

The World Evangelical Alliance's Journal
of Theology and Contemporary Application

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Editor's Introduction: Holistic Mission

As I write this introduction, I am newly returned from an inspiring week at the World Evangelical Alliance's 2019 General Assembly (its first in eleven years), held on November 7–12, 2019 in Bogor, Indonesia, an hour south of Jakarta. This issue of the *Evangelical Review of Theology* contains (on pages 72–87) a two-page overview of the General Assembly, WEA Secretary General Efraim Tenderso's 'State of the Movement' speech, and a message delivered by Thomas K. Johnson of the WEA Theological Commission.

The main emphasis of the General Assembly was on holistic, intergenerational disciple making. Suitably, the other five articles in this issue insightfully cover five important aspects of fulfilling the Great Commission in a holistic manner: theological education, Bible translation, social reconciliation, the effect of prayer, and supporting the suffering church.

Seth Nelson probes what it would take for theological education to prepare pastors with a thoroughly mission-focused mindset, rather than a primary preoccupation with serving those already in the church. He derives seven principles of 'missional' education and assesses how we are doing on each item.

Ralph Siebert of Wycliffe Associates, who has been involved in Bible translation efforts for nearly thirty years, describes the recent revolution in Bible translation methods and calls on local churches, with support from national evangelical alliances, to take a greater role in providing the Bible to

all people in their own language.

Muhati Allan Isiaho, a theological programme director in Burundi, reflects on the problems of ethnic strife plaguing that country and many others and masterfully derives a theology of reconciliation, with clear practical application, from the implications of Christ's atonement.

Christopher Woznicki's article may look strange at first, because it is more analytical philosophy than theology. Don't be scared off. He carefully addresses a very common spiritual problem: people struggle to pray because they think God has already decided what he is going to do anyhow. As Woznicki explains colourfully, he has often heard people in Reformed churches (which tend to strongly emphasize God's sovereignty) encourage others to pray as though Reformed theology was not true! Woznicki's article aims to solve this problem.

Thomas K. Johnson discusses the difference between the experience of Christians dealing with friendly ('Romans 13') and unfriendly ('Revelation 13') governments and highlights the responsibility of all Christians to pray for and aid the persecuted church.

I hope you will read all five articles, along with the messages from the WEA General Assembly, and share them widely. Each article presented here could have a transforming impact on how Christians think about and carry out holistic mission.

Happy reading!

—Bruce Barron, Editor

Towards a Missionally Integrative, Evangelical Theological Education

Seth J. Nelson

I. Introduction

In 1989, the renowned missiologist and churchman Bishop J. E. Lesslie Newbigin lamented, 'It seems clear that ministerial training as currently conceived is still far too much training for pastoral care of the existing congregation, and far too little oriented towards the missionary calling to claim the whole of public life for Christ and his kingdom.'¹ To what extent is Newbigin's lamentation true of theological education globally thirty years later? How have evangelical seminaries responded to the call to recover a biblical, missional theology over the last twenty years?² Have they reconceived their institutional missions and practices for training leaders to participate actively in the *missio Dei*?

In this article, I explore how a gos-

pel-centred, missional theology could serve as both the integrating point and motivation for evangelical theological education³ around the world. I will first discuss the contours of an evangelical, missional theology within the context of the larger *missio Dei* movement that emerged in the twentieth century. Then, to establish the current need for missionally integrated theological education, I will present two related historical surveys. In the first survey, I discuss how the church in the West has conceived of pastoral leadership in different paradigms and suggest what a missional pastoral paradigm might look like today. In the second, I interact with the ongoing debate in the West over the unity, fragmentation and purposes of theological education. On this basis, I propose an integrated model, adapting from Darren Cronshaw's work,⁴

1 Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 231.

2 For example, Darrell Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) became the seminal work that sparked the emergence and development of the 'missional church movement' in the United States.

3 Although I recognize that theological education can encompass all formal, non-formal, and informal study of God, in this article I use the term to refer to formal, post-baccalaureate education in seminaries and divinity schools.

4 Darren Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education and Missional Spirituality', *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 9, no.

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for evangelical, missional theological education. Based on this model and the review of the missional literature, I suggest seven commitments and practices which a theological school could employ to become more missionally integrative. I conclude by offering my perspective on the state of evangelical theological education concerning mission, as a way to encourage schools towards deeper missional impact.

II. The Contours of an Evangelical, Missional Theology

If a gospel-centred, missional theology could serve as both the integrating point and motivation for evangelical theological education, what might be the contours of such a theology? Before answering this question, I will first sketch the main contours of the larger missional conversation and situate it within what has become the consensus view of the *missio Dei*.

1. Missio Dei and Missional Theology at Large

In 1998 Darrell Guder and his colleagues, in *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending Church in North America*, coined the term ‘missional’⁵ to express the integration between missiology and ecclesiology and affirm that mission is essential to the church’s very being, not something the church does.

Guder and his colleagues ignited a

missional conversation by applying the seminal work of theologians and missiologists Karl Barth, Lesslie Newbigin and David Bosch. Bosch’s oft-quoted statement about the emerging ecumenical consensus on mission summarizes the situation well:

Mission was understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It was thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology. The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit was expanded to include yet another ‘movement’: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.⁶

This understanding of the *missio Dei* represented an important development within the larger Protestant missions movement in the mid-twentieth century because it provided a justification for world missions work rooted in the Trinitarian nature of God.⁷ Providing a robust foundation, Barth, Newbigin and Bosch confessed that God is a missionary God and that the church is missionary by its very nature. Thus, in the oft-quoted words of Jürgen Moltmann, ‘It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfil in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.’⁸

⁶ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th anniversary edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 399.

⁷ Thomas Schirrmacher, *Missio Dei: God’s Missional Nature*, ed. Thomas Johnson, trans. Richard McClary (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2017).

⁸ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Pow-*

1 (2012): 9–27.

⁵ Darrell Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 11.

Since the World Missionary Conference held in Willigen in 1952, Protestant Christianity (both mainline and evangelical), Roman Catholic, and Eastern Orthodox have embraced the understanding of mission as *missio Dei*.⁹ Evangelical Protestants, with their high view of scriptural authority, recognized and were persuaded by the overwhelming biblical evidence for God's singular mission.¹⁰ From creation to new creation, God is on a mission to 'unite all things in him [i.e. Christ], things in heaven and things on earth' (Eph 1:10) and 'through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross' (Col 1:21). The church partners with God in his mission by the commission of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:21–23).

Within the missional movement, the church partners with God in mission by proclaiming and demonstrating the kingdom of Christ to the world. God's reign, begun in Jesus Christ's life, death, resurrection and ascension (and which will be complete at Christ's return), bears upon all aspects of human life and calls all things towards reconciliation in Christ Jesus (Col 1:21). Newbigin repeatedly emphasized that 'the church is the sign, instrument, and foretaste of the reign of God.'¹¹ He argued, 'The church is a movement launched into the life of the world to bear in its own life God's gift of peace for the life of the world. It

is sent, therefore, not only to proclaim the kingdom but to bear in its own life the presence of the kingdom.'¹² Thus, preaching the gospel of the kingdom (e.g. Mk 1:14–15) and demonstrating Christ's healing presence, through deeds of mercy and acts of justice in the world, become equal priorities for the church's mission.

Newbigin went farther by applying this kingdom-oriented theology to the state of the West in the late twentieth century. He asked, 'What would be involved in a missionary encounter between the gospel and this whole way of perceiving, thinking, and living that we call "modern Western culture"?'¹³ Behind his question resides his perception that due to Enlightenment influences, Western culture had become increasingly post-Christian. The era of Christendom was over. The church could no longer assume that Christianity, much less the gospel of Christ, was part of the main cultural narrative. Therefore, in a post-Christian West, the church found itself in a similar situation as it did during the first three centuries of the church before Constantine: it was a missionary, counter-cultural, messianic community once again. Further, this movement has also exposed and critiqued the ways Western culture, a Christendom mentality and modernistic thinking have co-opted theology, especially ecclesiology.¹⁴

er of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology (London: SCM Press, 1977), 64.

⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 400.

¹⁰ Schirmacher, *Missio Dei*.

¹¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

¹² Newbigin, *The Open Secret*, 49.

¹³ Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 1.

¹⁴ E.g. Guder, *Called to Witness*; Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013).

2. An Evangelical, Gospel-Centred Missional Theology

Since the missional conversation driven by the *missio Dei* consensus encompasses a wide swath of Christian traditions, what additional contours especially characterize an evangelical missional theology? The evangelical stream of the missional conversation includes all the contours I have described above and also affirms at least three other commitments, to the primacy of the church's role in God's mission, Christocentricity, and the logical priority of gospel proclamation.

First, an evangelical missional theology values the church as the primary vehicle for God's mission in the world. The missional movement has rightly recognized that God's mission to redeem the world through Christ remains prior to the church. Further, missional authors call the local church to join in God's mission by discerning what God is doing in the world around them and what he wants to do (through that church) for local mission.¹⁵ However, while appreciating these commitments, an evangelical missional theology also affirms the church as the primary vehicle for God's mission (Mt 16:18; Col 1:18–20). Thus, evangelicals hold together both Moltmann and St. Cyprian (d. 258 AD). Moltmann: 'It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the

church.'¹⁶ Cyprian: 'No one can have God as Father who does not have the church as Mother'.¹⁷

Second, an evangelical missional theology is both trinitarian and Christocentric. A thoroughgoing trinitarian theology remains central to the *missio Dei*. Essential to God's very being is a sentness in love—the Son is eternally generated by the Father and the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and Son. The love within the trinitarian persons overflows into God's acts of creation and redemption. In redemption, the Father sends the Son, and together they send the Spirit. However, an evangelical missional theology will always seek to hold trinitarianism and Christocentricity together, for the Father can be known only through faith in the Son (Mt 11:27; Jn 1:18), and the Holy Spirit's role always points to and glorifies the Son (Jn 16:13–15). Therefore, the *missio Dei* remains fully trinitarian but focused in and through Jesus Christ, requires the proclamation of Jesus as Lord over all, and calls all people to personal repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

Third, consistent with Christocentricity, an evangelical missional theology both proclaims in word and demonstrates in deed the kingdom of Christ to the world, but it logically prioritizes the proclamation of the gospel (Lk 4:42–43).¹⁸ This convic-

¹⁵ E.g. Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*.

¹⁶ Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 64.

¹⁷ Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church*, in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1885), vol. 5, <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.html>, 979–95.

¹⁸ David Gustafson, *Gospel Witness: Evangelism in Word and Deed* (Grand Rapids: Eer-

tion does not mean that evangelism has a temporal priority over social responsibility. Rather, it affirms that individuals can find eternal salvation only through personal faith in Jesus Christ, while at the same time affirming the integral relation of social responsibility to the gospel.¹⁹ The Lausanne Movement's 'Cape Town Commitment' expresses this well, using the language of 'integral mission':

Integral mission is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. If we ignore the world, we betray the Word of God which sends us out to serve the world. If we ignore the Word of God, we have nothing to bring to the world.²⁰

III. Pastoral Paradigms in Historical and Cultural Context

Having outlined the contours of an

evangelical, missional theology that could serve as both the integrating point and motivation for evangelical theological education, I will now take a step back and explore the history of pastoral paradigms in the Western Protestant church. Because theological schools educate towards some paradigm of the ideal pastor, this historical investigation will help to situate the present state of pastoral education, while exposing deficiencies in the previous paradigms and demonstrating the need for a new missional pastoral paradigm.

Alan Roxburgh²¹ suggests an historical sequence of four pastoral paradigms informed by the cultural and social location of the church in the West, calling them apostle, priest, pedagogue and professional. According to Roxburgh, in the early church, pastoral leaders operated from an apostolic identity, and their goal was to 'enable the church to carry out its fundamentally missiological purpose in the world: to announce and demonstrate the new creation in Jesus Christ'.²² Pastoral leaders sought to equip the people of God to live as a communal witness to Jesus Christ in word and deed. Therefore, in the apostolic paradigm, pastors *served* the church *for the salvation of the world*.

In the era of Western Christendom, from Constantine to the Reformation, an apostolic paradigm gave way to a priestly paradigm. After the Edict of Milan (313 AD), which decriminalized Christianity and led to the 'Christianization' of the Roman Empire under

mans, 2019).

¹⁹ Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and World Evangelical Fellowship, 'Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment', Lausanne Occasional Paper 21 (1982), <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-21>.

²⁰ Lausanne Movement, *The Cape Town Commitment: A Declaration of Belief and a Call to Action* (2011), <https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment#p2-6,1.10.B>.

²¹ Alan Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership: Equipping God's People for Mission', in Guder, *Missional Church*, 183–220.

²² Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership', 185.

Constantine, the church and state became intermingled so that to be a citizen was to be a Christian. 'Membership in the church through baptism was concomitant with citizenship in the state.'²³ Thus, pastoral leadership became focused solely on shepherding and dispensing the means of grace to a static people of God in a particular locale within the empire. In this historical-cultural context, priests did not need to serve apostolically and missionally. Mission concerned only the 'pagans' yet to be converted outside the Roman Empire. Thus, in the priestly paradigm, pastors *tended* the church *for the salvation of the church*.

