither was such freedom available to dissidents in Catholic-dominated Europe during the Inquisition, religious minorities in Protestant-ruled states after the Reformation, or Christians in Nazi-controlled countries, the Soviet Empire, Imperial Japan, or North Korea and conservative Islamic states today.

On the other hand, sometimes we unintentionally become the intimidating force at the table. We must remember that our goal should not be to establish a theocracy. We are no longer operating in 'Christendom'. We do not elect our country's pastor-in-chief or moral-exemplar-in-charge. We must sometimes support the lesser of two evils and the most viable path to the common good.

God may not have any intention to 'Christianize' our nation, but he definitely wishes to revive the church. Certainly, it is a blessing for the church to dwell in a nation that welcomes it, but it is not always good or godly for our nation to reside in the church.

We must be realists, therefore, and permit our entire worldview to mould us so that we are not deluded or deceived. This world is beyond repair. In fact, it is terminally ill. In all cases, our intervention is palliative. Sometimes, we must leave both the wheat and tares in place and 'let both grow together until the harvest' (Mt 13:27–30), remaining 'wise as serpents and innocent as doves' (Mt 10:16). We must function as the 'salt of the earth' (Mk 9:50), serving as a preservative as we await the new heaven and new earth.

IV. The Table as a Basis for Christian Apologetics

As a final note, we should keep in mind, and point out where appropriate, that the very existence of a table where we come together to seek the common good presupposes the truth of the Christian worldview. As I wrote above, 'Even before we argue or reject, welcome or exclude, wield power or share it, we presuppose many critical social, existential, and *ontological* realities.'

Even though proponents of differing worldviews often deny the existence or relevance of the Christian God or his law conceptually, in practice they cannot live in this way. Their behaviour and convictions betray them, for they presuppose the very conditions that the Bible explains and that their worldviews cannot explain.

Honesty demands recognition of only two options ontologically. We can believe in either impersonal materialism or a personal cosmos, governed by an intelligent, absolute Person. Obviously, everyone who agrees to take a

place at the table does not *really* believe in ultimate chaos or meaninglessness. At their deepest level, what the Bible calls the *heart*, they do not hold this anti-biblical worldview. Though they may never acknowledge this truth, their very participation presupposes an underlying order created by God.

In effect, your opponents at the table are relying on borrowed Christian capital. They are unwittingly presupposing theism in order to oppose it. They possess a kind of faith in God, though it is hidden, assumed and unconscious—or perhaps conscious but held in hostility (Rom 1:18–23).

Christians, therefore, can and should participate at the table for the common good of all. But we should never forget the hidden, ontological presuppositions that make the event possible. Moreover, we must never forsake our evangelistic motivation, because every seat at the table is occupied by a creature made in God's image, subject to God's revelation, and benefitting from his common grace that calls them at every moment to repentance (Rom 2:4).

ERT (2018) 42:1, 65-68

Collaboration without Compromise: The World Evangelical Alliance and Roman Catholic Leaders

Thomas Schirrmacher and Thomas K. Johnson

We sometimes receive strong criticism from evangelical Christians over our friendly interaction, on behalf of the World Evangelical Alliance, with senior Roman Catholic leaders. We have been accused of entering into spiritual union with the Antichrist; some evangelicals have refused to participate in a meeting with us because we have shaken hands with Pope Francis. Interestingly, our friendly meetings with Orthodox Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Jains, Hindus, or Sikhs do not provoke similar criticisms.

We cannot answer all such critics individually, nor are we inclined to respond to personal attacks. However, the disagreements highlight three crucial issues about public Christian witness and collaboration in a pluralistic world that deserve, we believe, careful attention.

1. It is possible—indeed necessary—to interact in respectful fashion and to collaborate where appropriate with Roman Catholics and people of other faiths without changing or softening our theological convictions.

Some of our critics wonder if we have given up our historic Reformation theological positions and have moved towards accepting Catholic teachings on some topics, or if we think there are no longer major issues separating evangelical and Catholic teaching. This is not true. On the contrary, we have repeatedly affirmed the authority of the Bible and salvation by faith and grace alone, and we have not wavered from our adherence to the Westminster Confession of Faith ever since our ordination vows.

Leonardo De Chirico and Greg Pritchard, in a recent 12,000-word essay, expressed concern that one of us (Schirrmacher), the WEA's Associate Secretary General for Theological Concerns, could be permitting religious experience to take precedence over the Bible due to our friendship with Roman Catholics. Indeed, involvement in interfaith and intrafaith dialogue can create pressure to water down one's distinctive convictions in the name of mutual acceptance. However, we think there is ample evidence that we have resisted this threat.

We know that basing theological convictions on experience rather than the Bible has been a central mistake of liberal European Protestant theol-

*Dr **Thomas Schirrmacher** serves the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) as Associate Secretary General for Theological Concerns. Dr **Thomas K. Johnson** serves the WEA as Religious Freedom Ambassador to the Vatican.*

ogy for more than two hundred years. Over the last twenty years, we have frequently talked about how this problem tends to recur in almost every decade, leading to ever new varieties of liberal theology. For our entire careers we have worked exhaustively to renew Bible-based theology and ethics, with a view to biblical theology guiding spiritual experience and all of life.

With regard to Roman Catholic theology specifically, Schirrmacher teaches the same doctrine that he taught in his German translation of the Westminster Confession and his book, *Indulgences,* one of the sharpest criticisms of the Catholic view of salvation on the market.[1] These views have not changed. He is still one of the strongest critics of Roman Catholic theology, but honest criticism of Catholic theology must be accompanied by acknowledging when Catholics agree with us.

Our theology has not changed as a result of talking with Catholic, Orthodox, or Coptic leaders; if anything has changed, it is that we have intensified our commitment to a principle that both of us learned from Francis Schaeffer, and which Schaeffer learned from John 13:35. The unbelieving world may legitimately demand that we display visible love for other Christians as a proof of our discipleship. We believe that such a display of love among Christians includes interacting socially with leaders of other organizations that are called Christian and seeking to defend people who are persecuted because they are called Christians.

We can become close friends with the top leaders of other streams of Christianity, while still remaining critical of some themes in their theology; in fact, we believe that we are morally obligated to behave in such a way. Our ultimate intent in all such efforts is to convince our neighbours to believe the gospel through seeing the visible love of Christians for each other.

2. We have different perceptions of both the Roman Catholic Church and the needs of the global evangelical mission movement from those of some of our critics.

From our point of view, the greatest threats to New Testament teaching on justification and salvation by grace and faith within the evangelical movement are not coming from the Catholic Church but result from intra-Protestant or intra-evangelical problems. These problems include simple biblical illiteracy, some types of new interpretations of Paul, and teaching which minimizes or denies the holiness and justice of God, rendering juridical justification unnecessary.

In making this claim, we do not intend to lower the standards for teaching justification by grace. We do want to make sure that, amidst the concerns over the implications of Catholic–evangelical relations, we do not overlook other serious threats.

We believe that very few Catholic theologians today would contend openly that the teachings of the Council of Trent can be found in the New Testament. Meanwhile, the Pope and some Catholic spokespeople are teaching justification by faith. As Pope Francis

1 Thomas Schirrmacher, *Indulgences: A History of Theology and Reality of Indulgences and Purgatory*, 2nd ed. (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2012), available as a free download at https://www.bucer.org/fileadmin/_migrated/tx_org/Thomas_Schirrmacher__Indulgences__2nd_edition.pdf.

said in a sermon at Lund, Sweden, in October 2016:

> The spiritual experience of Martin Luther challenges us to remember that apart from God we can do nothing. 'How can I get a propitious God?' This is the question that haunted Luther. In effect, the question of a just relationship with God is the decisive question for our lives. As we know, Luther encountered that propitious God in the good news of Jesus, incarnate, dead and risen. With the concept of 'by grace alone', he reminds us that God always takes the initiative, prior to any human response, even as he seeks to awaken that response. The doctrine of justification thus expresses the essence of human existence before God.[2]

We are not lowering our confessional standards by noting the changing theological situation within the Catholic Church.

The serious theological problems separating us from the Catholic Church today are different from those faced by the Reformation. For example, Catholic teachings on Mary pose a greater obstacle to Protestants today than during Luther's time. And a Catholic–Protestant discussion on Mary has not been substantially launched, although some Catholic leaders have responded to the claim that doctrine and practice regarding Mary currently comprise the biggest obstacles to Catholic–evangelical agreement. (One of us published a meditation on the Virgin Birth, partly to have a text to contribute to such a discussion.)[3]

We perceive a huge degree of diversity within the Catholic Church, to the extent that some senior Catholic leaders may not know the convictions of other senior Catholic leaders, and documents emerging from the Catholic Church may even contain unresolved disagreements among different parties within the Catholic Church. At the same time, the Roman Catholic emphasis on the unity of the church makes it much more difficult for Catholics than for evangelicals to openly acknowledge their differences of opinion.

Therefore, it can be very hard to determine with certainty if a particular Catholic document is internally consistent, or if the authors of a Catholic statement fully acknowledge, even to themselves, the extent to which they may be departing from previous Catholic statements on that topic.

Though it is our perception that some Roman Catholics are teaching a proper doctrine of justification by faith alone, nevertheless, some Catholic priests and laity probably continue to teach doctrines of justification that are closer to the Council of Trent, contrary to the Reformation and the Bible. This is the diversity of the Catholic Church.

We must not overlook the fact that, under its established system of authority, leaders of the Catholic Church

2 Pope Francis, Common Ecumenical Prayer at the Lutheran Cathedral of Lund, 31 October 2016, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20161031_omelia-svezia-lund.html.

3 Thomas K. Johnson, 'Why Is the Virgin Birth So Important?' Martin Bucer Seminar 187 (2017), available as a free download at https://www.bucer.de/ressource/details/mbs-texte-187-2017-why-is-the-virgin-birth-so-important.html.

have no way to formally change the positions laid down in their historic documents. Given that situation, it is crucial to distinguish our dialogue with living representatives of the Catholic Church—and their position on many topics—from the official documents.

We are convinced that any change has to start on the level of theologians and church leaders or even the Pope himself. All the positive changes that resulted from the Second Vatican Council occurred because of Catholic theologians and bishops and finally the Pope changing their mind.

3. Many top Roman Catholic leaders are our allies on many theological topics (including justification by faith) and most social and ethical problems, even while many Roman Catholics are moving farther from our understanding of biblical truth on other theological topics.

We long to see the church of Jesus Christ grow in numbers and also in depth of discipleship. In our interactions with Roman Catholics, from local parishes all the way up to the Pope, we constantly encourage them to look to the Bible, though we also remind them of the historic Christian creeds. (Surprisingly, not all Roman Catholics seem to comprehend the Nicene Creed; some may not believe all of it.) And we welcome their response when they point us to the Bible and the historic creeds—which does happen sometimes! In all our interactions with Roman Catholics, we maintain the confessional and organizational integrity of the churches in which we are ordained ministers.

Amidst the severe and widespread persecution of Christians today, we consider it an important task of our department of the WEA to develop closer communication and cooperation with the institutions and multiple levels of leadership of the other streams of Christianity on this grave problem. This effort includes taking steps intended to reduce conflict among Christians.

Recently we have invested great effort in addressing one common accusation lodged against evangelicals: that our missionaries have been inappropriately engaging in 'sheep stealing', or proselytizing members of other churches. In an era marked by religiously motivated conflict and violence around the globe, it is necessary to listen carefully and peacefully when such accusations arise.

Such a response in itself can carry tremendous apologetic significance by demonstrating publicly that Christianity is not a violent faith. By such strategic steps we seek to promote the evangelical faith (never ceasing to be missionaries!) while also calling all forms of religious extremism (which result in the persecution of many Christians) into question morally and politically.

We believe that practising visible love toward other Christians includes listening to what other parts of Christendom have to say to us. To our overwhelming joy, we are discovering that many Roman Catholics now affirm justification by faith alone because they have read the Bible (and sometimes Martin Luther as well). This is tremendously good news! We want all our neighbours to hear and believe that gospel. This is our constantly affirmed, uncompromised, top priority in our dealings with all Christian and non-Christian faith traditions.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 69-79

Stopping the Leaking Bucket Syndrome

Mario Phillip

I. Introduction

Recently, many major financial institutions and corporations have been caught engaging in frauds of great magnitude. Marianne Jennings, in *The Seven Signs of Ethical Collapse*, explains that ethical collapse occurs gradually as committing moral wrongs becomes first palatable and eventually acceptable.[1]

Whether the early signs of ethical collapse were conspicuous and intentionally ignored or undetected, the ultimate result was great cost and public embarrassment. Spotting ethical failings is thus essential for any organization's continuity and viability.

Religious groups are not immune to ethical threats. For example, the pressure to maintain impressive membership and attendance numbers can cause them to allow advances in one area to overshadow the ills occurring elsewhere. Among evangelical churches, a strong evangelistic thrust can create a predisposition towards making unrealistic soul-winning demands a priority in place of a more cogent, balanced, relational approach to mission.

Unethical trends and practices, if not corrected, can lead to a qualitative membership meltdown even amidst apparent quantitative growth. And when the world exerts a stronger influence on the church than the church is exerting on the world, further deficiencies in the church's attempts to gain and retain new believers can result.

I believe that an ethical deficiency in many evangelical churches is partly responsible for the 'leaking bucket syndrome',[2] in which huge efforts are made to attract new members without a commensurate commitment to

1 Marianne M. Jennings, *The Seven Signs of Ethical Collapse: How to Spot Moral Meltdowns in Companies … Before It's Too Late* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006), xi.

2 G. T. Ng used this term in his presentation, 'The Leaky Bucket Syndrome and How to Fix It', at the Summit on Nurture and Retention, 19 November 2013, Silver Spring, MD.

Mario Phillip *(MA in Missiology, Andrews University, USA; MA in Philosophy, Tilak Maharashtra University, India; PhD Asia Adventist Seminary, Philippines) is an administrator for the Grenada Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists. He formerly served as an assistant professor of New Testament Biblical Studies and Missiology at the University of the Southern Caribbean. Dr Phillip is the author of* Postmodernism, Secularism and the Mission of Adventism: Adventism in Grenada as a Case Study *and authored a chapter for* Earthly Shadows, Heavenly Realities: Temple/Sanctuary Cosmology in Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Jewish Literature. *He is currently working on a commentary on 2 Thessalonians for the Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary series.*

effective discipling. The end result is a church that may be baptizing or welcoming relatively large numbers of new arrivals, yet experiencing a decline in active membership. Such unethical practices, if not corrected, can lead to qualitative membership meltdowns, even while the anthems of prolific growth are sung.

In 1979, Carl S. Dudley in his classic, *Where Have All Our People Gone*?, noted that mainline churches had experienced unprecedented membership loss since the 1950s while evangelicals and other Protestants, such as the Seventh-Day Adventists (SDA) and the Church of the Nazarene, increased by 35 and 40 percent, respectively.[3] Overall, the declines in mainline membership were less than the drops in attendance, implying that many people may have still considered themselves nominal members even though not attending church.[4]

The Adventists have enjoyed considerable growth, especially in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. But in recent years, the trend of mainline decline may have begun to spread into many SDA and other churches where the rolls are filled with persons who rarely or never attend but nonetheless consider themselves members.

The tendency amongst Generations Y and Z is to hold beliefs without much commitment. Could evangelistic approaches that de-emphasize personal involvement and relationship-building run the risk of inculcating belief without commitment?

II. The Typical Evangelistic Pattern and Its Problems

The SDA, like the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, emerged from the US spiritual awakenings of the nineteenth century with a strong missionary imperative. Between 1890 and 1960, Adventism became an international movement as its teachings surged in practically every corner of the globe.[5]

By 2009 the SDA was a truly worldwide denomination, with a membership of 200,000 or more in each of twenty-nine countries, mostly in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.[6] Today the SDA claims a total membership of over twenty million and has added one million new members a year since 2004, mostly in developing countries of the global south. According to the SDA General Conference's Office of Archives, Statistics and Research, as of 2014 the denomination was adding a new member to its ranks every 28.92 seconds and planting a new congregation every 4.35 hours.[7]

3 Carl S. Dudley, *Where Have All Our People Gone? New Choices for Old Churches* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1979), 4–6.

4 David Roozen, 'Denominations Grow and Individuals Join Congregations', in *Church and Denominational Growth: What Does (and Does Not) Cause Growth and Decline*, ed. David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993), 10.

5 George R. Knight, *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom: Adventist Mission Confronts the Challenges of Institutionalism and Secularization* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1995), 78.

6 Ronald Lawson and Ryan T. Cragun, 'Comparing the Geographic Distributions and Growth of Mormon, Adventists and Witnesses', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51, no. 2 (2012): 223.

7 Office of Archives, Statistics and Research,

This rapid growth, however, has been accompanied by substantial attrition. It has been claimed that the SDA loses 43 of every 100 persons who join the church.[8] This statistic points to a chronic problem present in many local congregations.

SDA-style disciple-making seems to be patterned after that of nineteenth-century American revivalist, Charles Finney, with a focus on a heightened private experience of Jesus.[9] Today, this approach is mediated through the musical hype that accompanies many evangelistic campaigns, with their grandiose paraphernalia designed to draw persons to Christ and the church.

Although such approaches have in fact won many genuine believers, they have often created an army of members driven by programs and goals rather than by an inherent commitment to becoming disciples and teaching others. In most cases, church membership is equated with being a disciple, rather than with the inculcation of deeper spiritual virtues as is evident in the lives of transformed passionate disciples.

Therefore, John R. W. Stott referred to much of contemporary outreach as 'superficial discipling' and others have commented that it merely makes the church quantitatively robust but qualitatively fickle.[10]

Unlike the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, whose members are personally obliged to take their message from house to house, Adventists typically rely predominantly on the public promulgation of biblical truths in small or large gatherings. Theoretically, the church encourages complete involvement in its mission, including personal witnessing, but in actuality, at best, the great majority of members are only passively involved.

We see the result of this tendency when evangelistic campaigns are held and the crowds are full of members, rather than their friends, neighbours, and other outsiders. Evangelism becomes seen as the purview of the evangelist and his team, but fruit cannot be harvested if it has not been prepared. In contrast, effective harvesting takes place as members make daily deposits in the social account of their religious experience, thereby allowing themselves to connect with others and share their faith. Reaping is a consequence of such investment.

In response to this problem, evangelism must return to its biblical foundation of disciple-making. Missiologists agree that the loss of members in mainstream denominations is symptomatic of a much deeper problem: a breakdown in relationships and a failure to make passionate disciples as a consequence of an insufficient social capital reservoir. This problem is directly related to a potential misinterpretation of our mission: are we called to grow the church through large numbers of baptisms, or are we called to make disciples?

The two goals are not mutually exclusive, but they are distinct from each other. Every disciple is a member of the family of God, but not every member is

---

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, March 24, 2014.