With the emergence of Protestantism in the Reformation, the priestly paradigm shifted to a pedagogical model.²⁴ The magisterial Reformers took up significant ecclesiastical reforms related to 'pure doctrine, pure sacramental administration, and pure discipline', but they never questioned or challenged the Christendom assumptions of 'the church as static server of religious grace and [its] power within a Christian society.'²⁵ Although the Reformers' doctrine of the priesthood of all believers dissolved in some ways the sacred-secular divide and the priest-laity distinction, a separate clergy class still continued. Roxburgh suggests that within Protestantism the pastoral paradigm shifted from Roman priests to Reformed 'pedagogues', in which "Teach-

ing and preaching, oversight of right doctrine, and proper administration of the sacraments became the normative forms of Protestant leadership.'²⁶ In sum, in the pedagogical paradigm pastors *taught* the church *for the salvation of the church*. This paradigm reigned in Western Protestantism from the Reformation period through the nineteenth century and implicitly directed how theological education prepared pastors for ministry.

In the West by the end of the nineteenth century, this third paradigm would give way to a fourth: the pastor as professional.²⁷ Enlightenment rationalism challenged Christian belief and the church's relation to society. 'Theologians like Friedrich Schleiermacher attempted to sustain theology's place in the academy by proposing a new model based on the scientific study of religion's role in culture.'²⁸ So, for example, as the first denominational seminaries were born in the United States in the early to mid-1800s, they responded to Enlightenment thought by increasing disciplinary specialization (e.g. the fourfold theological encyclopaedia of Bible, theology, church history and pastoral theology) and professionalization, akin to similar developments in medicine and law. 'This shift essentially placed the training and functioning of church leadership in a new setting organized or controlled by Enlightenment categories of competency', such that 'seminary training remains firmly committed to

23 Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership', 192.

24 Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership', 193.

25 Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership', 193. In contrast to the magisterial Reformers, radical Reformers created alternative ecclesiological conceptions of the church in relation to the state, but their views were never in the majority.

26 Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership', 193.

27 Glenn Miller, *Piety and Profession: American Protestant Theological Education, 1870-1970* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

28 Roxburgh, 'Missional Leadership', 194.

the model of preparing a professional clergy for a set of tasks considered to be “ministry”.²⁹ While Protestantism continued to affirm the priesthood of believers, the professional paradigm maintained a Christendom mentality and continued the bifurcation between ordained clergy and laity. Professional clergy did ministry to gather their people and grow their churches.

More recently, as Roxburgh argues, professionalism can be observed in how pastors are trained as counselors, managers and technicians ‘focused on the provisioning of personal, individual needs and technical management of growth, market, and success so admired in modern culture’.³⁰ Thus, in the professional paradigm, pastors *lead and manage* the church *for the salvation of the church*.

However, with the demise of Christendom in the West and the transition from modernity to late or post-modernity, the deficiencies of the professional model of pastoral leadership, along with those of the previous two paradigms, can be clearly seen. The church and the world need a new missional paradigm for pastoral leadership that is thoroughly biblical, returns to its apostolic roots, but also respects aspects of the pedagogical and professional paradigms which resonate with biblical teaching about pastoral ministry.

In a missional paradigm, pastors *equip* the church to *deploy* the church *for the salvation of the world*. A missional pastor teaches, leads and manages a congregation not to gather

and tend to a static people of God, but to equip an active people to be sent out into the world as a communal witness to Jesus Christ’s reign. A missional pastor is not just a pastor-teacher but also exercises apostolic, prophetic and evangelistic functions (Eph 4:11).³¹ As Newbigin puts it, the pastor is ‘to lead the congregation as a whole in a mission to the community as a whole, to claim its whole public life, as well as the lives of all its people, for God’s rule’.³²

But how can theological schools train such ministers? What kind of missionally integrated model could seminaries embrace to form such leaders?

IV. Towards an Evangelical, Missionally Integrative Model for Theological Education

I contend that a missional model of theological education has progressively emerged from within theological institutions themselves and can provide unity and purpose for such institutions. Although many important voices could be considered in the development of a missional model, I will draw on five: Edward Farley, David Kelsey, Robert Banks, Brian Edgar and Darren Cronshaw.³³

³¹ In suggesting that missional pastors exercise apostolic and prophetic functions, I do not intend to imply a position regarding the continuing use of the miraculous sign gifts of the Holy Spirit.

³² Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 234.

³³ Farley, *Theologia*; David Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological*

²⁹ Roxburgh, ‘Missional Leadership’, 195. Cf. Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

³⁰ Roxburgh, ‘Missional Leadership’, 196.

The publication in 1983 of Farley's *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* inaugurated the contemporary debate over the unity, fragmentation and purposes of theological education. Farley wrote at a time when the professional clergy paradigm had reigned for about one hundred years and its deficiencies were becoming apparent. Farley opined that theological education in the twentieth century had lost all sense of unity, except for a functionalist, externally imposed unity, in what he called 'the clerical paradigm'. He observed, 'The only thing which studies of Scripture, theology, history, and pastoral care have in common is their contribution to the preparation of the clergy for its tasks.'³⁴ In response, Farley proposed that the aim of theological education should be to restore *theologia*, or 'the personal, sapiential knowledge (understanding) which can occur when faith opens itself to reflection and inquiry'.³⁵

In this definition Farley seeks to hold together the two original aspects of *theologia*: theology as a personal quality and as a discipline. As a personal quality, theology is a '*habitus*, a cognitive disposition and orientation

of the soul, a knowledge of God and what God reveals'.³⁶ As a discipline, it is not 'one technical and specialized undertaking among others' (e.g. only systematic theology),³⁷ but a disciplined and reflective, unitary enterprise.

Farley's proposal provoked a lively debate over the next ten years, with scholars articulating several views including 'character or moral formation, vocational identity, or liberation and perspectival theologies'.³⁸ But with Kelsey's *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate*, a turning point was reached. In an intentional allusion to Tertullian's famous quote, 'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem ... or the Academy with the church?' Kelsey proposed that theological education in North America could be generally grouped into two models represented by 'Athens' and 'Berlin' (see Figure 1). Athens represented a more ecclesial, classical model, following the ancient Greek 'academy' and focused on personal formation or *paideia*, or *theologia* in Farley's language. Kelsey 'argues that the early church adopted and adapted this model'.³⁹ In contrast, Berlin represented a more professional or

Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Brian Edgar, 'The Theology of Theological Education', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 29, no. 3 (2005): 208–17; Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education and Missional Spirituality'. My model-building endeavour has also been significantly influenced by Perry Shaw, 'Holistic and Transformative: Beyond a Typological Approach to Theological Education', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 40, no. 3 (2016), 205–16.

34 Farley, *Theologia*, 114.

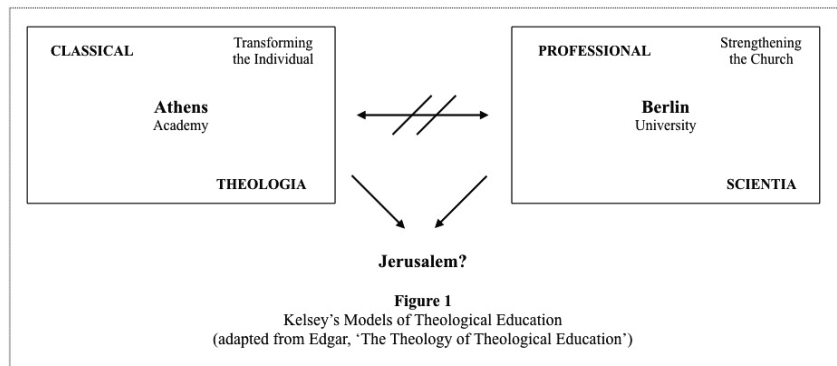
35 Farley, *Theologia*, 156.

36 Farley, *Theologia*, 35.

37 Farley, *Theologia*, 39.

38 Kyle Small, 'Missional Theology for Schools of Theology: Re-Engaging the Question "What Is Theological about a Theological School?"', in Craig Van Gelder, ed. *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 45. For a helpful overview, evaluation and critique of these various views, see Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 17–45.

39 Edgar, 'The Theology of Theological Education', 209.



scholarly model, following the university approach inherited from the University of Berlin (and as especially promulgated by Schleiermacher), focused on theological science (*scientia*) or *Wissenschaft*, and seeking to prepare an educated clergy.

Kelsey recognizes the limitations of his bipolar analysis and in a passing comment points to the possibility of a third model of education: 'Jerusalem'.⁴⁰ In doing so, he opens a way for the emergence of a missional model of theological education that is biblically rooted and more representative of evangelical education.

Both Farley and Kelsey's analyses consider the whole of Western theological education, but from a mainline Protestant perspective. Additionally, absent from their account is any language of mission or ideas associated with the *missio Dei*. Banks moves the debate forward by taking up Kelsey's comment about 'Jerusalem' and proposing an evangelical and missional model. Banks writes, 'What [Kelsey] terms "Jerusalem" and I describe as a "missional" alternative—that is,

a more integrally and distinctively Christian approach to theological education ... opens upon the most fruitful, as yet largely unexplored, direction for the theological education debate'.⁴¹

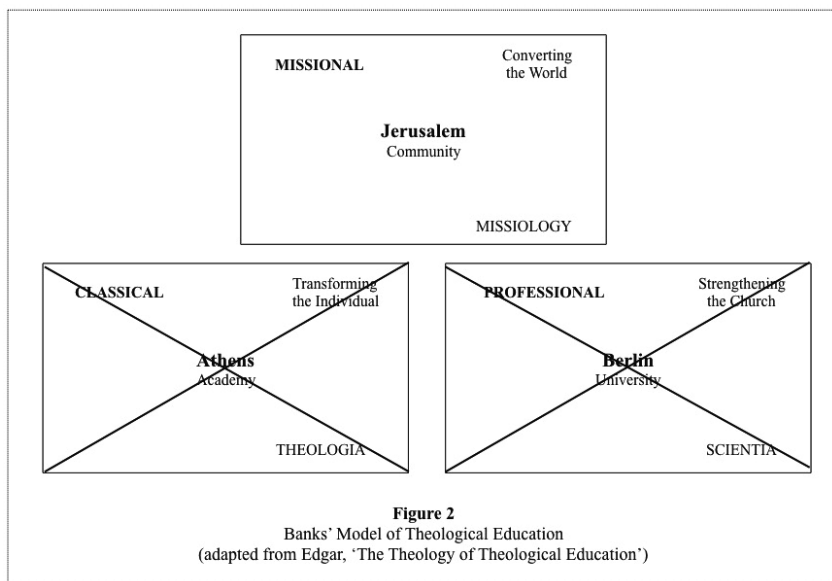
Banks goes on to develop his alternative view of missional theological education by directly interacting with Scripture. He surveys how the people of God were formed in the Old Testament, how Christ formed his disciples, and how the early church was formed by the apostles through the Spirit (according to Acts and the epistles). From this biblical analysis, he concludes that missional education is

undertaken with a view to what God is doing in the world, considered in a global perspective. ... I'm thinking ... of reflection, training, and formation for work on the mission field, whether the latter takes place overseas or locally, ... and that [it] involves some measure of doing what is being studied.⁴²

⁴⁰ Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, 5–6.

⁴¹ Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 70.

⁴² Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*, 142.



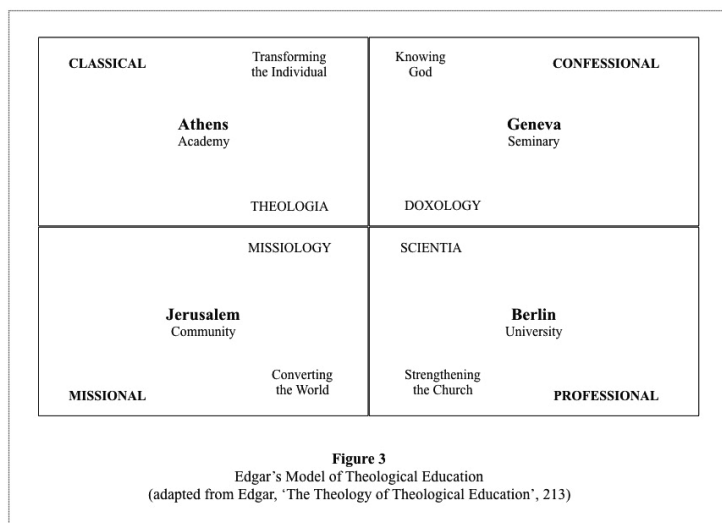
For Banks, theological education is not only for those preparing for pastoral ministry, but for the broader people of God as well as they seek to integrate mission into their whole lives as family members, friends, citizens and workers, not just members of a church. He seeks a thoroughgoing missiological expression of Christian faith in the world for the conversion of the world to Christ. Further, study with a community of disciples and action in the world with that community become central to theological education. Finally, Banks develops his missional model (see Figure 2) as an alternative to the previous approaches rather than a synthesis.

Also coming from an evangelical perspective, Edgar proposes another model (see Figure 3) for the theological education geography. Using a more synthetic rather than a bipolar or antithetical approach, he builds upon Kelsey and Banks by taking up their

models and adding 'Geneva', which he describes as 'a confessional approach to theological education [in which] the goal is to know God through the use of creeds and the confessions, the means of grace and the general traditions that are utilised by a particular faith community.'⁴³ The proper context for such an education is the seminary. The goal is to know God through a particular confession of the Christian faith for the purpose of doxology.

In this synthetic approach, Edgar agrees with Banks that missionality is a vital component of theological education. But unlike Banks, he recognizes that Athens and Berlin can and should be meaningfully integrated with a missional approach. He further does justice to the Genevan tradition, which Farley and Kelsey ignored. This

⁴³ Edgar, 'The Theology of Theological Education', 212–13.



tradition has been a key component of evangelical theological education in the United States, especially within the evangelical streams of Presbyterianism, Episcopalianism, Methodism and Lutheranism. However, Edgar's model still does not do full justice to a missionally integrated theological education, one in which the *missio Dei* provides both the integration point and motivation for the whole educational endeavour.