8 Ng, 'The Leaky Bucket Syndrome and How to Fix It'.

9 Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on the Revival of Religion* (New York: Leavitt, Lord, 1835), 91.

10 'Make Disciples, Not Just Converts', *Christianity Today* (25 October 1999): 28.

a disciple. A disciple is fully converted and demonstrates a commitment to the master's cause.

Can proper discipling contribute to improved retention of members? Is there any biblical paradigm as to what entails proper discipling? Can we maintain a balance by which the church grows quantitatively without compromising its core values or cheapening the grace of God to meet statistical goals? Can the church grow without losing its essential call to be a witness and voice of God in a world that is destitute of absolutes?

How does Adventism or Christianity in general maintain a balance between its mission and its image? How does the institution serve the mission, and not vice versa? In many cases, mass public evangelism has been encouraged as a means of striking that balance, but has it really proved to be the most effective way? Is it possible that Christians could lose sight of their mission while seemingly engaged in the mission? Is it possible that mission could become a means of supporting the structure, rather than the institution supporting the mission?

I believe that we must begin by linking discipling with membership-retention initiatives, because if these two are separated, the entire missional mandate is eviscerated.

III. The Church: God's Property

Since discipling takes place within the believing community, it is imperative to establish that the church is the property of God. The church is built on Jesus Christ, the foundational stone (Mt 16:18; 1 Pet 2:6–7). Moreover, the church has been given the assurance that its efforts in kingdom-building, though punctuated with insurgencies, will ultimately triumph.[11]

Those who belong to the church must see themselves as merely custodians entrusted by God with the responsibility of fulfilling his agenda to seek and save the lost (Lk 19:10). The work of church growth therefore consists primarily of God growing his church through human instrumentalities (1 Cor 3:6; Acts 20:28). Unless this is understood, we will attempt on our own to do what God alone can do—grow his church.

The origin of the New Testament church reflected God's continual initiative in establishing a people who would serve as his witness to all the nations of the earth (Is 49:6; 60:3). God's redemptive and restorative agenda is at the core of the church. The church not only owes its ontological existence to God, but relies on Christ for its future sustenance.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus regarded the church as *mou tēn ekklēsia*, 'my church', suggesting his ownership of and authority over it. In Greek, when the possessive lacks the article, as in the case of *mou*, 'my', this infers that the author intends to assert an innate quality of its object.[12]

11 Malcom B. Yarnell III, 'Upon This Rock I Will Build My Church: A Theological Exposition of Matthew 16:13–18', in *Upon This Rock: The Baptist Understanding of the Church*, ed. Jason G. Duesing, Thomas White, and Malcom B. Yarnell III (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010), 24–56.

12 A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1934), 685.

The church, therefore, has Christ's imprint within its DNA and no one else can claim its ownership. Christ not only owns the church but takes responsibility for its growth and protection. He says, 'I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' (Mt 16:18 KJV). The use of the future tense indicates that Christ foresaw the future growth, expansion and persecution of his church and, as a result, placed these events under his domain. Consequently, nothing can happen to the church in the present or future that God has not already resolved in eternity. In Revelation, the church is seen in both its militant and triumphant state, with both the saints and Christ as ultimate victors (Rev 3:11, 12).

IV. The Biblical Paradigm

Often, messages on evangelism highlight the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18–20. Although this commission underscores the disciples' commitment to Christ's mission until the end of time, when read by itself Matthew 28 does not paint a full picture of what the Great Commission entails.

One of the most pertinent biblical texts related to the Great Commission is John 15:16 (KJV): 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.'

This text broadens the focus from bearing fruit (which could be equated with quantitative growth) to fruit retention (or qualitative growth). Sustainable evangelism takes place only when the fruits remain. Evangelism, therefore, must include not just a plan to win new members to the faith but also a concomitant plan for retaining them. And the success of any evangelistic initiative should be gauged not just by the bearing of fruit (i.e. baptisms) but by its retention.

I long for the day when my denomination will stop reporting mere baptisms as evidence that 'fruit has been borne' and will instead report what has been truly added, the retained fruit. The process of retaining fruit is correlated with how it is produced.

When rightly done, evangelism will be less program-driven and more a relational initiative, in which those who are won become in fact disciples connected foremost to Christ, and by implication to those constituting the body of Christ. After all, people are unlikely to remain in a church where the social capital account is low. In other words, the dynamism of relationships among the church's members and their social networks of friendships within the community directly affect the connectivity that new believers experience when they enter the church upon accepting its teachings.

When Jesus called Peter and Andrew in Matthew 4:19, he said, 'Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men' (Young's Literal Translation). It is notable that Peter and Andrew, and likewise James and John, were called first in their capacity as brothers. Jesus was not trying to build family dynasties; rather, he understood that discipleship takes place most easily and effectively within a relational context.

Furthermore, the disciples were asked to become reproducers (fishers of men) only after making their own

resolution to follow Jesus. The use of the conjunction *kai*, 'and', in the Greek serves as a bridge connecting two elements that are meant to be understood as closely connected and of equal status.[13] This means that the call to be disciples of Jesus logically precedes their mandate to become fishers of men. According to Daniel Wallace, *kai* can sometimes add an emphatic element to that which precedes it, inferring that 'becoming fishers of men' should be understood as the central thrust in following Jesus.[14]

V. Discipleship: The Real Mandate

Recognizing the need for believers to work in partnership with God, Jesus gave the commission in Matthew 28:19–20 to 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age' (NAS). This commission is enveloped with the imperative *mathēteusate*, 'make disciples', and three participles—*poreuthentes*, 'go'; *baptizontes*, 'baptize'; and *didaskontes*, 'teach'.

This text can possibly be seen from different perspectives. If the first participle, *poreuthentes*, and those following it are predicative, then the imperative *mathēteusate* must be seen as substantive, thus implying the translation, 'Make disciples while going … baptizing … teaching.' On the other hand, if the imperative is seen as the predicate, the text can be read, 'When going, make disciples … when baptizing, make disciples … when teaching, make disciples'. In the first instance, disciple-making becomes the focus and the participles explain how it is to be done. In the second instance, disciple-making results from the actions inferred.

In the text, it appears that Matthew intercalated the imperative amidst the participles to highlight its prominence and importance in the commission. The author placed the imperative, *mathē teusate*, and the participle *poreuthentes* in the aorist tense as if to suggest that both are contemporaneous actions. In other words, making disciples cannot take place apart from going, and going leads to disciple making.

Conversely, the participles *baptizontes* and *didaskontes* are in the present tense, inferring that both are continuous initiatives, ongoing in the discipleship process. This implies that fulfilling the Great Commission can happen only when the church is actively involved in 'going' and not passively waiting. Moreover, baptizing and teaching are not events but processes, as is discipleship.

The commission in Matthew 28:19–20 suggests that the one being baptized must first be made a disciple, which essentially requires an inward transformation of loyalty and submission to Christ. Disciple-making, though it precedes baptism (which underscores its chronological importance in

13 Steven E. Runge, *A Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2010), 40.

14 Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics—Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999, 2002), 671.

the conversion sequence), also constitutes a continual process that begins with conversion and continues daily in the process of sanctification.[15]

Evangelism, therefore, cannot start with public evangelization and end with baptism. Rather, evangelism commences and ends with disciple-making, because the ultimate goal of evangelism is kingdom building, not institutional maintenance. The former aims at the multiplication of members' qualitative discipleship, whereas the latter targets the addition of members through increases in quantitative membership. Although addition and multiplication are not necessarily mutually exclusive ways of achieving meaningful growth, multiplication best contributes to kingdom building.

The imperative to make disciples underscores a fundamental premise in biblical evangelism: the focus is never on adding new members but rather on multiplying members. Only disciples can multiply; hence Jesus' resolute willingness to start the Christian movement with just twelve intimate disciples. He understood that it does not matter how many disciples you start with; if they are firmly committed and well trained, multiplication will inevitably take place.

The early Christian church, at its inception, had five hundred believers who witnessed the resurrection (1 Cor 15) and 120 meeting in the upper room at Pentecost (Acts 1:13–15). It later multiplied to nearly one million in seventy years.[16] This church crossed geographic frontiers as it swept through Judea, Samaria, Asia and Africa without the aid of technology and trained seminarians.

What contributed to the success of the early church? The answer is simple: members were not just added to the church. Rather, the church was engaged in multiplication through disciple-making.

The early church saw world evangelization as its mission, but the retention of believers was of equal importance. Likewise, the church today must see conservation as a priority and as an integral aspect of evangelizing the masses. Baptism is for those who believe in Jesus and are willing to demonstrate their belief through their full commitment and surrender. This required total surrender occurs only as someone becomes a disciple.

A failure to make disciples creates believers who are disoriented and eventually uninterested. A survey of SDA young people in their teens and early twenties indicated that 31 percent found church to be boring, 24 percent saw their faith as irrelevant to their careers and interests, and 20 percent saw God as missing from their personal experience of church. Most importantly, 36 percent confessed that they were not able to ask their most pressing life-questions in church.[17]

Young people who leave the church

15 For some of the characteristics of a disciple, see Kwabenor Donkor, 'Discipleship: Towards a Biblical Approach', paper presented at the Summit on Nurture and Retention, 18 November 2013, Silver Spring, MD.