Since Banks, a growing number of theological educators have called for theological education to begin with the missionary character of God.⁴⁴

What could this missional model look like? In Figure 4, I have adapted Cronshaw's recent model, which he in turn built upon Edgar's. To Edgar's model, Cronshaw adds two more dimensions: 'Auburn' (which I have renamed 'Greenville' since that is where I currently live) and 'New Delhi'. He relocates mission ('Jerusalem') to the centre, making it the integrative point for theological education. God's mission to redeem the world through Jesus Christ and the church's role in

⁴⁴ Linda Cannell, *Theological Education Matters: Leadership Education for the Church* (Newburgh, IN: BookSurge Publishing, 2008); Darren Cronshaw, 'Australian Reenvisioning of Theological Education: In Step with the Spirit?' *Australian E-Journal of Theology* 18, no. 3 (2011): 223–35; Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education'; Steve de Gruchy, 'Theological Education and Missional Practice: A Vital Dialogue', in Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang and

Joshva Raja, eds., *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives, Ecumenical Trends, Regional Surveys* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 42–50; J. Andrew Kirk, 'Re-Envisioning the Theological Curriculum as If the Missio Dei Mattered', *Common Ground Journal* 3, no. 1 (2005): 23–40; Mark Laing, 'Recovering Missional Ecclesiology in Theological Education', *International Review of Mission* 98, no. 1 (2009): 11–24; Bernard Ott, 'Mission and Theological Education', *Transformation* 18, no. 2 (2001): 87–98; Shaw, 'Holistic and Transformative'.

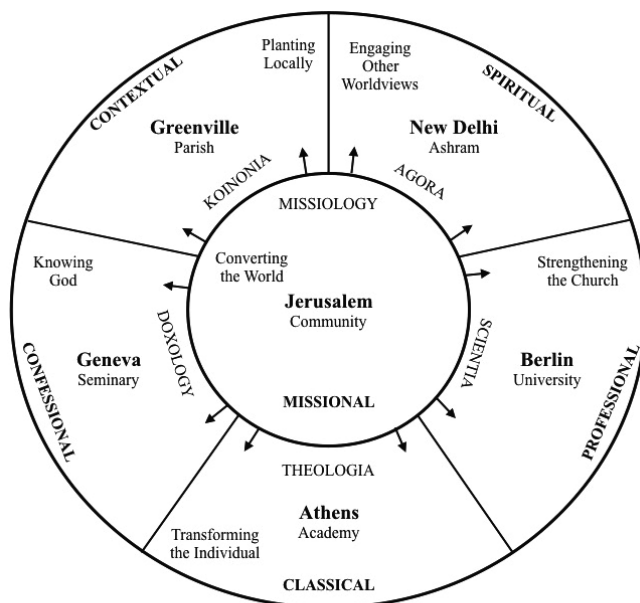


Figure 4
 Missional Model of Theological Education
 (adapted from Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological
 Education and Missional Spirituality', 13)

that mission—to collectively witness to the reign of Christ over all things—become the organizing centre for theological education. Thus, all the other vital aspects of theological education revolve around the hub of the *missio Dei*.

Cronshaw's additions of 'Auburn' (my 'Greenville' in Figure 4) and 'New Delhi' add important dimensions to a missional model of theological education. 'Greenville' represents the missional affirmation of contextuality and locality. It pays attention to the physical neighbourhood ('parish') and city of its students, as it seeks to apply the gospel faithfully to the sociocultural context where God has planted them. Learning how to cultivate *koinonia* among Christians, which welcomes those who are not

yet Christians, becomes a vital component of student formation.

As the centre of world Christianity has shifted away from the West, 'New Delhi' describes another important aspect of a missionally integrated theological education. It represents the need for biblical Christianity to interact with other spiritualities, religions and worldviews. Relying on Klaudt,⁴⁵ Cronshaw suggests that Indian ashrams display helpful characteristics that theological education could adopt. They 'are located "in the world" without fences; are open to all; offer community living that is en-

⁴⁵ Kraig Klaudt, 'The Ashram as a Model for Theological Education', *Theological Education* 34, no. 1 (1997): 25–40.

gaged in service; emphasise ... spiritual maturity; ... [and] provide a holistic curriculum of intellectual, spiritual, political, aesthetic and relationship development'.⁴⁶ In other words, theological education must equip students to respectfully, intelligently and apologetically live out their faith in the public square (*agora*), conversant with the world's spiritualities, so as to bring Christ's redemption to the world.

In short, a missionally integrated evangelical theological education finds its centre and motivation in the mission of God in Christ. Using the proposed model, theological schools can more adequately prepare missional pastors—that is, as noted above, pastors who seek to *equip* the church to *deploy* the church for the salvation of the world. This missional model seeks not only to be anchored scripturally in the *missio Dei*, but to respect the historical development of theological education and the contemporary need for contextualization in a post-Christian West. Thus, an evangelical, missionally integrated theological education is a holistic model, motivated by love for God and his mission. Jesus Christ sends students out from 'Jerusalem', as pilgrims journeying often through 'Athens', 'Geneva', 'Berlin', 'New Delhi' and 'Greenville'.

V. Criteria for an Evangelical, Missionally Integrative Theological School

Having discussed a missional pastoral paradigm and a model for the missional theological school, I will

conclude by suggesting a series of commitments and practices that an evangelical school could employ to become more missionally integrative. The relevant literature⁴⁷ is replete

⁴⁷ A growing body of literature since 1999 seeks to specifically integrate theological education and missional theology, along with offering practical suggestions and key curricular commitments for such an education. Along with sources cited previously, this literature includes Orlando Costas, 'Theological Education and Mission', in *New Alternatives in Theological Education* (Oxford, UK: Regnum, 1988), 5–24; Christopher Duraisingh, 'Ministerial Formation for Mission: Implications for Theological Education', *International Review of Mission* 81, no. 321 (1992): 33–45; Darrell Guder, 'Theological Formation for Missional Faithfulness After Christendom: A Response to Steven de Gruchy', in Werner et al., *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity*, 51–55; Carlos Emilio Ham, 'Missional Formation at the Evangelical Seminary of Theology in Matanzas, Cuba', *International Review of Mission* 106, no. 1 (2017): 80–88; Christopher James, 'Education That Is Missional: Towards a Pedagogy for the Missional Church', in *Social Engagement: The Challenge of the Social in Missional Education* (Wilmore, KY: First Fruits Press, 2013); J. Andrew Kirk, *The Mission of Theology and Theology as Mission* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997); Karina Kreminski and Alan Frost, 'Theological Education for Missional Leadership', in *Theological Education: Foundations, Practices, and Future Directions*, ed. Andrew M. Bain and Ian Hussey (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018), 175–86; Mark Laing, 'Recovering Missional Ecclesiology in Theological Education', *International Review of Mission* 98, no. 1 (2009): 11–24; Bernard Ott, *Beyond Fragmentation: Integrating Mission and Theological Education: A Critical Assessment of Some Recent Developments in Evangelical Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011); Ott, 'Mission and Theological Education', *Transformation* 18,

⁴⁶ Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education', 12.

with helpful and practical suggestions, but I will limit my list to seven criteria, which are recommended by multiple sources or which I consider particularly important for a missionally educational education. I offer these following principles in the spirit of the Lausanne Movement's guidance, 'We urge that institutions and programmes of theological education conduct a "missional audit" of their curricula, structures and ethos, to ensure that they truly serve the needs and opportunities facing the Church in their cultures'.⁴⁸

1. Mission and Vision Statement

First, an evangelical, missionally integrative theological school will clearly express its role in serving the mission of God in the world in its institutional mission and/or vision statements. A school's understanding and articulation of its mission should drive every-

thing it does. Further, all assessment activities centre on whether the school is fulfilling its mission and how it can do so more effectively in the future. Therefore, institutional mission must be explicitly linked to the *missio Dei*. As Shaw states, if the

'Vision Statement' is focused on our students or even on the church, then something is fundamentally missing. Yes, we want our students to learn and grow and we want strong churches, but these are merely a means to an end—which is the acknowledgement of the Triune God and his Kingdom.⁴⁹

Thus, missional theological schools have done reflective work to discern before God how their school with its particular history, context and constituencies supports God's mission to redeem the world in Jesus Christ. This reflection is then translated into clearly articulated institutional mission and vision statements.

2. Theological Education for All the People of God

Second, when God's mission for the world drives a theological school's mission, the resulting student body is inclusive of all the people of God, not just those training for pastoral ministry in the church.⁵⁰ As the Lausanne Movement's *Cape Town Commitment* states, 'Theological education

no. 2 (2001): 87–98; Ott, 'Mission Oriented Theological Education: Moving Beyond Traditional Models of Theological Education', *Transformation* 18, no. 2 (2001): 74–86; Gerald Pillay, 'Theological Education and Missional Formation in the South African Context', *Transformation* 35, no. 3 (2018): 179–91; Ian Randall, 'A Mode of Training': A Baptist Seminary's Missional Vision', *Transformation* 24, no. 1 (2007): 2–13; Kyle Small, 'Missional Imaginations for Theological Education: Mixed Model, Exploratory, Action-Oriented Research Mapping the Theological Identity and Organizational Readiness for Change of Five Theological School Systems in the United States Originating after 1945' (PhD dissertation, Luther Seminary, 2009); W. Michael Smith, 'Missional Faithfulness: An Expanded Agenda for Theological Field Education', *Encounter* 61, no. 2 (2000), 167–86.

48 Lausanne, *The Cape Town Commitment*, IIF4C.

49 Shaw, 'Holistic and Transformative', 211–12.

50 See Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*; Cronshaw, 'Australian Reenvisioning of Theological Education'; Cronshaw, 'Reenvisioning Theological Education'; Kreminski and Frost, 'Theological Education for Missional Leadership'.

serves *first* to train those who lead the Church as pastor-teachers, equipping them to teach the truth of God's Word with faithfulness, relevance and clarity; and *second*, to equip all God's people for the missional task of understanding and relevantly communicating God's truth in every cultural context.⁵¹ Missional theological education provides avenues, programmes, degrees, certificates and informal educational opportunities for Christians in any and all vocations to learn how to integrate their work with their faith and conduct their work in a way that is aimed towards kingdom fruitfulness.⁵² Even if a theological school continues to prioritize clergy preparation, it will do so in a way that emphasizes the minister's missional equipping role for the whole people of God.

3. Theological Reflection and Curriculum

Third, a missional theological education infuses mission-related theological reflection throughout its entire curriculum.⁵³ Missiology or missions are no longer relegated just to the 'school of intercultural studies' or to the practical theology department. Rather, missional theology permeates all departments and all courses. Biblical courses apply 'missional hermeneutics' (discussed further in the next criterion). Church history courses are also histories of God's

mission through the 'World Christian Movement' and pay attention to how the sociocultural dynamics of paganism, Christendom, the Enlightenment, and late and post-modernism have influenced the church's development. Theology courses develop from a trinitarian theology of the *missio Dei* and debate the contours of a missionary ecclesiology. Thus, Ott urges, 'Every programme aim, every course objective, every assignment, every research paper, every test must be developed in view of the church in mission'.⁵⁴

4. A Missional Hermeneutic

Fourth, if missionality permeates the whole curriculum, then a missional hermeneutic⁵⁵ must be specifically taught in biblical studies classes and utilized in pastoral studies courses for teaching and preaching. In *The Mission of God*, evangelical scholar Christopher Wright describes a missional hermeneutic as follows:

Mission could provide the framework both for our hermeneutical approach to reading the Bible and for organizing our account of biblical theology. ... A missional hermeneutic proceeds from the assumption that the whole Bible renders to us the story of God's mission through God's people in their engagement in God's world

⁵¹ Lausanne, *The Cape Town Commitment*, IIF4.

⁵² Mark Greene, *Fruitfulness on the Front-line: Making a Difference Where You Are* (Nottingham, England: IVP, 2014).

⁵³ Ott, 'Mission and Theological Education'; Guder, *Called to Witness*.

⁵⁴ Ott, 'Mission and Theological Education', 91.

⁵⁵ George Hunsberger, 'Proposals for a Missional Hermeneutic: Mapping a Conversation', *Missiology* 39, no. 3 (2011), 309–21; Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006); Guder, *Called to Witness*.

for the sake of the whole of God's creation.⁵⁶

Thus, theological students should learn how to read Scripture as a cohesive, single drama of God's mission to redeem the world through Jesus Christ and to locate their place, time and context in God's ongoing dramatic mission. Guder extends this idea by arguing that the whole thrust of the New Testament is to collectively form God's people for witness. He asks, 'How did this particular text continue the formation of witnessing communities then, and how does it do that today?'⁵⁷ Theological schools ought to provide the exegetical tools that students will need to answer this question in their contexts.

5. Cultural Exegesis and Contextualization

Fifth, corresponding to a missional hermeneutic in biblical studies, a missionally integrated theological school should train students in cultural exegesis and contextualization.⁵⁸ Students should learn how to disentangle the church's gospel from Christendom and modern distortions. They should learn how to confront society's idols and offer the grace of the only true God, Jesus Christ. In this way they can be prepared to equip the church to speak and act into the world in ways that make the gospel distinct, understandable, tangible and attractive to

those who are not yet Christians.