16 David Barrett, ed., *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 3.

17 David Sedlacek, 'Why Young People Leave the Church', paper presented at the Summit on Nurture and Retention, 18 November 2013, Silver Spring, MD.

do so due to a lack of authentic interpersonal relationships that are nurtured and cultured within a community atmosphere of love and belonging. Older adults report the same problem. In one survey of SDA backsliders, the top six reasons given for leaving were all based on relationships. Not surprisingly, only 24 percent viewed their chances of reconnecting with the SDA as likely.[18] This seems to suggest that evangelism without a strong focus on developing quality, sustainable interpersonal relationships is counterproductive to assimilation and retention.

The method of membership assimilation has a corresponding impact on retention. In many places, public evangelism is the principal method of assimilating members into the church. There are some examples in Scripture of successful public evangelism, despite the apparent numerical failures of Noah (1 Pet 3:20) and Paul in Athens (Acts 17:34). Many of the successes of public evangelism in Scripture were the result of coordinated personal effort, with the public campaign merely reaping the seeds sown. On the first Pentecost, more than three thousand were baptized, but the preparatory work done by Jesus' ministry created the context for that great success.

One of the key differences between the declining churches of the 1950s and 1960s and the growth of evangelicals pertains to their approaches to evangelism. Mainline churches seldom went beyond their denominational walls in evangelism; as a result, they deprived themselves of the chance to breathe new life into their structure. Churches that are more willing to evangelize heterogeneously, i.e. reaching out to diverse groups of people, often experience exponential growth and energy within their ranks.[19]

Historically, this has been a strength of the SDA, as its evangelistic fervour has crossed boundaries, driven by a firm commitment to preparing the world for the eschatological closure of earth's history. This evangelistic ethos is laudable, but it must be accompanied by a refocusing on sustainable initiatives, not motivated solely by quantitative agendas.

To truly fulfil the Great Commission, we must take the following steps:

1. Disciple-making must become the focus, where the thrust is on multiplication and not mere addition. In discipleship, the focus is on producing reproducers, which ultimately leads to multiplication of more disciples.
2. Believers must become disciple-makers, through an ongoing process by which they are won, trained, and deployed.
3. It is easier to disciple a few rather than the masses. Unless new believers are trained to become individual disciples who are connected to Christ, they will never be inspired to make other disciples.

18 Anthony Kent, 'Why Did They Leave? Why Might They Come Back? Findings from a Global Survey of Seventh-day Adventists', paper presented at the Summit on Nurture and Retention, 18 November 2013, Silver Spring, MD.

19 C. Kirk Hadaway, 'Is Evangelistic Activity Related to Church Growth?' in *Church and Denominational Growth: What Does (and Does Not) Cause Growth and Decline*, ed. David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993), 172–4.

VI. Sustainable Church Growth

Sustainable church growth must be firmly rooted in a Christocentric framework, which includes the following concepts: Christ created human beings in his image (Jn 1:1), reconciled fallen humanity to himself (Rom 5:12), assumed human nature in order to redeem humanity (Phil 2:7–8), bore the penalty for sin on the cross (1 Cor 6:20), died and was risen to guarantee believers victory over death (1 Cor 15:56–57), makes provision of salvation available to all (Jn 14:6), commissioned his followers as disciples (Mt 28:19) and promised to return to consummate his kingdom of glory (1 Thes 5:4–10).[20]

Public evangelism is most successful when accompanied by concerted fieldwork, both preceding and following the public initiative.[21] This kind of work demands a systematic and consistent approach to evangelism, which goes beyond merely holding an event and involves an ongoing lifestyle. Public evangelism thus must complement and even augment relational evangelism, not replace it.

Interestingly, Adventist pioneer Ellen G. White had much more to say about evangelism being centred on relationships than about large public gatherings devoid of personal connections. She wrote, 'One of the most effective ways in which light can be communicated is by private personal effort. In the home circle, at your neighbor's fireside, at the bedside of the sick, in a quiet way you may read the Scriptures and speak a word for Jesus and the truth.'[22]

In another passage, White stated, 'The presentation of Christ in the family, by the fireside, and in small gatherings in private houses, is often more successful in winning souls to Jesus than are sermons delivered in the open air, to the moving throng, or even in halls and churches.'[23]

When sustainable evangelism occurs, church growth will be inevitable. A growing church will exhibit some or all of the following:

1. High institutional commitment of members
2. Emphasis on active involvement in evangelism
3. New churches with youthful zeal
4. Decline of congregational conservatism as the church endeavours to be more relevant to its context
5. Denominational loyalty prioritized above the actions of the local church[24]
6. A retention rate of new members higher than the attrition rate
7. A culture of caring, love and fellowship that characterizes relationships
8. Strong involvement of new believers in the services and programs of the church

20 Thom. S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology and Principles* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 1993), 101–9.

21 Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1995), 135, 136.

22 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1855), 428, 429.

23 Ellen White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1946), 437.

24 Hadaway and Roozen, 'Growth and Decline', 129–34.

9. Evangelism becoming less programmatic and more experiential, with a focus on each one reaching one

VII. A Practical Checklist for Disciple Making

A growing church is one in which service begins when the church program has ended. In other words, members are challenged to live out their faith daily beyond the contours of the church wall.

Based on my personal experience, I have developed a set of guidelines for wholesome and sustainable church-based evangelism, grounded in the biblical imperatives of kingdom growth and effective retention:

1. Disciple-making must be our priority, not merely adding members.
2. The church's culture should encourage all members to take personal responsibility for their spiritual growth.
3. New converts must be thoroughly instructed and consolidated in the faith.
4. A mentoring plan must be set up and the church must be responsive to the needs of new members.
5. Members are confirmed in their faith through witnessing and service.
6. Strict, firm, consistent behavioural standards are maintained.
7. Children and youth receive intentional caring.
8. High involvement is encouraged for most members, not just a select few.
9. A warm, caring welcome is given to new people.
10. A church that makes prayer its passion does better in attracting others and keeping them.
11. Worship must be lively, uplifting and creative.
12. Conscious effort is devoted to maintaining unity within the church and resolving conflict.
13. Get in touch with absent members promptly.
14. Help members who are facing pressing issues related to work, education or family.
15. Put the focus less on programs and committees and more on people and their needs.
16. Involving people actively in worship service contributes to their spirituality, growth and consolidation.
17. Service must begin when church ends!

VIII. Conclusion

A return to biblical evangelism necessitates a paradigm shift in the minds of those who are committed to fulfilling the church's mission. This entails a return to relational personal evangelism, which ought to complement and never be substituted by public evangelistic campaigns. Although public evangelism may account for the scores of people being baptized, most of those leaving the church are also recent converts from public evangelism, as opposed to those who were won through personal and relational evangelism. An emphasis on the latter will stop the high membership attrition that many churches are currently experiencing.

There will always be a place for public evangelism within the church, but in collaboration with intense personal work. Public evangelism should be

more of a reaping initiative, harvesting the results of the seeds sown by passionate disciples. Approaching public evangelism from this perspective eliminates the need for protracted public efforts and exorbitant financial obligations. Any church with an aggressive, eschatological evangelism agenda can counter the problem of high attrition currently faced by the Adventists and other churches.

This article calls for a healthy balance between missional ethos and evangelistic fervour. Evangelism must be done in a sustainable fashion so that the leaks from the bucket can be minimized or even stopped. There is a better way, a biblical way—focusing on making disciples through relational evangelism that eventually serves as a feeder to public reaping initiatives. Public evangelism may not even be needed to a great extent if the church, through its members, is engaged in soul winning on a consistent basis.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 80-96

Books Reviewed

Book Reviews

ERT (2018) 42:1, 80-83

Encyclopedia of Christian Education, 3 volumes

George Thomas Kurian and Mark A. Lamport, eds.

Lanham, MD, USA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015
ISBN 978-0-8108-8492-2
Hb., pp. xxxv + 1630 (xxx + 528, 529–1088, and 1089–1630, each vol. respectively), indices

Reviewed by Amos Yong, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, USA

Virtually no one reads a multi-volume encyclopaedia from front to back. But in this case, I did, because I am completing a book on Christian higher education and wanted to be sure I had a good overview of the state of the question.

I was not disappointed. The three volumes contain more than 1,200 articles by over 400 authors, who bring a wide range of educational, disciplinary and ecumenical perspectives. Historical, philosophical and theological articles on Christian education in its various guises are complemented by appendices with

statistics on education around the world and on the access of national populations to Scripture, libraries, literature and Christian broadcasting.

There is good reason for the commending forewords by J. I. Packer, Stanley Hauerwas, Richard J. Mouw, Ronald J. Sider and Will Willimon as this is in many respects a full-service encyclopaedia brimming with information.

For the typical user, who will not read the volumes' 1,600 pages sequentially as I did, the most important sections are not the bare-bones table of contents but the 'Index of Entries' (1591–1602) and the 'Lead-in Introductions' (1427–1518). The former provides in effect a detailed table of contents, listing each entry of the encyclopaedia in alphabetical order. Perusing this entry index provides an overview of the range of topics and will guide a user's more specific quests. As there is no other subject index, these twelve pages are the closest thing to a synoptic view of the work.

The 'Lead-in Introductions' are perhaps even more crucial in presenting the conceptual logic of the three volumes. Here, the mass of entries has been organized under nineteen major categories, each of which receives its own overview essay averaging four double-column pages in length. Most of them are authored by members of the twenty-person editorial advisory board or by one of the five consulting editors, and they include a list of resources and an accompanying alphabetized itemization of the relevant entries.

These introductory essays help readers to get a general overview of important overarching concepts and areas of scholarship within the field of Christian education, and to understand better how the two primary editors and their advisory board determined what needed to be covered and why. They also provide a *status quaestionis* for important segments in the field of Christian education, encompassing various historical periods, intellectual and ecclesial traditions, disciplinary and biographical vantage points, higher education, theological education and Christian libraries, among other areas.