6. A Praxis Approach to Learning

Sixth, if the content of the theological school's curriculum is permeated with a missional emphasis, then the process of learning should also be missional—a cycle of action and reflection. 'Missional educators embrace a praxis approach. The educational process is therefore imagined as a continuous cycle of action and reflection, rather than linear movement from reflection to action.'⁵⁹ Students remain engaged and active in their ministry contexts throughout the duration of theological study. They are not only preparing for ministry, but actually doing ministry.⁶⁰ Their actions for Christ in the world are brought into the classroom for theological reflection and further action. Theological reflection in classes results in thoughtful and prayerful contextualization of action in students' various contexts.

7. Mission-Compatible Pedagogies

Seventh and finally, beyond a praxis approach to learning, evangelical and missionally integrated theological schools employ diverse missionally compatible pedagogies.⁶¹ Nearly fifty years ago, Paulo Freire exposed the dangers and deficiencies of the 'banking' concept of education,⁶² but this

56 Wright, *The Mission of God*, 104, 122.

57 Guder, *Called to Witness*, 109.

58 Ott, 'Mission and Theological Education'; Kirk, 'Re-Envisioning the Theological Curriculum'; de Gruchy, 'Theological Education and Missional Practice'; Kreminski and Frost, 'Theological Education for Missional Leadership'.

59 James, 'Education That Is Missional', 150.

60 Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*.

61 E.g. Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education*; Ott, 'Mission Oriented Theological Education'.

62 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,

approach still remains widely used in theological schools. Instead, Freire proposed an approach that included 'the posing of problems of human beings and their relations with the world'⁶³ and collaborative dialogue between teachers and students and between students themselves, with the goal of raising consciousness towards transformative freedom. If God's reign in Christ brings the ultimate kind of freedom and flourishing to the world, then theological educators should use pedagogies that align with that vision. Missionally attuned theological schools recognize that their students do not need more theological or biblical knowledge deposited in their heads; they need more active, collaborative reflection and practice, applying their biblical knowledge in service to God's mission in the world.

VI. Conclusion

Certainly, the world needs theological schools that form Christian leaders 'to lead the congregation as a whole in a mission to the community as a whole, to claim its whole public life, as well as the lives of all its people, for God's rule'.⁶⁴ To aim at this kingdom vision, as I have suggested, evangelical schools must intentionally prioritize a gospel-centred, missional theology at the nexus of their education endeavours. The *missio Dei* must serve as the integration point and motivation

for ministerial training. Thus, I have proposed a new missional model, based on Cronshaw's prior work, according to which schools seek to form pastors who can *equip* the church to *deploy* the church *for the salvation of the world*. The question thus remains: How are evangelical theological schools around the world doing in this regard? How do they compare to the criteria I have proposed? I will conclude by offering my thoughts on this question, which may help to provide a practical way forward for evangelical schools seeking to fulfil their kingdom mission.

From my anecdotal and limited perspective,⁶⁵ it seems to me that evangelical schools around the world, by and large, have made good progress with regard to criteria 1 and 5 (mission and vision statement, cultural exegesis) and are beginning to make progress on criteria 2 through 4 (educating all the people of God, theological reflection, missional hermeneutic) but have made little progress on the last two criteria (praxis approach, mission-compatible pedagogies).

First, theological schools have made substantial progress in refocusing their institutional mission, vision and purpose statements on God's kingdom mission. For example, my denomination's seminary, Covenant

trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, 30th anniversary edition (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000).

⁶³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 79.

⁶⁴ Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 234.

⁶⁵ In my current roles at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL, USA, I have contact with educators and students from around the world, representing the beautiful breadth of worldwide evangelical theology. Thus, while I cannot speak about individual schools outside the United States, I do have a general sense that my concluding observations may also be generally representative of international contexts.

in St. Louis, Missouri (USA), added the words 'All for God's mission' to its long-standing purpose statement in 2010 after a year-long discussion among the faculty, administration and board.⁶⁶ Further, evangelical schools appear to have also progressed in teaching students how to exegete their cultures and how to contextualize the gospel (criterion 5). At the institution where I currently study and teach, in every class session we discuss the learners' ministry contexts and how to apply pastoral learning in ways that are culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate.

Evangelical theological schools have more recently begun to make some missional progress in three other categories. First, they have begun to embrace the belief that theological education exists for all the people of God (criterion 2), not just those preparing for pastoral or congregational ministry. For example, seminaries in the United States have noted the most recent statistics from the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) in the United States and Canada, which show that nearly 39 percent of graduating seminary students expect to work or are working in a non-congregational setting,⁶⁷ and have expanded

their programme and degree offerings accordingly. Additionally, as the 'Faith at Work Movement'⁶⁸ expands around the world, seminaries such as Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, with its Mockler Center for Faith and Ethics in the Workplace, have begun to purposely apply missional Christian faith to people's everyday 'secular' work.

Furthermore, schools appear to be taking more seriously the task of training students in missional theological reflection and missional hermeneutics (criteria 3 and 4). Through my direct experiences with five evangelical seminaries in the United States and in conversations with my international colleagues, I sense a deepening commitment to a missional and kingdom-wide expression of the gospel. They recognize that Jesus Christ did not die just for the salvation of individual sinners; rather, God has a broader mission to 'make all things new in Christ' (Rev 21:5). However, my impression is that this missional commitment and reflection tend to be concentrated in the biblical studies and practical theology departments. Substantial work is still needed to achieve missional integration across the seminary curriculum and between the theological disciplines.

Although missional theology has grown and permeated evangelical theological education in some important ways, in other ways it has hardly been realized. From my perspective, evangelical schools must do far better with regard to a praxis approach

66 Mark Dalbey and the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary, 'Systematic Theology at Covenant Seminary Is Biblical and "Missional"', n.d., <https://www.covenantseminary.edu/systematic-theology-covenant-seminary-biblical-missional-2/>.

67 Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, 'Total School Profile: Graduating Student Questionnaire 2017–2018 Profile of Participants' (2018), <https://www.ats.edu/uploads/resources/student-data/documents/total-school-profiles/gsq-total-school-profiles-2017-2018.pdf>.

pdf.

68 Cf. David Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

to learning and mission-compatible pedagogies (criteria 6 and 7). For example, when interviewing a recent MDiv graduate from a well-known US seminary, I asked the graduate to describe the types of pedagogies and assessments that the faculty employed. With the exception of a handful of practical theology classes and the pastoral practicum, which employed interactive pedagogies, most of this student's professors lectured for the entire class period, devoting only a short time to clarifying questions. Most classes required a midterm and final examination and one research paper, with no other graded assignments or assessments given. Such practice remains not only deficient from an educational perspective (still

attached to Freire's 'banking' model) but, more significantly from a theological perspective, incongruent with kingdom mission.

The world does not need more seminary graduates with heads stuffed full of theological data; it needs more fully formed graduates who love Jesus Christ, his kingdom and his church. It needs more self-reflective, wise graduates who can immediately apply their theological learning to their local contexts and ministries in a collaborative way while working with all kinds of people. In a word, the world needs missional seminary graduates who can equip the church to deploy the church for the salvation of the world and for the glory of God.

Making Bible Translation a Core Mission of the Church

Ralph Siebert

The church upholds the Bible as its ultimate source of authority, but Bible translation and revision, as well as the whole Bible publication process, are largely controlled by other bodies. In this article, I introduce an emerging paradigm by which the church is empowered to take full ownership of Bible translation and revision, without infringing on existing copyrights. This new translation approach, called Church-Centric Bible Translation (CCBT), is gaining momentum predominantly among rather small ethno-linguistic communities in Africa, Asia and the Pacific region.

Before introducing the CCBT approach, I will review historic and current approaches to Bible translation and argue that this activity is a crucial task for the church and should not be left to others.

Rethinking the process of Bible translation is imperative and prudent in light of the ever-declining Western workforce involved in global missions. Accordingly, I hope to challenge the worldwide church to adopt and take ownership of Bible translation as part of its indispensable core mission.

I. History of Bible Translation

The biblical canon represents a col-

lection of writings which, beginning in the third century, came to be defined as an unchangeable and binding document. It was established in 350 AD as the specially inspired basis and guideline for the fellowship of believers, the church.

Although different churches have come to accept somewhat divergent canons over the course of time, all Christian churches acknowledge the Bible as their foundation for faith and belief. From the early days, interpretation and exegesis of the Scriptures received heavy emphasis, since the Bible has consistently been viewed as God's direction for life. God entrusted the Bible to the church and mandated the church to use it, live by it and assume full responsibility for it. Thus, Bible translation is a task that the church needs to reclaim. All spiritual gifts necessary for this task have been given to and are present in the church.

Translation of the Scriptures has a long history. The first translations of the Torah were made into Aramaic and later into Greek, Latin and Gothic. During the Renaissance and the Reformation, the Bible was translated into vernacular tongues. Our focus in this article, however, is the nineteenth century, when the beginning of modern missions featured people

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like William Carey, who translated the Bible into a number of languages spoken in India, or Cornelius Van Alen Van Dyck who translated the Bible into Arabic. The purpose of these translations was to evangelize more effectively and to make biblical content clear to believers.

During the nineteenth century, the first Bible societies were founded, including the British and Foreign Bible Society (founded in 1804), the Bible Society of India (1811) and the Bible Society of Australia (1817). Interest in overseas mission and evangelism rose sharply. Later mission societies such as OMF International (founded in 1865) and SIM (1893) also emphasized Bible translation.

In 1942, Wycliffe Bible Translators, the best-known of such endeavours, was founded by William Cameron Townsend. Years earlier, Townsend had travelled to Guatemala to sell Spanish bibles, but he had little success, because most people where he went did not understand Spanish. A specific incident triggered Townsend's interest in Bible translation: he met a man who questioned God's sovereignty because, the man said, God was unable to speak the man's native tongue.

Townsend started offering summer linguistic training during the 1930s, which led to the founding of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). During these training camps, Townsend taught principles of how to analyse a language, thus laying a good foundation with regard to how to produce a clear, natural and acceptable Bible translation.

Wycliffe Bible Translators sought initially to recruit additional missionaries and to serve as a link between the mission field and home churches.

During its first years, the missionaries served mainly in Latin America. The first Wycliffe-supported Bible translation was completed in 1951; today, the number of full Bible translations is approaching 700, with an additional 1,550 New Testament translations, plus translation of selected passages and stories into 1,150 more languages.

These impressive figures must be balanced against the number of living languages worldwide, which is a moving target. Living languages can die if they are very small. On the other hand, one language can become split into two or more, if the various dialects of that language turn out to be too diverse for one translation to serve all of them well. In these cases, separate translations are of course warranted.

SIL International is keeping track of all these developments in Bible translation, and updates are published regularly. As of October 2019, SIL indicated that there were about 7,353 living languages worldwide, including sign languages, and the Wycliffe Global Alliance estimated that '171 million people, speaking 2,115 languages, still need translation work to begin.'¹

For decades, Bible translation has been viewed as an expert preserve, an activity reserved only for highly trained specialists. Fastidious production standards have been maintained. Thorough training in the various fields of linguistics—phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, and discourse analysis, to name a few—has therefore been considered

1 "2019 Bible Translation Statistics", www.wycliffe.net/en/statistics.

essential. Other subjects such as acquisition of practical approaches to language learning, ethnology, or special information technology skills have contributed further to making the practice of Bible translation highly scientific in nature.

For a long time, ethno-linguistic communities have not had the capacity to do Bible translation themselves, even if they wished to. Therefore, a sound and systematic approach by Western Christians was justified. However, much has changed over recent years. Mass media and communication platforms now enable dramatic inroads into previously isolated people groups. Options and facilities for higher training have increased in many countries. And the picture in Bible translation is more diverse than ever before, with an increasing number of stakeholders coming from the growing churches of the global south and east.

II. The Wake-Up Call

In 1999, Wycliffe International and SIL International jointly hosted their tri-annual conference. (Conference modalities have changed since then.) Wycliffe International is the predecessor of today's Wycliffe Global Alliance, which describes itself as composed of more than a hundred organizations involved in Bible translation movements and language communities worldwide.

During this conference, the delegates set the direction for a major course change regarding how to approach the remaining Bible translation task. Why did they do this? John Watters, executive director of Wycliffe International at that time, presented the delegates with new figures and a

new perspective, adding a whole new dimension to the issue of the remaining Bible translation need. Watters related the number of Bible-less languages to factors like the active number of expatriate translation advisors, taking growth and attrition rates into account. He also looked at the average number of years required to successfully finish a translation project.

The result he presented was both a shock and a wake-up call for Wycliffe and SIL, leading them to adopt a plan called Vision 2025. This plan contained an extremely ambitious goal, far too large to accomplish by that date or merely by human means. Wycliffe USA summarizes the main conference outcome as follows:

In 1999, our leaders realized that at the speed we were going, it would be at least 2150 before a Bible translation could be started for every language that needed one. As they thought about the people perishing around the world every day without receiving the Good News of the gospel, they felt God calling them to adopt a new goal for accomplishing this mission. Our leaders committed to do everything we could to see a Bible translation program in progress in every language still needing one by 2025.²

The delegates developed and adopted Vision 2025 without really knowing where they were going, and without answers to the many emerging and burning questions it raised.

The Vision 2025 statement reads, 'Motivated by the pressing need for all peoples to have access to the Word of

² 'The History of Wycliffe', <https://www.wycliffe.org/about>.

God in a language that speaks to their hearts, and reaffirming our historic values and our trust in God to accomplish the impossible, we embrace the vision that by the year 2025 a Bible translation project will be in progress for every people group that needs it.’³

The adoption of Vision 2025 led to intensified prayer, greater urgency and a focus on training nationals. The results were impressive. The number of nationals with a formal degree in translation studies has increased significantly. The output of Scriptures has never in history been higher, especially in minority languages. The urgency to make the word of God known to everyone in a language he or she understands best has contributed to the formation of new alliances such as ETEN (Every Tribe, Every Nation). Many new translation organizations have come into being, especially in South America, Africa and Asia. Entities like Wycliffe Associates, which historically supported Bible translation through construction work and technical support services, decided to become directly involved in Bible translation. In October 2019, Wycliffe Associates published a set of free and open-licensed Bible translation tools for the global church to support oral and written translation (see <https://bibletranslationtools.org/>). Another organization, called unfoldingWord, has developed translationStudio, an open-source platform to make Bible translation accessible to the global church. TranslationCore, another free tool, has been developed for checking translations.

As a result of these efforts, the number of languages needing translation has been reduced significantly. As noted above, however, latest counts still indicate that the figure is over two thousand.

III. Grappling with ‘Translation Need’

‘And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come’ (Mk 13:10, NIV). This is a key verse in the realm of Bible translation activity, since people need to clearly understand the Gospel before they can decide how to respond to it. The translation task was defined starting from that premise, so efforts were made early to catalogue the world’s languages.

SIL International had a natural interest in doing this, having been Wycliffe’s main partner organization since its foundation. As the leading organization in language research and documentation, SIL has published since 1951 the *Ethnologue*, a reference publication on the world’s living languages. The *Ethnologue* is published periodically in print and is progressively being updated online.

The goal in Bible translation is to close the gap between finished and needed translations. For many years, the gap exceeded three thousand languages out of a fluctuating total of between 6,800 and 7,100 languages. During the 1980s, Scripture output figures started to pick up, but the number of needed translations did not come down significantly, for several reasons. As language survey and assessment progressed, new languages were discovered or identified. More sophisticated survey tech-

³ ‘Vision 2025’, Wycliffe Global Alliance website, <http://www.wycliffe.net/about-us/more?id=7988>.

niques and tools evolved in the wake of improvements in language survey methods. Languages and their settings were sometimes re-evaluated, leading to more differentiated language assessments that in turn resulted in additional translation needs.

Furthermore, the advancement of socio-linguistics relativized the perception that only linguistic factors constitute a translation need. Experts concluded that for certain subsets of language groups, separate translations were warranted because of different religious beliefs from those of the majority, or because of cultural or historical allegiances to other groups in the area. It became evident in many cases that a single translation would not suitably serve a whole people group.

The number of languages needing translation eventually decreased. The Wycliffe Global Alliance, which has generated and published Scripture access statistics for many years, indicated in 2017 that the number had dropped to around 1,860—only to increase by about three hundred in 2018, because sign-language needs were now included. This change reinforces the degree to which translation need has been a moving target.

Since Vision 2025 was adopted twenty years ago, many (including myself) have been riveted by ‘remaining translation need’, because a deadline had been defined: a Bible translation project was to be started in every language that needed it by 2025. The so-called low-hanging fruit was harvested first: translations into large languages with many speakers and often well-established churches, providing motivated and well-trained translators. Making headway has become harder now that the remaining

translation needs are located in ‘difficult’ countries with no or only small churches.

On a positive note, one could say that the 171 million people whose languages have no current or completed Bible translation work represent just over 2 percent of the world population, and that almost 98 percent of the world population has access to the Gospel, at least theoretically. One could say that we are almost there, but we know that Jesus cares even for the last percent (Mt 18:12).

We also know that the Holy Spirit uses different parts of Scripture to draw people to Christ: it could be a gospel, a psalm, Genesis or Isaiah. Translating all or most of the Bible is desirable, I would think, because God speaks through all his words. I even remember reading an account of a man for whom the genealogical passage in Mt 1:2–16 was instrumental in enabling him to trust the Bible, because the record of who fathered whom was the key evidence for him. God is sovereign and can work through many or few passages of Scripture, just as he likes. Therefore, the question of how much of the Bible should be translated into a given language cannot be answered in general. Whether we provide a Bible, mini-Bible, New Testament, or only Scripture portions is a question I believe the local church must answer.

Although we are still striving to achieve the goal set by Vision 2025, I believe we need to widen our focus to look beyond that year.

SIL has created Progress.Bible, a database and information hub on the status of Bible translation in each living language. It is kept up to date by constantly drawing data from multiple sources, such as Wycliffe organi-

zations from around the world, mission societies, and the United Bible Societies. Progress.Bible welcomes updates on translation projects from anywhere, but information output is graded and limited, partly because of the sensitive nature of some information. Interested individuals can subscribe to monthly 'snapshots', which provide figures on completed translations or numbers of living languages at global and continental levels.

Revision is another growing aspect of translation need. Revisions of existing New Testaments are often done after the Old Testament translation into a language is completed. The idea is to give the church a complete Bible that is current and communicates well. So to invest another two to three years to revamp the New Testament is time well spent.

If a New Testament translation has existed for 25 years, many people, including those behind Progress.Bible, consider that translation to be aging. I do not believe that this threshold can be applied universally, but a translation published in 1995 should be tagged as possibly starting to become outdated in terms of vocabulary and other categories. The compelling question is evident: who will tackle the ongoing task of revising the ever-growing number of New Testaments in the years to come? The only logical answer is the church.

IV. A New Paradigm in Bible Translation

Various approaches to Bible translation have been applied over the past three centuries. The first common paradigm was typified by missionaries like Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg, who travelled to India in the early

eighteenth century, learned to speak the Tamil language and translated the NT and parts of the OT into it.

A second paradigm uses speakers of the source tongue (normally a major language in the area, such as Swahili in Africa) as the main translators. They master the target language well and do most or all of the translation. Project coordination and assistance are often provided from outside the target geographic area, involving experts on topics like literacy or Scripture use. Translation quality control comes from consultants separate from the translation team.

This is still the prevailing model, although nationals increasingly fill leadership roles in translation projects. The time investment under paradigm 2 averages about twelve years, but projects have lasted as long as thirty years under difficult circumstances like health or visa issues, lack of suitable staff, or civil unrest. Financially, these projects have normally been covered by donations from a home constituency that cover staff members' needs.

A new, third paradigm is emerging in which local churches take full ownership of Bible translation. This method, which some refer to as church-centric Bible translation or CCBT, began only a few years ago. Tim Jore, author of a white paper titled 'Bible Translation 3.0', described the direction this translation approach is taking:

We are in the midst of a historic shift in Bible translation, as the global Church reclaims her rightful ownership of and authority for the task. As biblical content, training resources, and technology tools are increasingly made available without restriction, the Church

will be able to take advantage of every opportunity for the advancement of Bible translation into every language.

To that end, the ‘unfoldingWord’ project is an end-to-end digital publishing platform that is attempting to facilitate this outcome. It models the concept of an unrestricted ‘commons’ of open-licensed biblical content, translation training resources, and open-source tools that enable the global Church to do whatever is needed to accelerate the task of translating the Bible into every language.

Wycliffe Associates USA is using the paradigm 3 approach to empower local churches for translation. Open collaboration is encouraged, to take advantage of the access provided by our computer age and enable many people to work simultaneously on a Bible translation project.

Under paradigm 3, local churches and church networks take the project lead, and the translation scope is defined according to the needs and desires of the church. This method is cost-effective relative to previous approaches. An NT translation may take only two to four years, and revisions can be done frequently because all printed and audio materials are published under a Creative Commons license, as further explained below.

V. Church-Centric Bible Translation

The main characteristic of CCBT is that a part of the global church takes full control of all necessary aspects of translating the Bible into its own language. Tim Jore’s book on the

topic provides a good overview.⁴ It describes the Gateway Languages Strategy, or the basis for preparing Scriptures published under a Creative Commons license. The Gateway Languages concept has become the centrepiece for multiple entities including Wycliffe Associates, unfoldingWord, and church networks in Asia or Africa to promote and foster Bible translation carried out under the auspices of the local church.

The main characteristics of CCBT are as follows:

- Driven at the grassroots level
- Generally, use of copyright-free Bibles
- Quick use of draft print-outs for feedback
- Many translators in large workshop settings, not few translators investing great amounts of time
- Use of an array of electronic translation helps and tools, such as translation notes, translation questions, a reviewers guide, Greek and Hebrew Bibles, grammars and lexicons⁵

Gateway languages (GLs) are very dominant languages. They gain that status because they are used internationally, as with English, or because very many people across different countries use it as their second language (L2), as with French in Central and West Africa. A GL can be relatively small, like Bislama, the national language of Vanuatu. Only 10,000 people speak Bislama as their L1, but

⁴ Tim Jore, ‘Church-Centric Bible Translation: A Visual Overview’, <https://www.ccbt.bible>.

⁵ See ‘Resources’, <https://www.unfoldingword.org/resources>.

another 200,000 people speak it as a second language. In Vanuatu, 110 different living languages are spoken, which explains why Bislama can be considered a GL.

As Jore explains, ‘The Gateway Languages Strategy provides biblical content that is irrevocably open-licensed so that the entire global Church can use and build on it equally.’ It was originally developed by the non-profit organization Distant Shores Media (now ‘unfoldingWord’). This organization’s stated mission is ‘Equipping the global church with unrestricted biblical resources’.⁶

Wycliffe Associates USA adopted the GL concept several years ago. Worldwide, around 42 GLs have been named, although precisely defining the concept or counting the number of GLs has not been a priority. The important step is for a church in a certain area to define the source language from which a translation into a local vernacular can best be produced. GL translations are the avenues that the local church can use to produce its own Scriptures.

Ownership

The introduction of CCBT is also helping to solve historical problems with regard to who ‘owns’ a Bible translation. Ownership can be defined in legal or moral terms. People groups who do not have the Bible in their mother tongue may be described as the moral owners of an active translation project into their language, because they are the ones who will benefit directly from the project.

On the other hand, legal ownership of a translation project rests, in a sense, with a national church. If one or more expatriates are involved, the national government could be seen as legally owning that project by sponsoring work permits through one of their ministries. Often, translation organizations like Wycliffe or a partner organization control project-related funds. Finally, the resulting product is in most cases legally owned by the respective national Bible Society. Scripture translation can thus be a very complex and complicated legal process.

The question ‘Who owns the Bible?’ can be answered in different ways, but to me the paramount stance is the one the church takes. What is the status of the Bible for the church? Is it simply a book that church activities traditionally revolve around? Does the Bible really belong to the national Bible Society, which sells it and holds the copyright—despite the fact that the lion’s share of resources to produce a new translation came from abroad? Or is the Bible the living word of God, entrusted to the church to be used for evangelism and discipleship, church planting and building people up? These questions could bring very divergent answers from Christians around the world., but the baseline remains true for all: ‘From Apostolic days the church pioneered translation and the uses of mother tongues, vernaculars, and lingua francas in the proclamation and spread of the gospel.’⁷

I believe that community owner-

⁶ See Tim Jore, ‘The Gateway Languages Strategy’, <https://unfoldingword.org/gateway/>.

⁷ Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds., *World Christian Database* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2019), 245.

ship is central to achieving the purpose of any Bible translation effort, which is to bring more people to understand and obey the Gospel. When communities own their projects, they are more likely to use the Scriptures after translation and to apply the Bible's teachings.

VI. Getting the Church to Translate the Bible

In many places, the church is eager to become involved in translation. In some cases, however, the church may want to translate but is lacking funds, knowhow or logistics. In other situations, the church uses the Bible in the national language but a local translation would serve the church better.

The Great Commission calls the church to preach the good news everywhere, and unless people clearly understand the message, they are unable to respond to it in a meaningful way. That is why Bible translation is a necessity for the church. For the last twenty years, Western Christians have initiated translations, counted languages and measured progress towards accomplishing Vision 2025, but increasingly they are passing the torch to churches and organizations from the global south and east. They are recognizing that without more training of nationals to take responsibility for their own Bible translations, the vision will not be reached.

It is my hope that the World Evangelical Alliance will officially recognize Bible translation and revision as key tasks of the global church. The WEA could further help by developing a roadmap and a framework for Bible translation activity that is fully controlled by the church. The *World Christian Database* provides a wealth

of global data on both people groups and language to facilitate launching this process.

Guidelines to help national, regional and or local translation steering committees would have to be worked out. Here, much can be gleaned from agencies that have been active in the translation business for a long time. The most important potential innovation at the alliance level would be to set up national translation and information hubs where central questions can be handled. These questions might include whether to offer translation assistance to local groups, when to revise previously translated Scriptures, questions of translation style and format, matters of distribution and access, and training of consultants.

These kinds of questions are too manifold for outside agencies to respond to, but could be handled by national alliances affiliated with the WEA. Guidelines to assist regional and/or local translation steering committees would need to be developed and implemented. WEA bodies on the district and area levels are in the best position to make reasonable and substantiated judgements about translation need because of their insight into the linguistic and socio-linguistic dynamics of the area they live in or near.

It would be a great step forward if national alliances could take on formative responsibilities to coordinate and steer Bible translation activities in their respective countries, with policy and procedural guidance from the international level. Strategizing Bible translation in this way, though desirable, will not be realizable everywhere, as the situations facing the church and the available options for

action vary widely across the globe. But this should not stop the WEA from setting the Bible translation agenda and streamlining procedures as much as possible.

National alliances are also in the best position to keep a healthy balance between supporting needed translations and discouraging tiny dialect groups from producing non-essential translations in cases when Scriptures in a neighbour dialect already serve that group well.