An important essay on 'Christian Practice and Christian Education' not only highlights frequently neglected pedagogical dimensions but also opens up windows into important formative mechanisms in Christian life and education. This category contains more than fifty articles on topics related to the Christian educational endeavour. Their breadth indicates the innovativeness and comprehensiveness of the encyclopaedia, including (among others) art, celebration, dance, hospitality, imagination, music, poetry, service learning, storytelling and worship. An eighteen-page bibliography of sources published since 1995 concludes this important section.

Yet even with the help of this lead-in section, the encyclopaedia suffers from a range of technical problems. (An extended version of this review article, available on request from the editor, contains additional specific examples.) The main issue is that since the 'Index of Entries' and the lists in the lead-in articles are both alphabetized, these are helpful to researchers only if the articles are appropriately titled—which is often not the case. Here are a few cases where readers may struggle to find what they are looking for:

- Entries strangely alphabetized by an adjective or the wrong noun, such as 'Changing Paradigms in Theological Education', 'Spiritual Friendship' and 'Philosophy of Education, C. S. Lewis's'.

- Overlapping entries such as 'Education, Paul's Concept of' and 'Educational Mission, Paul's Concept of'. There is no rhyme or reason for these two separate articles, which have three others between them, including one on 'Educational Ministry of Jesus'.
- An article on 'Christian Education, 21st-Century Approaches to', buried in a string of 'Christian Education' articles and doubly hard to find since it is in the 'T' slot based on a transliteration of '21st'.
- An article on 'Science' and one on 'Hard Sciences'. The latter should have been called 'Sciences, Natural'. Interestingly, there is no article on 'Soft Sciences' (i.e. human or social sciences).
- An entry on 'Christian Scholarship in Politics', which would be hard to find by users logically looking under 'Politics' and which also raises the question of why there are no similar articles on Christian scholarship in other disciplines such as economics.
- Four article titles starting with 'Catholic' and three with 'Roman', which should have been standardized.
- An entry titled 'Reformation' and another titled 'Continental Reformation, Educational Principles of'.

The preceding are not isolated instances. The extent to which they permeate the encyclopaedia in various guises suggests that much of the valuable material in these articles may not be readily located by users who could benefit from it.

In addition, the conceptual relationship between apparently overlapping articles is often problematic. As one of many examples, there are a five-page article on 'Theological Education, Historical Outline of' and a one-page article on 'Theological Education, History of', written by two different scholars, only one of whom is a historian. There are also overlapping one-page articles on 'Theological Education, Objectives in' and 'Theological Education, Purpose of'. Conceivably, it could be argued that the pair provide complementary British and American points of view, but no explanation is given to help readers appreciate why separate entries address the same topics.

The unlikely combination of 'Confession as Christian Practice' and 'Confession, Historical Practices of' is noteworthy because it raises the question of why other practices are not also considered in historical perspective. Meanwhile, an entry on 'Preaching and Sermons in the Medieval Church' is not accompanied by similar articles on other time periods.

There are three separate entries on the *Didache*, which definitely feels like overkill, considering that there is only one article on Luther's *Small Catechism* and none on the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer.*

Coverage of individual countries is also notably uneven. There is an entry for South Sudan but none for either Sudan or North Sudan; an article on 'Sunday School in the United Kingdom' is the only country-related Sunday School entry. And the side-by-side entries on Sweden and Switzerland differ so starkly in length, detail and resource list that one wonders not only how decisions were made about what to incorporate, but also if a template was provided and to what degree the editors worked to ensure conformity.

I frequently wondered if perhaps the dual or multiple treatments were designed to offer a greater diversity of

voices on select topics, but nowhere do the editors enlighten readers as to the decision process for inclusion and exclusion.

There are also some substantive aberrations. I read the article on 'Lordship Salvation' three times to confirm that nothing in it was remotely related to Christian education. The entry on Neo-Thomism mischaracterizes it as theologically 'static' (as opposed to 'dialogical') and as pedagogically committed to memorization. The editors should have asked a Roman Catholic scholar rather than an evangelical to write this entry.

The resource list in the article on 'Science' leads off with the author's own book, from a young-earth creationist publisher. Although I am all for empowering voices from across the ideological spectrum, in this situation two science-related entries, by authors representing contrasting perspectives, might have been helpful.

Lastly, a series of stylistic and formatting eccentricities mar the experience of those who read more consistently and substantively through the three books. The list of resources, however short (in more than a few cases, only one item), appears at the end of many but not all entries. Some entries include footnotes and a resource list, some use footnotes only (with no list at the end), and some have neither. No explanation is provided for this discrepancy. Other articles contain author-date citations, but the list of references provided at the end of the article is incomplete.

From an aesthetic perspective, the articles are of drastically uneven length, ranging from one paragraph to ten pages. Happily, three ten-page, single-author articles are superb: 'Renaissance, Christianity and Science during the', 'Scholasticism and the Humanist Response' and 'Victorian Era, Christianity and Naturalism during the'. They are much more effective than the multiple-author section on 'Leadership Development', which is also chronologically disjointed because the alphabetical arrangement of sections causes the early church period (through the fourth century) to precede the discussion of Jesus and Paul.

Many readers encountering these difficulties may give up on their search before they figure out how to find what they are looking for. These anomalies are even more unexpected, given that the editors are veteran encyclopaedists with vast experience in putting together such reference works. Yet those who persevere through the initial difficulties will be thankful that Kurian and Lamport have produced this landmark work. Despite its deficiencies, *The Encyclopedia of Christian Education* certainly lives up to its title in providing a far-reaching introduction to the topic.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 83-85

Transformative Religious Experience: A Phenomenological Understanding of Religious Conversion

Joshua Iyadurai

Eugene, OR, USA: Pickwick, 2015
ISBN 978-1-6203-2746-3
Pb. + e-book, pp. xii + 265, bibliography, index (combined author + subject)

Reviewed by Jack Barentsen, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium

Joshua Iyadurai is not (yet) a well-known name in conversion studies. He was raised in a Protestant home, attending the Church of South India. He joined an evangelical student movement at

college, received his theological education at a leading evangelical seminary with a definite rationalistic approach, and advanced through higher education under Catholic scholars who opened his mind to other theological perspectives. Dr Iyadurai currently serves as director of Marina Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies in Religion, Chennai, India, and as guest lecturer at a nearby university.

Conversion studies represent a fascinating branch of practical theology and the study of lived religion. A biblical-theological approach to conversion provides crucial theological concepts and offers various examples of conversion in their ancient contexts. However, to understand conversion in multiple social, cultural and religious contexts today, thick empirical description and analysis of contemporary conversions are necessary.

Iyadurai contends that neither the pioneering work of William James (1902) in this field nor that of more recent scholars like Lewis Rambo (1993) adequately accounts for religious experience, or the divine-human encounter, in describing conversion. Moreover, few studies analyse the role of prayer, Bible reading and other religious practices in the conversion process, and none report on the hostilities often experienced after conversion.

As a result, Iyadurai determines to keep religious experience at the centre of his research, while paying close attention to these other dimensions in providing thick descriptions of conversion.

Following a phenomenological approach, Iyadurai interviewed dozens of Indian converts to Christianity from various other religions (mostly Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim). The converts come from a variety of economic and educational backgrounds and represent various castes. Iyadurai reports extensively on divine-human encounters, documenting not only the events reported but also the significance ascribed to them.

It is refreshing and moving to read the multiple accounts of visions, dreams, hearing God's voice, miracles, prayers and so-called mild experiences. Clearly God intervened and sought out the converts, or so they claim in the interviews. Often, the converts were ordinary, faithful followers of their own religion, not looking for a divine encounter; many of them experienced disruptive, life-changing events that caused doubt or sorrow.

The moment of divine-human encounter, called 'the Spark' by Iyadurai, occurs unexpectedly and without solicitation. Respondents report knowing instantly and with certainty that they have seen or heard Jesus. Almost instantaneously, the truth and security of their former religion vanishes. Even when people struggle with the implications, this moment of encounter casts such a different light—quite literally sometimes—that they simply cannot see their former religion any longer in the same frame of mind.

Iyadurai offers analytical chapters on how the Spark creates a 'mystical turning point' that somehow marks conversion. He finds that this turning point can be characterized as 'revelatory, conversational, and intimate, in addition to having the features that James identified: ineffable, noetic, transient, and passive' (154).

Iyadurai also describes the transforming effects of conversion: spiritual, psychological, behavioural, physical, social and economic. His last analytical chapter traces the various ways in which people experienced hostility and even great distress, often at the hands of their families or villages, because of their conversion.

Finally, Iyadurai offers his interdisciplinary Step Model of transformative religious experience: exposure, disenchantment, crunch (elsewhere labelled 'crisis'), pursuit and test, hostilities, participation and maturation. Although these steps cannot always be neatly divided—sometimes a step can even be skipped—generally converts pass more or less chronologically through these steps.

Iyadurai defines religious conversion as 'both a complex process and an event—the divine-human encounter—that triggers personal transformation, an ongoing process that is sustained by religious practices and socialization that leads to the integrated well-being of a person and a change of religious beliefs' (3).

I find the descriptions and the analysis challenging, since within more rationalistic forms of evangelical or Reformed theology, rational apologetics and Scriptural truths play such a primary role in theories of conversion that visions and miracles are somewhat distrusted. Yet the reports of these conversions and the resulting life-changes provide insights into the role of divine-human encounter that invite renewed theological reflection.