Hundreds of translation projects have been initiated at the local level during the past five years using the CCBT approach. Since very many translations are still needed to fulfil

the goal of Vision 2025, it is high time for the worldwide church to assume formal and practical responsibility for Bible translation, especially because the local church cannot be substituted by any other body. CCBT helps the local church to recognize that Bible translation and revision truly belong to the church, and it encourages the church to assume responsibility for this task in a viable way. This approach has gained significant momentum at the local level but could be further enhanced with support and helpful guidance from national and international levels of the body of Christ.

The Role of Reconciliation Theology in Socio-Political Healing and Development

Muhati Allan Isiaho

Although most countries in the world today enjoy peace and security, about 1.5 billion people live in areas affected by government fragility, conflict or large-scale criminal violence. These countries typically have the highest poverty rates and many are seemingly trapped in endless cycles of violence and conflict.¹

Burundi, a small land-locked nation in east Africa, has been one of those countries. Independent since 1962, after sixty-six years of colonization by Germany and Belgium, Burundi has three main ethnic groups: Hutus (about 85 percent, generally cultivators), Tutsis (14 percent, mostly cattle herders) and Twas (about 1 percent). Even though the Hutus and Tutsis share many things in common, including language, a number of cultural practices, traditional religious rites, history and territory,² they have engaged in heated power struggles

ever since Burundi's formation.

Burundi's political situation is bleak, delicate, deeply worrying and, as such, unacceptable to those who yearn for a positive change in the country's socio-political landscape. Social strife has produced dire consequences: extensive loss of life; destruction of property; children left as orphans; single-parent families; fear of investing in business development and infrastructure; physical, social, psychological and spiritual wounds; and the inability of social institutions to deliver essential services to citizens.

For example, during the controversial 2015 presidential election that resulted in a failed coup d'état, at least 1,200 people reportedly lost their lives and more than 425,000 were displaced and had to seek refuge in neighbouring Tanzania, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda.³ The government estimated that the insurrection cost the country at least US \$32.7 million in property

1 Christian Aid, 'Tackling Violence and Building Peace Global Strategy' (2016), www.christianaid.ie/Images/TVBP_REPORT_tcm19-89720.pdf.

2 David Niyonzima and Lon Fendall, *Unlocking Horns: Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Burundi* (Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 2001).

3 'Burundi's President Seeks "Unconstitutional" Third Term', France 24, 25 April 2015, www.france24.com/en/20150425-burundi-president-nkurunziza-seeks-third-term.

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damage.

The government has made many attempts to restore peace, security and social order. These have included *Ubushingantahe*, a traditional institution of reconciliation; the Arusha Peace Mediation Process of 2000; amending the constitution in 2005 to enshrine an ethnically based power-sharing arrangement between the Hutu majority (60 percent) and Tutsi minority (40 percent; the amendment is silent regarding the Twa people); and establishment of a National Commission of Truth and Reconciliation. Nevertheless, Burundi is still prone to political violence in every electoral cycle, with the worst violence occurring around the 2015 presidential elections.

The lack of a sustainable model of reconciliation has helped to nurture the conditions of mistrust, insecurity, impoverishment, powerlessness and underdevelopment in Burundi. Moreover, the church, in my judgement, has been under-involved in peace-building and conflict resolution.

Like many other countries, Burundi's people need a sustainable model of peace-making and genuine forgiveness. I believe that the only truly viable model of reconciliation is based on Jesus Christ, who is our conciliator, Prince of Peace and the embodiment of love, truth, forgiveness and justice. It is God's concern for the human family to live in deep shalom. Accordingly, the church should be a leader in addressing social evils such as ethnic hatred, strife, retaliation, selfishness and other behaviours that impair the harmonious functioning of social institutions. However, the evangelical church in Burundi appears to be making little progress in advancing a viable path towards social healing

and reconstruction through negotiation, mediation, dialogue and conflict resolution.

Addressing Burundi's underlying and long-standing issues that hinder the process of realizing genuine and long-term social reconciliation is the key to a future of sustainable peace, forgiveness and development. In this paper, I attempt to present a pathway towards this goal. The troubled situation in Burundi has driven me to pursue this question: How can the evangelical church provide a new future of renewed hope for a victimized people living in desperate situations of civil strife, extreme poverty and underdevelopment through proclaiming the Christian gospel, which is practically rooted in the doctrine of atonement? Can the doctrine that Jesus yielded himself on the cross as a way of mending human beings' broken relationships with God, each other and our natural world be relevant to the socio-political tensions that are destabilizing individuals, families and communities in Burundi?

In the next section I will explain the concepts of reconciliation theology, healing and development as they relate to the situation of social strife. Then I will present four ways in which truths derived from Christ's atonement can be practically applied to social reconciliation. My observations are equally applicable to any location where social strife poses a barrier to human flourishing.

I. Conceptualizing Reconciliation Theology, Healing and Development

Reconciliation is a central theme in the Bible and the central concept of

our Christian faith. The word is derived from the Greek *katallassō*, a composite term consisting of the prefix *kata* (to or for) and the verb *allassō* (transform, change or exchange). In this regard, reconciliation involves a transformation or change in a relationship between God and humans, or between people.⁴

The Greek *katallassō* is equivalent to the Hebrew *kaphar*, which is translated into English as 'atonement'.⁵ Thus, in the New Testament, atonement is essentially an act of reconciliation that takes place through Christ's death. This conception is explicit in two notable Pauline passages, Romans 5:10–11 and 2 Corinthians 5:18–20. The root idea is a change of attitude or relationship.

From a practical perspective, reconciliation can be conceptualized as a process in which relations are rebuilt to restore a state of harmonious existence, peaceful living, solidarity and mutual cooperation. African scholar Lutiniko Pedro describes reconciliation as 'a state in which two separated individuals, tribes, communities, nations and/or religions come together and accept each other, in order to work together, and to endeavour to solve their differences, bound together by a common motive and by mutually accepted principles'.⁶

In a similar vein, Brounéus conceptualizes reconciliation as 'a soci-

etal process that involves mutual acknowledgment of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behaviour into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace'.⁷ The need for reconciliation is given in the fact of alienation or estrangement. Humans must be put right with God because they have a broken relationship with him.⁸

Although the theological concept of reconciliation derives from Jesus Christ (e.g. Mt 5:24) and the apostle Paul, the idea is present wherever estrangement or enmity is overcome by the restoration of true love, forgiveness, justice, social unity and peace. Building right relationships is at the heart of all religions. However, reconciliation as the central concept in Christianity seeks to restore socio-spiritual harmony by making acceptance, forgiveness and fellowship possible for all, as a result of exchange of enmity for friendship, in both vertical and horizontal relationships.⁹ Sin, the ultimate root of our broken vertical and horizontal relationships, has far-reaching ramifications and has resulted in enmity in our relationship with God as well as with ourselves, with one another and with the environment.¹⁰ Vertical reconciliation is

4 Itumeleng J. Mosala, 'The Meaning of Reconciliation', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 59 (June 1987): 23.

5 Mosala, 'Meaning of Reconciliation', 24.

6 Lutiniko L. M. Pedro, 'The Ministry of Reconciliation: A Comparative Study of the Role of the Churches in Promoting Reconciliation in South Africa and Angola' (PhD dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2007), 5.

7 Karen Brounéus, *Reconciliation: Theory and Practice for Development Cooperation* (Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2003), 13.

8 James Denney, *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation* (Shropshire, England: Quinta Press, 2012), 12.

9 R. E. O. White, 'Reconciliation', in Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 917.

10 Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth: A Handbook of Christian Belief* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1982), 106–8.

viewed as the recipe for horizontal reconciliation.

The church has a unique role to play in public reconciliation, and that role is urgently needed in Burundi. From 1993 to 2005, the country went through a tumultuous period of social and political unrest that culminated in civil war and genocide. The aftermath of this tragic history has included perennial cycles of ethno-political confrontation at every election period. Such conflict is partly responsible for the conditions of poverty and underdevelopment observed in Burundian society. Thus, reconciliation is an imperative task for the evangelical church in Burundi.

An effective theology of reconciliation could enable the church to realize its mediatorial, moral and spiritual mandate in all its fulness. Therefore, reconciliation theology provides an avenue for the church to re-evaluate itself with regard to its mission as God's custodian for genuine reconciliation, peace, social order and sustainable development. Through the biblical vision of reconciliation, there is a possibility of new hope of social unity, healing of a wounded and victimized population, freedom and solidarity with all those who are struggling to overcome their despair.

By 'reconciliation theology' I mean Christian reflection on the socio-political realities surrounding cycles of conflict and violence, for the purpose of designing an alternative response rooted in a biblical vision and capable of enhancing the process of peace-making, forgiveness, justice distribution, healing and development. Basically, this is a corrective discourse that seeks to create life; promote fairness in distribution of material goods, human rights, oppor-

tunities and services; redress wrong deeds and ensure people's quick recovery and restoration; consolidate human solidarity and mutual cooperation; strengthen the bonds of social unity, love, sharing and fellowship; create an environment of free interaction, dialogue, forgiveness, friendship and good neighbourliness; and, above all, enhance social transformation.

In this reconciliation theology, 'healing' means restoring conditions of social, economic, political, cultural, environmental and spiritual health as a means of promoting the full development of individuals, families and communities. It involves restoring wounded bodies, minds and souls to their original physical, emotional and spiritual health as intended by God at the time of creation. In a nutshell, therefore, reconciliation should be viewed as a long-term program for social, economic, political, judicial, cultural and spiritual healing.

The term 'development' refers to the process of coming to realize the full potential of human life in a context of a peaceful, loving, forgiving, just and truth-telling society. As such, reconciliation is development in the sense that it endeavours to rescue, liberate and restore individuals, families and communities to their original identity by removing all that degrades, enslaves, dehumanizes and robs them of their inherent humanity.¹¹

Evangelical Christians recognize that social and political violence is pervasive, brutalizing and corrupting and, as such, impedes the process of

¹¹ Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 177, 180.

development. Therefore, the evangelical church can never ignore the challenges posed by socio-political tensions if it is going to be faithful to its roots. The doctrine of atonement is central to the process of searching for a renewed life and restoring broken relationships.

Consequently, reconciliation theology seeks to transform conflict situations by changing the structures and institutions that keep injustice, selfishness, hatred, resentment and mistrust entrenched in a society, thereby preventing the achievement of sustainable peace, healing and just sharing of the country's resources. This is an endeavour to create and nurture a conducive and viable environment where all citizens can live in peace and harmony with their neighbours and enjoy to the fullest the benefits arising from fair distribution of material goods, human rights, opportunities and other essential services. The concept of reconciliation is central to any human development initiative.

II. Principles of Atonement and Their Application to Socio-Political Conflict

Throughout the Old Testament, God has demonstrated concern for his ultimate purpose of salvation, which is to reconcile all people of the earth, irrespective of their social, ethnic, racial or geographic backgrounds. The prophetic literature contains extensive promises of reconciliation of the nations to God and each other (Is 2:1–54; Mic 4:1–3). The prophets denounced the social, economic, political and religious elites who failed to live up the demands of the covenant and failed to practice justice and mer-

cy on behalf of the victims of oppression such as the alien (a minority), the poor, the fatherless and the widows (Amos 2:6–7; 3:9–10; 4:1–3; 5:7–12; 8:4–8).

Daniel Groody writes, 'God pays particular attention to those in the community whose dignity is diminished, denied, or damaged or those who, when they are no longer deemed useful, are rejected and discarded or those who are dehumanized and depersonalized in their society.'¹² By the power of God's Spirit, the prophets provided an expanded understanding of God's intention to save and reconcile people for himself from among all the nations of the earth through the work of the coming Messiah (Is 9:7). This implies that the quest for active compassion, acceptance, tolerance, love, fellowship, forgiveness and reconciliation in the midst of a wounded and victimized population should always remain a priority for the evangelical church.

Both the Old and New Testaments teach that in his eternal plan, God designed atonement as the only means by which sinful humankind would be reconciled to him. Therefore, reconciliation theology, which is central in the teachings of the apostle Paul, is rooted in the OT concept of covenant and atonement. The shedding of covenant blood and the reconciliatory sacrificial rituals of the OT are embodied in the incarnation, life, work, death and resurrection of Christ for the reconciliation of sinful humanity.¹³ Romans

¹² Daniel G. Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice: Navigating a Path to Peace* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007).

¹³ Joseph O. Omolo, *Reconciliation in African Context* (Nairobi: Uzima Publishing, 2008), 8–11.

5:6–10 states this clearly: ‘When we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ... God demonstrates his own love in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us. ... When we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son. ... Having been reconciled, we shall be saved through his life.’

Clearly, reconciliation has its biblical foundation in the atonement of Christ. Jesus’ death is the supreme act by which men have been reconciled to God, with the view to help humans restore a peaceful relationship with God, each other, their community and their environment (Rom 5:10–11; Col 1:20–22; Eph 2:16).

In his atoning work of reconciliation, Jesus suffered violence on the cross. If our faith has the story of a violent crucifixion at its heart, then the church must face up to violence and look for ways to understand it, confront it and transform it, not just into the absence of violence but into a healing and redeeming of it. By relying on the meaning of the atonement, the evangelical church has the tools to transform situations of socio-political tension with a view to restoring peace, promoting healing of wounded victims and enhancing development initiatives. Below, I discuss four biblical principles of atonement and their application.

1. Substitution

The principle of substitution is anchored in the fact that the death of Christ sought to exchange our sinful nature for Christ’s righteousness. Christ changed our state of enmity with God to that of friendship and fellowship with him (Is 53:5; 1 Pet 2:24; Heb 9:28). Since he has replaced our

old nature with his new nature on the inside, or our condemnation and iniquities with his righteousness, we are forgiven and are not accountable for our sins at all. Through the forgiveness of our sins, our debt has been paid by the atoning blood of Christ.