I find myself wondering what is the role of divine-human encounter in less dramatic conversions among those raised in a Christian environment. Nevertheless, this study deserves wide reading by theologians, church planters and others who are vitally concerned with conversion. Certainly, in the Western world, where institutional Christianity has long been on the decline, the church can grow only through conversion. This study helps us understand the process more faithfully.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 85-87

Managing Religion: The Management of Christian Religious and Faith-Based Organizations
Volume 1: *Internal Relationships;* Volume 2: *External Relationships*

Malcolm Torry

Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014
ISBN 978-1-1374-3926-0
Hb., pp. xx + 276 / xviii + 270, bibliog., index (Scripture, name, subject), figures

Reviewed by Jack Barentsen, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium

Dr Malcolm Torry is the vicar of Holy Trinity Church in Greenwich Peninsula, a dynamic and ever-changing district in downtown London. He also coordinates the Greenwich Peninsula Chaplaincy and lectures in the Social Policy Department of the London School of Economics.

In an earlier study, *Managing God's Business* (2005), Torry analysed the structure of congregations; he used this work as a foundation for the present two-volume study. In addition, he published *Bridgebuilders* (2010), which presents a history of workplace chaplaincy.

Torry offers a detailed study of congregations based on sociological categories from management and leadership studies; thus, the chapter titles don't read like a typical church growth or church leadership book. Yet each chapter reviews relevant Scripture passages and analyses an aspect of the empirical reality of the church as a religious organization. It then covers selected topics from secular management studies to shed light on congregational realities and their management, inasmuch as parallels between religious and secular categories can be sustained.

Torry defines a religious organization as 'an organization that has gathering for worship as its main purpose', i.e. a congregation. He sees this as the primary organizational form of the Christian religion, from which all other organizations, such as denominations or charities, developed (1:4–5). He views faith-based organizations, meanwhile, as ones with an external purpose and with important links to Christian religious organizations (congregations) and their beliefs and values.

The uniqueness of the congregation as an organization resides in its authority structure. The ultimate authority is God himself, from whom every subsidiary authority structure derives its legitimacy. The primary authority structure, Torry says, is hence external to the religious organization, unlike the internal authority present in the private, public and volunteer sectors (12ff).

This seems to be an overstatement, and Torry himself discusses the authority of the professional as externally located (1:204–7). Moreover, even businesses must respond to external authority structures, since they function within a thick web of government regulation and law. Perhaps one could more appropriately say that a religious organization's authority structure is rooted in the presence of God in the congregation as its final rule and authority.

Still, Torry's frequent discussion of authority structures within congregations (which can always be contested since every member is directly accountable to the external authority) and between congregations and other organizations is very insightful and merits close study. Indeed, the longest entries in the indexes of both books concern authority in all its shapes and forms.

Volume 1 discusses the management of internal relationships and contains chapters on story and culture, members versus volunteers, strategy and vision, group dynamics, governance and managing Christian clergy. Volume 2 discusses external relationships, including chapters on denominations, faith-based and mission organizations, ecumenical and multi-faith activity, church-state relationships, welfare and social justice engagement, and how churches engage with older and newer neighbourhoods.

This study is useful on several counts. First, each chapter collects a number of surprisingly relevant Scripture passages, showing that predecessors of the organizational categories are clearly recognizable in scriptural accounts. Second, each chapter ends with a helpful case study, over half of which come from Greenwich (reflecting the author's personal location and involvement) and almost all from the Church of England. It would be helpful to develop a broader base of case studies, perhaps via a companion website for the book.

Third, the study presents a different way to review various aspects of the church as an organization, and it provides useful links with management theory. However, I find it hard to follow Torry's proposed relationships between a particular aspect of congregations and particular theories from the field of secular management. Perhaps some more signposting might be helpful in carrying the reader along.

This two-volume work is unique in bringing together multiple aspects of organization and management, prefacing each one with a survey of relevant Scripture passages, and offering frequent connections with non-religious theories of organizational management. It is an accessible study of the nature and working of congregations as

religious organizations. Considering the price of €104 per hardback volume (as an e-book, €80 per volume), this study will mostly be held in libraries to serve as reference material for research, with excellent indexes of Scripture passages cited, authors and subjects.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 87-88

Heavenly Bodies: Incarnation, the Gaze, and Embodiment in Christian Theology

Ola Sigurdson

Grand Rapids, USA: Eerdmans, 2016
Translated from Swedish by Carl Olsen
ISBN 978-0-8028-7166-4
Hb., pp. 673, bibliog., index

Reviewed by Patrick Mitchel, Irish Bible Institute, Dublin, Ireland

What is the body? How has it been viewed within church history? Attempting to answer these apparently innocuous but actually complex questions theologically leads us into the area of somatology—theology of the body.

If we are not familiar with this word, that unfamiliarity in itself reveals how thinking about the body has tended to be a relatively marginal activity within Christian theology. Yet we are embodied beings. Our bodies are the medium by which we experience life, ourselves, others and God—and in which the Word becomes flesh.

Ola Sigurdson sets out to fill this gap in learned and ambitious style. His work is a monograph-length theological and philosophical account of human embodiment. It is the fruit of four years of research by one of Sweden's most productive and respected theologians. Sigurdson writes elegantly and is a pleasure to read.

The 49-page introduction gives a sense of the book's length and complexity. This is very much top-league academic theology. Sigurdson constructs a critical and self-critical theology of the body: critical in that he engages with different views of the body throughout church history; self-critical in that he is well aware of the dangers of assuming that our own thinking about the body is somehow normal or natural. In the background lies Nietzsche and his withering critique of Christianity as nihilistic, so perverted by hope in a utopian world to come that it denies the body, desire and even life itself.

The book's title summarizes Sigurdson's three-part approach to constructing a contemporary theology of the body in dialogue with historical voices. Each part is shaped around a particular question, which is answered in two, four and five chapters respectively.

Part 1 asks whether the incarnation involves a denial or at least a reduction of the human, in that the deity of Christ, doctrinally or functionally, has been allowed to dominate in way that has marginalised human nature.

Part 2 is on 'the Gaze'. The meaning of this term is not immediately obvious, making this section the most difficult to follow. Sigurdson refers to how humanity 'sees' the divine and the relationship between the visible and the invisible. His concern is to explore a theology that (in my words) allows humanity to be human and lets God be God. In other words, how does a human embodied person (finite) manage to behold the eternal (infinite) without reducing the infinite to the finite?

Part 3 asks how Christian theology has thought of human embodiment in light of

Christ's incarnation. Sigurdson believes that studying each of these themes in parallel will be mutually enriching and will lead to the development of an overarching theology of the body.

This broad description does not do justice to the abundant riches and remarkable scope of the book. The tone is ecumenical and irenic. The two chapters on Christology and the Incarnation, covering voices from Schleiermacher, Barth and Hick to feminist Christology, are masterful and worth the price of the book alone.

The four chapters on the Gaze develop a theology of sight (how we see God and the world and how this changes as cultures and philosophy shifts) unlike anything I have ever read. It is a demanding tour through modernity (which has reduced its gaze to only what is visible) and back to Jesus and the New Testament, to icons and how faith is a form of sight.

The chapters on embodiment examine how the body has been viewed philosophically; liturgically (e.g. within the Bible and by Christian practices like asceticism and mysticism); as an 'erotic body' (a theological account of desire and changing perceptions of the body, sexuality and gender); and as a 'grotesque body' (Christian perceptions of difference, suffering and pain tempered by the hope of a resurrection body). The concluding chapter of this section returns to Nietzsche's critique.

As one might expect with a work of this scale, there are no simple answers. Sigurdson develops broad proposals to recover a constructive somatology within a modern (Western) Christianity that has spiritualized the resurrection, individualized Christian faith, lost sight of the body within a Cartesian dualism between body and mind, and secularized sexuality. Although you may not agree with the direction of all his proposals, there is much here to learn from and think about. The book is an important resource for post-graduate students and teachers in theology and ethics.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 88-90

The Triumph of Faith: Why the World Is More Religious Than Ever

Rodney Stark

Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2015
ISBN 978-1-6101-7138-0
Hb., pp. 269

Reviewed by Tony Waters, California State University, Chico, USA, currently teaching at Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand

Modern sociologists claim that religious faith is fading. They point to survey statistics that show church membership and attendance declining, particularly since the 1950s. The number of people who do not acknowledge an affiliation with a major religion has grown to approach 30 percent in the US and Europe; it already includes virtually all Chinese.

Rodney Stark's response to this evidence is: so what? He claims that faith is triumphant around the world, despite predictions of its demise stretching back to the Enlightenment and Voltaire.

Why, Stark asks, does failure to go to church mean that society is secularizing any faster than it did when Thomas Jefferson predicted the United States would discard the Christian Trinity for secular Unitarianism by 1830? He also asserts that lack of formal religious membership (nominal or otherwise) does not mean that religious activity has declined or that rational secularism is triumphant; the same surveys that show formal

church membership declining also show ongoing belief in a range of supernatural phenomena—such as 82 percent of Americans believing in angels.

In presumably secular Japan, new cars are inevitably blessed by Shinto priests, while in secular Iceland great care is taken to route new roads away from the hills and rocks where the huldufolk (fairies and trolls) are spotted. Therefore, Stark says, the decline in church membership is not a victory for secularism at all; faith has simply shifted.

Stark finds this to be the case in country after country, albeit in many different ways. And in the overall picture, Christianity is growing rapidly because of gains in Africa and Asia. Islam and Hinduism are also enjoying revival and growth. Stark is less sure as to whether Buddhism is spreading, but perhaps that is only because his observations do not include Thailand, which has seen a recent boom in the erection of Buddhist temples and monuments.

The Triumph of Faith discusses religion's growing and changing role in Islamic countries: Europe, China, Japan, parts of Africa, India and the Four Asian Tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan). Stark finds plenty of evidence contrary to the Enlightenment's secularization thesis. In a book that relishes irony, he points out that everywhere the better educated are more likely to participate in formal religion, and that everywhere the young and unobservant become more religious with age.

Stark's clear, persuasive writing explains the data well, and in a fashion accessible at the undergraduate level. Much of his data for international comparisons come from the 2005–2013 international Gallup surveys, which include over one million respondents in at least 119 countries. The data are presented in readily interpretable tables, albeit without the detailed statistical analysis and description of survey methods found in formal sociology.

In this way, Stark focuses the reader on the averages and on the normative centres of religious behaviour and belief. He thus avoids the tendency to use illustrative outliers to describe trends, or the pitfall of over-generalizing from anecdotal information that drives discussion of secularization and religion in popular media. Such an approach should be required reading in comparative religion and philosophy classes.

I do wish that Stark had more fully discussed Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Japanese spirit-worship as ontological systems. Stark has a good grasp of the West, particularly his native United States. His description of how the 'mainstream' US Protestant denominations declined in the 1960s, and the rise of fundamental Baptists and Pentecostalism, is engaging and interesting. So is his account of how laypeople left the pews while holding onto the supernatural world of angels, yoga, astrology and Tarot cards.

Stark's analysis is strong here because of the quality of the US survey data and his own vast knowledge. It would have been good if similar data and analysis could have appeared in the chapters on other regions where similar trends have emerged, albeit with their own flavour. But that might have required another volume or two.

For me, the weakest part of the book was the discussion of extremism, particularly regarding Islam as practised in the Middle Eastern countries covered by the Gallup survey. Indonesia, the world's largest Islamic country, is left out, as is Hindu India, which also has the world's

third-largest Muslim population.

Stark correctly notes that the policies of Middle Eastern governments led to rapid declines in the religious pluralism found there, but he then conflates the government policies that caused this result with extremist movements like ISIS within Islam. His focus on Islamic extremism overlooks instances of Christian apocalyptic sects like the Lord's Resistance Army in central Africa, Jim Jones' cult in Guyana, and the Tai Ping in nineteenth-century China, as well as contemporary attacks by extremist Hindus and Buddhists on Muslims in places like Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

Evangelical Christians in particular should take heart from Stark's analysis. Evangelical Christianity has achieved the greatest gains in recent centuries after languishing for over a thousand years in Europe, parts of the Middle East, and Ethiopia. In historical terms, its spread has been very rapid.

Moreover, since 1500 the Christian message has spread into new continents, and in recent decades it has flourished across Africa, the continent with the largest number of Christians today. But even these large numbers, Stark reports, may be eclipsed in twenty or thirty years by the growth of Christianity in Communist-ruled China.

The Triumph of Faith relentlessly demonstrates that faith is an important element everywhere, and that the apostles of secularism who predicted the demise of religion were wrong. In many parts of the world, Christianity continues to lead the way in that triumph. Sceptic Nikita Khrushchev once said that 'we will bury' the West; instead, faith is burying the sceptical rationalists. Take that, Voltaire, Frederick the Great, Jefferson, Marx, Mao Zedong and Richard Dawkins!

ERT (2018) 42:1, 90-92

Saint Paul as Spiritual Director: An Analysis of the Concept of the Imitation of Paul with Implications and Applications to the Practice of Spiritual Direction

Victor A. Copan

Eugene, OR, USA: Wipf & Stock, 2007
ISBN 978-1-5563-5661-2
Pb., pp. xxvi + 296

Reviewed by H. H. Drake Williams III, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium and Tyndale Theological Seminary, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Spiritual direction is a popular topic in Christian spiritual formation today, but there is considerable confusion on the boundaries between spiritual direction, counselling and psychotherapy. Moreover, there are contradictions between the aims and models of Christian spiritual direction.

In *Saint Paul as Spiritual Director*, Victor Copan compares contemporary models with the idea of imitation found within Paul's writing. It is a unique contribution to the field and provides a helpful balance between practical application and biblical study.

In his introduction, Copan describes a personal struggle regarding his own spiritual growth. As he was living in Catholic Austria at the time, he consulted Catholic tradition along with his broadly evangelical background, discovering a variety of models characterized by different presuppositions and methods. This discovery led him into an in-depth study of the New Testament, and the practical concern that provided his initial motivation thoroughly informs the book.

Copan's survey of the field of spiritual direction sorts out the various terms frequently used (e.g. spiritual director, spiritual guide, mentor) and shows that there is currently no common understanding of the way that psychotherapy and spiritual direction relate to each other. He then examines the approaches to spiritual direction taken by leading writers: Thomas Merton, Kenneth Leech, Alan Jones, Morton Kelsey, William Barry, William Connolly, Tilden Edwards, Gerald May, Carolyn Gratton, Margaret Guenther and John Yungblut. The descriptions are numerous but short on detail, usually no more than a page; readers seeking a lengthier treatment of these authors will need to look elsewhere.

Next, Copan presents a methodology for understanding Paul as a spiritual director. He seeks to understand Paul as an individual, including his ethos, goals, desires and lifestyle. Copan examines Paul's relationship with those he addressed, as seen in his role, manner, activity, interaction and response. In doing so, he provides a reasonable model for sorting out the current confusion in the field.

In chapter 3, Copan considers Paul's use of the idea of imitation. He situates the idea within the Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds, helpfully categorizing several thousand references and exploring multiple Greek terms (*mimētēs*, *paradeigma*, *deigma*, *manthanō*, *eikōn*). Copan concludes that the concept of intentional imitation has emerged from a diverse background in Greco-Roman and Jewish thought and that it could refer to the emulation of particular character traits or of the thought, character, action and lifestyle of another (53).

Copan then turns to the Pauline corpus, thoroughly examining imitation in 1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, and Philippians. His exegesis is extensive, as he analyses the relevant passages and interacts well with various commentaries and scholarly articles.

It would have been helpful if Copan, rather than focusing so heavily on Jewish and Greco-Roman background, had also pursued the link between the Jesus tradition and imitation. Granted, our access to the historical Jesus is limited, but Paul's concept of imitation is linked directly to Christ (1 Cor 11:1; cf. Phil 2:5–11) and Jesus is the object of Paul's imitation.

Copan omits discussion of relevant passages in other letters usually ascribed to Paul (2 Thes 3:7, 9; Eph 5:1) as well as several passages that contain the idea of imitation without explicitly using the word (e.g. Rom 15:1–7; Gal 4:12). Covering all these passages, however, would have resulted in a much longer study.

In chapter 7, Copan provides a forty-page response to Elisabeth Castelli's post-structuralist view of Paul in her book, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (1991). He effectively zeroes in on Castelli's denial of the author's original intention and her interest in pursuing Michel Foucault's understanding of relational power. His reply is thorough and convincing, even though in the flow of the book, this material would have more suitably been placed as an appendix.

In an eight-page summary of Pauline imitation, Copan distinguishes its orientation (to Christ and the gospel) and its content (the totality of Paul's life, actions, virtues and lifestyle, or specific virtues embedded in a lifestyle that reflects the cross and the gospel message). Paul calls for imitation through various means: letters, memories of his time with the audience, through his representative or through a team.

In the final chapter, Copan applies his understanding of Pauline imitation to spiritual direction, in two main sections. First, he addresses Pauline imitation in the light of Paul's personality and apostolic role. He properly addresses the abuses that can emerge from Pauline imitation: copying, a desire for power, a strategy to enforce uniformity, and use of psychological techniques to effect foundational transformation.

Interestingly, Copan supports an idea opposed to what is found within therapeutic circles today: he urges the conformity of the Christian to Christ-centred activities rather than changing one's mind-set first. The call to imitation becomes in Copan's evaluation a legitimate pedagogical tool for genuine spiritual transformation.

In the chapter's second section, Copan focuses on the implications of Pauline imitation for spiritual direction. Warning against domineering models, he instead supports the model of a player-coach, servant or spiritual mother or father. Although his applications do not rule out all methods of psychological therapy, Copan provides thoughtful theological guidelines based on Paul's words and example.

Saint Paul as Spiritual Director provides a rare combination of in-depth biblical study in conjunction with practical application, as well as one of the few existing biblical or theological analyses of mentoring and spiritual direction. It is a valuable work not only for practitioners of spiritual direction, but also for anyone interested in Pauline studies or applied theology.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 92-93

To Alter Your World: Partnering with God To Rebirth our Communities

Michael Frost and Christiana Rice

Downers Grove, USA: InterVarsity, 2017
ISBN 978-0-8308-4137-0
Pb., pp. 238, notes

Reviewed by David Turnbull, Tabor College of Higher Education, South Australia

Christians, especially in postmodern Western contexts, are encountering the challenges of being a minority community. The derailment of their former social status heavily affects their capacity to have an influential voice in society and to contribute towards its transformation. Therefore, the goals, nature and media of Christian communication and engagement in society must be reviewed.

The temptation in community engagement under pressure is to confront and be combative rather than to negotiate and dialogue. Michael Frost and Christiana Rice present a healthy alternative.

The two authors come to their task with backgrounds of missional engagement on different continents, Frost in Sydney and Rice in San Francisco. Such authentic experience gives them the opportunity to be prophetic yet pragmatic and to be effective storytellers.