Once sin has been forgiven, it should be remembered no more (Heb 8:12; 10:16–18). In this regard, Harold Kushner’s description of forgiveness is worth noting: ‘To be forgiven is to feel the weight of the past lifted from our shoulders, to feel the stain of past wrongdoing washed away. To be forgiven is to feel free to step into the future unburdened by the precedent of who we have been and what we have done in previous times.’¹⁴ Those who put their trust and confidence in Christ’s atoning work are not victims of eternal condemnation; instead, they are the beneficiaries of the eternal life made possible through the power of the atoning blood (Jn 3:17–18).

Through atonement, God is reaching out to every human being in his fullness. He sent his only begotten Son so that the sinners would be justified. Through justification, God acquitted sinners of judgement. This acquitting took place not because human beings were innocent, but because when they were still sinners, the truly innocent Jesus Christ was himself made sin for the sake of redeeming sinners (2 Cor 5:21).

By an act of love, Christ died for sinners (Rom 5:8). Love is a strong tool for transforming a society enmeshed in socio-political strife. Paulo Freire described what true love entails and

¹⁴ Harold S. Kushner, cited in Niyonzima and Fendall, *Unlocking Horns*, 121.

what it can do for individuals, families, communities and societies:

Because love is an act of courage, not fear, love is commitment to others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause—the cause of liberation. And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must not serve as a pretext for manipulation. It must generate other acts of freedom; otherwise, it is not love. Only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made impossible. If I do not love the world—if I do not love life—if I do not love people—I cannot enter into dialogue.¹⁵

In a similar manner, Jaccaci and Gault view love as ‘the unitive power and presence common to all religious and spiritual beliefs that gives them their deepest potential to heal, nurture, and to glorify with joy the human soul and spirit’.¹⁶ Indeed, God is love (1 Jn 4:8, 11, 16) and as such every beauty has its origin in God’s love; everything is shaped by it, everything is directed towards it. Love is God’s greatest gift to humanity; it is his promise and our hope.¹⁷

Jesus has given us power and ability to live for him who died for us. As the mediator, he has reunited us with our creator, God the Father. Moreover, through the atonement believers have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, a spiritual power that can effect transformation in believers’ lives.

The doctrine of atonement transforms those without merit into beings of tremendous value in God’s eyes. It expresses victory over the forces of sin and evil (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; Heb 9:12). Through Jesus’ vicarious death, all the forces of darkness including ethnicity, hatred, bitterness, selfishness, enmity, resentment, hostility, greed, oppression, injustice, discrimination, retaliation, intolerance, carnality, unforgiving hearts and any other form of malice have all been blotted out by an act of divine mercy (2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; Rom 5:8).

The Holy Spirit and the doctrine of atonement empower believers to overcome evil with good, defeat negative thoughts and resist the devil before he causes us to commit social sin. In this case, Christ has provided an effective example of how to tackle conditions of civil strife. Rather than taking revenge against their offenders, offended believers should take a bold step of exchanging the physical, emotional and spiritual pain inflicted on them for unconditional forgiveness and love. Likewise, these believers should attempt to dissuade non-believers from becoming involved in acts of retaliation; those who want justice to be served should seek retribution in a court of law. Forgiveness as an act and a process is the foundation of the doctrine of atonement.

¹⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1993), 70–71.

¹⁶ August T. Jaccaci and Susan B. Gault, cited by Richard J. Spady and Richard S. Kirby, *The Leadership of Civilization Building: Administrative and Civilization Theory, Symbolic Dialogue, and Citizen Skills for the 21st Century* (Seattle, WA: Forum Foundation, 2002).

¹⁷ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, *Papal Encyclical on Integral Human Development in*

Charity and Truth (Vatican, 2009).

Forgiveness, love, truth and justice are the fundamental pillars of genuine reconciliation and peace-making. For believers, forgiveness is not an option but a necessary action regardless of the cost.

Someone has said that 'bitterness is like swallowing poison and expecting your enemy to die'. Consequently, those who hold to bitterness die a slow death while making their enemies happy. Thus, forgiveness is an act and a process of self-healing; it does us a favour rather than just minimizing our physical, emotional or spiritual pain.¹⁸ Through the act of forgiveness, we are able to release our pain into the Lord's capable and loving hands.

Paul Tillich writes that 'genuine forgiveness is participation, reunion, overcoming the powers of estrangement. And only because this is so, does forgiveness make love possible. We cannot love unless we have accepted forgiveness, and the deeper our experience of forgiveness is, the greater is our love.'¹⁹ Even though forgiveness is an act of loss, it liberates the victim from his or her condition of physical, emotional or spiritual pain.²⁰ Moreover, genuine forgiveness can often cause the offender to repent and abandon his or her sin permanently. It seeks to restore the offenders into the fellowship of society. As such, to the same extent that a forgiving Jesus represented us on the cross, he now

wants us to represent him.

The doctrine of atonement is the foundation of social and spiritual unity. Through baptism, all believers form one garment and one pilgrim people on a journey, the end of which is the *eschaton*. Creation in all its dimensions is held within the sphere of God's pervasive love, a love characterized by relationship and expressed in the vision of the Trinity as a model of intimate interaction, mutual respect and sharing without domination, discrimination or inequality. The atonement demonstrates God's universal love for all humankind regardless of their ethnic, political, racial and socio-economic affiliation or geographical origin.

The Trinity provides the basis for consolidating the bonds of social unity, solidarity and collaboration among individuals, families and communities. The reconciliation pillars of forgiveness, love, justice and truth-telling provide the framework for promoting peace and harmonious living through social values of renewed fellowship, communal sharing and holistic relationships. Thus, in Christ there is no Hutu, Tutsi, Twa or social classes; all human races including created things are reconciled and united in Christ (Rom 10:12; Col 3:11). God wants to see sustainable peace and genuine reconciliation achieved in all his creation and in particular strife-ridden societies.

2. Participation

Although God is the author of reconciliation, Christ is the conciliator and the church is God's ambassador for reconciliation and peace-making. Consequently, the atonement gives Christians a spiritual platform that

¹⁸ Erwin W. Lutzer, *When You Have Been Wronged* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2007), 130.

¹⁹ Paul Tillich, cited in Niyonzima and Fendall, *Unlocking Horns*, 89.

²⁰ Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), cited in Niyonzima and Fendall, *Unlocking Horns*, xix.

allows for their participation in the death and resurrection of Christ. Here, participation means that the sinner has to die before he or she can regain new life as a new person in Christ (1 Pet 2:24).

Whereas the giving of life is God's prerogative in the OT (Gen 2:7; 1 Sam 2:6), in the NT Jesus claimed to be the life-giver (Jn 5:21; 11:25), and proved it by rising from the dead (1 Cor 15:45; Rom 1:4). Christ's resurrection makes our salvation possible and paves way for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Through faithful administration of the sacraments of communion and baptism, the believers in Burundi demonstrate their participation in the atoning blood of Christ (1 Cor 10:16; 11:25) and they die and live again in him (Rom 6:4, 11). Consequently, this implies their participation in the mission of reconciliation and peace-making. Baptism unites a believer with Jesus Christ in his or her death to sin and resurrection to new life.

Within a context of social and political violence, the benefits of the resurrection of Christ must not be limited to personal joy, peace, worship, hope and victory (1 Pet 1:8; Rom 4:24; Jn 20:28; Lk 24:52; 1 Cor 15:20; Mt 28:18). The strength of the church resides in its coming together to tackle all forces of darkness that hinder individuals, families and communities from attaining the condition of shalom intended by God at the beginning.

God has tasked the universal church in general, and the evangelical denominations representing him in a country like Burundi in particular, with the responsibility of rebuilding relationships among those in conflict. Reconciliation is all God's work

through Jesus, the Prince of Peace and the embodiment of forgiveness, love, justice and truth. As a result, only through God's grace can the church fulfil God's work of healing the physical, emotional and spiritual wounds inflicted on victims of violence. To accomplish this task of reconciliation and peace-making effectively, the church needs to be deeply immersed in Christ from whom it has received the ministry of reconciliation (Gal 3:28–29).

Genuine reconciliation begins with God and flows into the Christian community, where believers are empowered to infuse the principles and values of reconciliation into social structures and systems. This process recognizes the two dimensions of reconciliation, vertically with God and horizontally with fellow human beings. Vertical reconciliation is the recipe for horizontal reconciliation. Consequently, the evangelical church cannot be indifferent and isolated in the face of glaring socio-political tensions enveloping a country. Reconciliation is at the heart of God's salvific activities. True agents of reconciliation have had their worldviews, beliefs, attitudes, values and character transformed by the power of atonement so as to conform to God's will, purpose and Kingdom vision.

Through atonement, the dividing walls of hostility, be they ethnic, social, judicial, economic, political, cultural or spiritual barriers, have been destroyed by Christ (Eph 2:14–16). This is an affirmation of God's solidarity with us and with all creation; as such, no ethnic, social or political conflict, nothing done by us or to us, not even death itself can break God's bond of unity with us (Eph 1:9–10). Reconciliation theology should guide

the church to point out the social sins and evils that have contributed to the destabilization of peace, security and socio-political stability, to show how these detrimental factors have caused wounds in society by damaging the common good, and to propose a proper way to address such social sins and evils.

When we embrace the biblical vision of reconciliation, broken relationships are restored in all the dimensions distorted by sin. Walter Brueggemann writes, 'The gospel is the news that distorted patterns of power have been broken; the reception of the gospel is the embrace of radically transformed patterns of social relationships.'²¹

Above all, the church must recover its prophetic voice by speaking on behalf of the helpless victims of violence and conflict and by functioning as the moral and spiritual conscience of society. Believers need, without fear or seeking favour, to function as spokespersons exposing and condemning the perpetrators of social, economic, political and judicial crimes that incite unrest. Such people who inflict pain on others should be told what God expects of them, which includes making them understand their need to repent so that they are reconciled with God. In its function as salt and light in society, the church should be bold in persuading others to live in accordance with the ethical, moral and spiritual standards outlined in Scripture. By fulfilling the demands of the Great Commission, the church will infuse these biblical and divine

principles into the lives of individuals, families, communities and societal institutions.

Practical ways by which the church can participate in peace-making, reconciliation and social reconstruction include the following:

- Strengthening the ministry of prayer (Ps 140:1–3; 1 Sam 30:6; 2 Kings 19:14–16; Jam 5:16; 1 Tim 2:1–2), ecumenical bonds, and believers' participation in the sacraments;
- Influencing the government to embrace the ideals of mediation, negotiation and conflict transformation and to design contextually relevant methods and strategies of transitional justice;
- Creating a platform where the offender and the offended come together to exchange apologies and affirm forgiveness, love and abandonment of revenge (Mt 5:43–44; Rom 12:17–21; 2 Cor 2:5–11);
- Strengthening the valuable ministry of pastoral counseling, as this empowers victims and speeds up the process of healing from the inner wounds inflicted by trauma;
- Creating and nurturing a culture of communication and honest dialogue around the real drivers of the vicious cycles of socio-political unrest in society;
- Responding promptly and decisively to early warning signs of an impending social, political or ethnic conflict without hesitating or ignoring those signs;
- Engaging in deep evangelization by preaching holistic

²¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Biblical Perspectives on Evangelism: Living in a Three-Storeyed Universe* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993), 34.

- sermons attuned to the actual socio-cultural context;
- Encouraging church members to participate in promoting a culture of democratic principles and values in societal structures;
 - Strengthening the church's co-operation with other agents of reconciliation, peace-making, and social reconstruction, including other religious groups, civil society organizations and individuals with specialized skills or roles; and
 - Providing holistic education to church leaders. Besides studying Bible and theology, they should be equipped with knowledge and skills in such areas as development, entrepreneurship, peace-building, counselling, conflict transformation, mediation, negotiation, communication, and education on good citizenship and patriotism.

Christians agree broadly with the principles highlighted above. Every Christian desires to live in a just, peaceful and flourishing society. However, Christians will not always agree on how practically to address situations of social strife. Hence, it is necessary for believers to engage in open and candid conversations from a biblical-theological perspective, with the goal of reaching consensus where possible on how to tackle socio-political challenges. Above all, Christians should strive to create and nurture a society grounded in the principles, values and ideals taught and exemplified by Jesus, who did not separate religion from socio-political life.

Throughout history, the common people have turned to the church in

time of need. Indeed, a dehumanizing situation of social strife calls for Christians' participation in social reconciliation. Christians should imitate Christ by alleviating human suffering and advocating for the restoration of human dignity. Thus, believers share in Christ's death and resurrection not just as individuals but as a community. In this respect, the church is called to participate in Christ's sacrificial death, which brings forth the love of resurrection and new life.

3. Social Transformation

This principle is grounded in a holistic view of the doctrine of atonement. Jesus, as the life-giver, is the source of abundant life. Jesus came so that believers may have life and have it in abundance here on earth (Jn 10:10). Atonement is the foundation of holistic or social transformation, because it includes the cultivation of principles and values that can bring forth positive change in society.