Frost and Rice encourage Christians to change their mind-set regarding community engagement and go beyond being formulaic in their response to the world around them. They provide a theologically grounded framework and vision based on partnering with God in rebuilding local communities through creative and innovative missional initiatives.

Their theological reflection undergirds the principles and practices identified,

affirming that God is continually on mission and active in the world. Frost and Rice deploy the image of a midwife, identifying five relevant practices associated with assisting women in childbirth and applying them to missional community engagement. The five practices include releasing agendas, shaping an environment and culture for the birth to happen, holding the space for the birth, being flexible and fearless, and living out a new narrative.

Frost and Rice suggest relevant, practical principles and practices to support participation in the transformation of communities. These include twelve faith lessons of faithful community engagement (61), six postures of missional communities (186–87), reflection on the change process, willingness to endure suffering, vulnerability and openness to change.

The book makes two significant contributions to clarifying our work in mission. First, the role of overseeing the nature of the birth environment leads to a stress on creative visions of place-crafting, especially within cities. This represents a step away from the traditional attractional model to being more incarnational; the vision stems from an understanding of God's vision for cities. Such activity contributes to shaping a community's public space in a collaborative manner with others so that God's vision for justice and creation can thrive. The book provides practical ways to facilitate this activity, particularly through careful observation, the identification of partners and intentionality in crafting places for social encounters.

Second, since transformation in communities comes through our work, it is important to deploy marketplace ministries—not a new concept but one that still requires an ongoing focus on the professional workforce of the church. Theological beliefs about work will aid in the equipping of people suited for marketplace ministries and capable of contributing towards community sustenance. The core idea is to ordain people to their job, service or vocation. Creative ways to implement this concept can be developed.

The book explores dimensions required of practitioners, but this aspect could have been developed further. Its focus tends to favour tasks more than character traits. Frost and Rice could have more fully explored issues of personal formation, especially with regard to developing the capacity to cross cultural borders and to thrive in the cultural journey associated with travelling beyond the Christian world into pluralistic, post-modern communities.

Other areas worthy of further discussion include the importance of contextualization and living with disruption and culture shock when yielding to God's ways, which often depart from the formulaic and individual ways of doing mission that we might prefer.

Nevertheless, this easy-to-read book has immense value. It could be used as a textbook globally and across cultural settings, as a strategic reference in helping us to incorporate missional and cultural dimensions into our preaching and teaching of Scripture.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 94-95

The Mission of the Church: Five Views in Conversation

Edited by Craig Ott

Grand Rapids, USA: Baker Academic Group, 2016
ISBN 978-0-8010-9740-9
Pb., pp. 181, bibliog., index

Reviewed by Peter Rios, PhD student, Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, USA

What happens when you get five theologians and missiologists to converse about the mission of the contemporary church? You get a thought-provoking, diverse dialogue that will leave you with an unquenchable thirst for more.

Craig Ott, the editor of this text, lays out in his introductory chapter the book's foundational question: how are we to understand the mission of the church? The first respondent is Stephen B. Bevans, a Roman Catholic priest and professor emeritus at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. Bevans asserts that Catholic missionary thinking, at least in the last fifteen years, has taken place through 'prophetic dialogue'. He admits that historically, this practice has not always avoided falling into error, but he argues that prophetic dialogue has given new life to missiologists worldwide and to the church holistically.

Next, Darrell L. Guder, mission author and professor emeritus at Princeton Theological Seminary, argues that the gospel is for all people, based on the fact that Abraham's blessing was intended for all nations. Guder emphasizes that the Great Commission crosses all cultural contexts, that Christianity is truly global, and that diversity is faithfully Christian. Guder calls his viewpoint a 'multicultural and translational approach'.

Ruth Padilla Deborst, from the Center for Interdisciplinary Theological Studies in Latin America, confronts readers with a solemn question: 'Does your faith make any contribution to the transformation of these realities, or does it simply teach you to wait passively for another world?' Padilla Deborst contributes from the perspective of radical evangelicalism, which is by no means a passive faith or one that concentrates simply on proclaiming the gospel. Rather, this gospel needs feet and hands—i.e. the body of Christ serving people as Jesus did. She summarizes her view as an 'integral transformation approach: being, doing, and saying'.

Edward Rommen, rector of an Orthodox church in North Carolina and adjunct professor at Duke Divinity School, brings a distinctively Orthodox 'sacramental vision approach' to the conversation, emphasizing the celebration of the Eucharist as the primary focus of the church's mission. According to Rommen, the church needs to invite those who do not know Christ in a 'come and see' fashion, so that they do not simply receive information but experience a live and personal encounter with the risen Lord, Christ Jesus.

Finally, Ed Stetzer, executive director of Lifeway Research and adjunct professor at several seminaries, affirms the traditional proclaiming power of the gospel of Jesus and the Kingdom of God. His 'evangelical kingdom community approach' puts evangelism at the forefront, because without it the church is not in mission. Stetzer declares; 'Holiness is separation from sin but not separation from sinners.' Therefore, the church, in order to be missional, needs a passion for the lost and must act in boldness through its global witness.

What makes this text so rich is that all

five authors then react to the other four. As a result, the reader not only benefits from five diverse viewpoints on ecclesiology, theology and missiology but also becomes privy to how each participant interpreted, learned from and responded to the others.

In this way, the book can serve as the beginning of a constructive global conversation. Although it includes only one female or majority-world perspective (which Ott admits is a limitation), this sharing of ideas can open doors for others to engage in prophetic dialogue about what God is doing in their midst.

I highly recommend this book for those involved in studying, teaching or practising mission at all levels, because it will challenge and broaden your concept of what the church's mission should be.

ERT (2018) 42:1, 95-96

The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision

Gerald Hiestand and Todd A. Wilson

Grand Rapids, USA: Zondervan, 2015
ISBN 978-0-3105-1682-8
Pb., pp. 187, index

Reviewed by Christopher M. Date, MA student, Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, USA

I had unwittingly accepted a lie. So might say Gerald Hiestand and Todd Wilson, authors of *The Pastor Theologian*, were they to discover that I did not seriously consider entering the pastorate until I read their book.

Until then, I had thought I must choose between pursuing my theological interests in the academy and giving them up for the pastorate. According to Hiestand and Wilson, this is a false dilemma—one of which I am quite happy to be disabused.

Both authors have years of experience as pastors and currently serve in that role; they are also accomplished scholars. Hiestand holds degrees in theology and in Christian thought and has published several books and peer-reviewed journal articles; Wilson earned a PhD in New Testament at Cambridge and has been published by such academic giants as Mohr-Siebeck, Kregel, and IVP Academic.

Thus, Hiestand and Wilson are particularly qualified to write *The Pastor Theologian*, in which they contend that they are members of what has become a lamentably 'rare species'. Historically, the pastorate was a vocation to which Christian intellectuals were deemed especially suited. From Irenaeus and Augustine to Zwingli and Calvin, 'the pastor theologian has had a robust and storied place in the history of God's people.'

Sadly, however, a cultural shift during the last quarter-century 'led to the tragic divorce between the theologian and the pastor', with theologians increasingly choosing the academy over the pulpit. Consequently, the church has become theologically anaemic and morally lax, while theology suffers from ecclesial anaemia in the ivory tower.

Hiestand and Wilson therefore call upon the church to recover an ancient vision. With the Spirit distributing his gifts as he chooses, there is certainly room for pastors who are not uniquely gifted in theology, and for scholastic theologians not called to the pastorate. These, however, are not in short supply. Meanwhile, the church's mission is stymied by the lack of pastor theologians, whose return from obscurity would nurture theological integrity and ethical maturity in the pews while bringing a much-needed

pastoral voice into the theological conversation.

The Pastor Theologian is a convicting read for those who have believed they must choose either to 'subdue their intellectual aspirations for a career in the church or lay aside their pastoral desires for a career in the academy'. Readers who have reluctantly chosen the latter path are advised in chapter 4 that their decision risks contributing to the moral bankruptcy exhibited by many Christians and Western culture at large, since that deficiency stems partially from a dearth of theological knowledge in the pews and in society.

For other readers who have instead chosen the pastorate over the academy, chapter 5 may be their wake-up call. I have defended the seminary against the charge that it fails to address real-life concerns. Yet even though this charge may be overstated, Hiestand and Wilson demonstrate how theology in the academy faces 'institutional pressures and vocational priorities that may have little direct relevance to the church', and how it is prompted by ideological hostility to focus on *defending* evangelical theology rather than on *developing* it.

Along with these convicting messages, *The Pastor Theologian* also offers hope and encouragement, painting a realistic and compelling picture of the role of the contemporary pastor-theologian. To readers inspired by this calling, Hiestand and Wilson offer strategies for overcoming challenges, as well as inspiring case studies of successful pastor theologians, making their vision appear eminently achievable.

The book is not without weaknesses. Its references to male pastors and theologians only, and its lack of advice specifically for female ones, may limit its impact in egalitarian circles. Written for a broadly Christian audience, it lacks details that might have been helpful for readers in specific denominational structures. But these gaps can be filled by future authors who, inspired by Hiestand and Wilson, can build upon their work, commending their vision both to an expanded audience including women and to narrower ones like Lutherans, Presbyterians and Baptists.

I have not abandoned my pursuit of the academy, but I no longer embrace the lie that I must choose it over the pastorate. My future vision is refreshingly less clear, and whichever vocation I pursue in the end, I join Hiestand and Wilson in praying that the Lord 'would raise up a new generation of pastors who are uniquely capable of intellectually navigating the rich textures of [his] world'.