Fredrick Amolo states, 'Social transformation embraces the act and process of improving society's material condition as well as restoring broken relationships within social structures in a bid to promote peaceful co-existence.'²² Bryant Myers reminds us that 'God's goal is to restore us and God's creation to our original identity and purpose, as children reflecting God's image, and to our original vocation as productive stewards, living together in just and peaceful

²² Fredrick Amolo, 'The Impact of an Essential African Christian Theological Reconciliation Schema in Peace-Building', in Rodney L. Reed, ed., *African Contextual Realities* (Carlisle and Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2018), 119.

relationships.’²³

Reconciliation theology endeavours to respond to societal needs, both materially and non-materially. It should aim at liberating people from all forms of captivity, including physical, social, mental, emotional and spiritual enslavement. This way of understanding reconciliation is affirmed in Jesus’ statement of mission (Lk 4:18–19, quoted from Is 61:1–2): ‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

In a similar vein, Leonardo Boff acknowledges the liberative task of the gospel:

The gospel is nothing less but the proclamation of the reign of God: the full and total liberation of all creation, cosmic and human, from all its iniquities, and the integral accomplishment of God’s design in the insertion of all things into His own divine life. Concretely, then, the reign of God translates into community of life with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in a universal communion of brothers and sisters in solidarity with one another in the use of the ‘fruit of the earth and the work of the human hands’.²⁴

At the heart of Jesus’ ministry, he

had great concern for those suffering from various forms of bondage and oppression, including economic oppression (poverty), physical oppression (diseases and disabilities), political oppression (injustice and oppressive rule) and demonic oppression (various forms of occult practices). Clearly, reconciliation is more than the absence of conflict and violence; it embraces harmony, health, wholeness and well-being in all relationships.

The idea of liberation reminds us that through Jesus’ atoning work, God the Father suffered in solidarity with suffering humanity. As such, God understands our suffering and delights in seeing it ended (1 Pet 2:21; 1 Jn 2:6). Through Jesus’ experience of a violent death, the human family has been healed: ‘He was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we have been healed’ (Is 53:5).

Christ’s atoning work seeks to address our social problems as they emerge in our lives and in different contexts. When wars, conflicts, violence, destructive competition, incompatible interests and ecological disasters rob people of the freedom to pursue their ordered ends, we become unable to satisfy our fundamental human needs. These detrimental factors cause disharmony, suffering and pain.²⁵ Development cannot take

²³ Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 82.

²⁴ Leonardo Boff, *When Theology Listens to the Poor*, trans. Robert R. Barr (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 36.

²⁵ Stan Chu Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa: Aid and Development from the Perspective of Catholic Social Ethics* (Nairobi: Paulines, 2011), 119–20; Isabel Phiri et al., eds., *The Role of Christianity in Development Peace and Reconstruction* (Nairobi: AACC, 1996).

place if people cannot work together because of ethnic differences, intolerance, ancient prejudices, and inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic differences.²⁶ Political, economic, religious and cultural divisions can stymie sustainable development. For that reason, the evangelical church should confront truthfully and honestly the disagreements among individuals, families, communities and parishioners. Learning to live and work together demands a new way of seeing each other and understanding human relationships.

Peace is not the mere absence or avoidance of war and conflict, but the positive realization of the dignity of the whole human family. Peace is wholeness, integrity, and tranquility of order, the effect of love and righteousness. The vision of peace-building and reconciliation is to create a more humane society, promote equality and justice, preserve human rights, foster solidarity and unity of human community, and create a non-violent and orderly society, all of which culminate in authentic human development.²⁷ At the heart of peace-making and reconciliation is the intentional rebuilding of relationships at every level of society, dedicated to non-violent transformation of conflict, the pursuit of social justice and the creation of cultures of sustainable peace. Reconciliation is not complete without restitution. In the Burundian context, this includes restoring seized land and other properties to their rightful owners.

A condition of socio-political conflict cannot be transformed without addressing demands for the respect of fair distribution of material goods, opportunities, services and human rights and the quest for equality, justice and the common good. Reconciliation denotes the holistic rebuilding of relationships.²⁸ It is a multidimensional concept that involves liberating victims from physical as well as emotional and spiritual pain.²⁹

The power and promises resident in the atonement, when fully embraced, permeate all societal institutions to effect positive change in them. Through the atonement every chain of darkness has been broken, including social, economic, political, cultural and judicial maladies. Reconciliation is inevitably bound up with social empowerment.³⁰ Therefore, the evangelical church should rely on the doctrine of atonement as it endeavours to transform these social systems and structures with the goal of creating and nurturing a more humane society that is committed to the principles and values of human development.

4. Inspiration for New Life

The atonement is a source of inspiration for the church, as believers are empowered morally and spiritually to create a new society that lives in accordance with the life of Christ, and in

²⁶ Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa*, 257.

²⁷ Ilo, *The Church and Development in Africa*, 118.

²⁸ Jesse N. K. Mugambi, *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction* (Nairobi: Acton, 2003).

²⁹ Maake Masango, 'Reconciliation: A Way of Life for the World', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 26, no. 1 (2005): 134.

³⁰ Mugambi, *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction*.

a new life with him (Rom 6:4). Atone-ment therefore makes it possible for new life to spring forth. Christ's death inspires the believers to live a life with God—a life characterized by changes in attitudes and relationships (Phil 2:5–8).

When believers have received the benefits of Christ's death, something new should be seen in their lives, because the old is gone and they are re-created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:23). Believers are called to 'not conform any longer to the patterns of this world' with its behaviours and customs that are usually selfish and often corrupting. God wants believers to be transformed by the renewal of their minds so that they can live to honour and obey him (Rom 12:2).

Through deep evangelization and contextualization of the gospel message, people are more likely to be confronted by the life-changing nature of the gospel,³¹ thereby allowing Christ to transform their attitudes and behaviour so that they can live in loving, kindly, compassionate and merciful ways towards those around them. On the basis of living a renewed life, believers should joyfully give themselves as living sacrifices for God's service (Rom 12:1–2). The Holy Spirit provides the power to renew, re-educate and redirect believers' minds so as to enable them to pursue fruitful methods and strategies of rebuilding relationships and healing those victims whose minds and spirits have been broken (Rom 8:5).

Believers are required to put on a

new role, head in a new direction and have the new way of thinking that the Holy Spirit gives. Because they live for Jesus who gives new meaning to their lives, they should express love in the face of enmity, forgiveness in the face of resentment, dialogue in the face of discord, justice in the face of injustice, hope in the face of despair, healing in the face of pain, respect for law in the face of a culture of impunity, walking in the light in the face of darkness, and truth-telling in the face of falsehood. This new order was introduced by God, who reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:18). The biblical concept of eternal life excludes a person's former miserable, mortal and disorderly life; eternal life is God's life embodied in Christ, given to all believers now as a guarantee that they will live forever. It calls us towards a perfect relationship between God, human beings and the rest of the creation.

New life is characterized by a focus not only on eternal life with all its treasures, but also on here-and-now right living in society. As children of the light, believers should act in such a way as to reflect their true faith and allegiance to Jesus the Lord. Their position in God's Kingdom requires them to live above reproach morally, and in so doing they exhibit God's goodness to others. True reconciliation and peace-building presuppose righteousness in the sight of God and the right living of the Christian faith. This right living is displayed in such actions as making peace with everyone; being considerate towards others; showing true humility; obeying the civil law; freedom from deceitful personal interests and desires; continuous renewal of the heart; imitating God by loving and forgiving each

31 Darrel D. Whiteman, 'Contextualization: The Theory, the Gap, the Challenge', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 21, no. 1 (1997): 3.

other; being kind and compassionate to one another; living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; getting rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander and every form of malice; praying and interceding for authorities; and desisting from improper language, especially derogatory or inciting statements (Eph 4:29–32).

In this way, the church can become a new zone where people can seek and find fresh hope, experience the refreshing reality of solidarity, hear and follow the evangelical call for change in their conduct, and receive the fresh and boundless historical possibilities of abundant life, even in the midst of uncertainties and brokenness. At the grass-roots level, the church can inspire the living out of this new, transformed and non-violent Christian life in the family, which is the most basic institution of society.

Through the doctrine of atonement, a new future is possible for Burundi or any nation plagued by socio-political conflict. God has demonstrated his great love and forgiveness by restoring just and peaceful relationships through the atoning work accomplished by Jesus Christ.

III. Conclusion

Evangelical believers have a divine mandate to respond positively to God's call by becoming partners with him in restoring peace and order in their society. Reconciliation, peace, healing and development are essential components that should be secured for all victims of violence, as all are among the family of 'God-imagers'. Tackling the state of despair and pain for the purpose of creating a new and better society is an integral part of God's will for believers.

Atonement should never be conceived as an abstract concept, but as a real and transformative practical concept capable of bringing about reconciliation, healing and development in human society. Peace is what the gospel of Jesus is all about; being peace-makers therefore distinguishes us as recipients of that Good News (Mt 5:9; 2 Thess 3:16; Col 3:15). Since most Burundians are Christians, they have already been washed by the blood of Jesus. As such, they should be working to put an end to the shedding of innocent human blood in their country.

The vicious cycles of social and political unrest find their real solution in the power of the atonement to mend broken vertical and horizontal relationships. There is no need for endless violence when the Lamb of peace has shed his blood for our forgiveness, reconciliation, righteous living and oneness. Indeed, the love of God the Father covers us all and it cleanses us from all unrighteousness. In him there are no poor, no non-poor, no Hutus, no Tutsis, no Twas, no white, no black, no vulnerable, no invulnerable. We are one.

The ministry that God has given to believers encompasses peace-building and peace-making through the spiritual model of reconciliation. Since God has offered forgiveness to us, those victimized by violence need to forgive those who have hurt them. God has reconciled with us, and he expects these victims of violence to reconcile with their enemies. Christians can lead the way in enabling members of society to consolidate their spiritual, intellectual and physical resources so as to solve their differences and social problems.

Despite the challenges of socio-

political tensions, optimism and hope are possible when the church begins to assume its moral and spiritual mandate of functioning as a renewed community of forgiven people of God. The church in Burundi continues to demonstrate that there is life beyond a social strife. This church is rekindling people's hopes in numerous ways, including the following:

- influencing the government to develop a policy framework for enhancing peace, security, and fairness in distribution of opportunities and development outcomes;
- providing social assistance to orphans, widows, disabled and internally displaced people;
- promoting the principles and practices of social unity, cohesion, mutuality, stewardship, inclusivity, solidarity, collaboration, cooperation, good governance and spiritual healing through Christian education and evangelism;
- creating and nurturing of kingdom principles, values and ideals in the life of individuals, families, society and the nation at large;
- influencing the government to take the path of dialogue towards individuals or groups having dissenting political ideologies;
- providing guidance in issues of ethical, moral and spiritual concern; and
- encouraging Christians to infiltrate into key positions in government so as to exemplify Christian principles, values and practices in their service as a way of minimizing the possibility of breeding social strife.

When the church becomes faithful to its mission of reconciliation and peace-making, its people and the surrounding society will be poised to experience God's abundant blessings—economically, politically, psychologically and spiritually. True children of God are committed to the process of tackling violence and building peace (Mt 5:9). The church urgently needs to deepen its understanding of the key drivers of vicious cycles of socio-political unrest so that it can take appropriate actions in solidarity with and in support of peace-building efforts in Burundi and around the world.

Are We Free to Pray? On the Freedom Necessary for Petitionary Prayer

Christopher Woznicki

Among Christian spiritual disciplines, few are more fundamental than the practice of petitionary prayer. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus himself bears witness to the essential nature of this practice (Mt 6:5–15). Here Jesus assumes that his disciples will offer petitionary prayers, and accordingly he teaches them how to pray in view of the fact that they have a Father who ‘knows what you need before you ask him’ (Mt 6:8). The significance of petitionary prayer is underscored by the widespread Christian practice of repeating this very prayer as believers ask God to hallow his name, bring his kingdom to pass, provide daily bread, forgive debts and deliver us from temptation.

If petitionary prayer is fundamental to Christian living, then freedom must be equally so. Lay Christians do not spend much time thinking about whether we have free will to pray as we wish, but philosophers and theologians have expended much effort analysing the nature of human freedom. As a result, a number of theories have arisen, the most popular of which—very broadly construed—are

compatibilism and libertarianism.

Compatibilism claims that the following two premises are both true and can exist simultaneously: (1) events are determined by a sovereign God and (2) agents can possess the kind of freedom necessary for moral responsibility. Libertarianism, on the other hand, contends that the freedom necessary for moral responsibility is incompatible with divine determinism (i.e. the second premise is impossible if one assumes the first premise). Moreover, the kind of freedom necessary for moral responsibility is one in which an agent can choose between alternative courses of action, e.g. to vote or not to vote.¹

1 For a helpful introductions to different types of compatibilist and libertarian positions, see J. P. Moreland and William Lane Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017), 300–315; Kevin Timpe, *Free Will in Philosophical Theology* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); Kevin Timpe and Daniel Speak, eds., *Free Will and Theism: Connections, Contingencies, and Concerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

As a Christian philosopher or theologian reflects upon these subjects—petitionary prayer and freedom—the question arises as to what theory of freedom best comports with our intuitions about petitionary prayer.² Recently, some Christian philosophers have claimed that genuine petitionary prayer is impossible under accounts of freedom that deny libertarian free will. This claim puts Christians who, for biblical or confessional reasons, are committed to compatibilistic theological determinism in a difficult position.³ For if these philosophers are correct, then such Christians would have to either abandon theological determinism or admit that petitionary prayer is not possible.⁴

2 I define petitionary prayer as an act of communication directed towards God that takes the form of presenting a request for some state of affairs *x* to God. This definition, I believe, refrains from taking a stance regarding the efficacy of those requests or on exactly how our doctrine of God's providence frames our understanding of how God acts in light of those requests.

3 I refer to 'compatibilistic' theological determinism because it is also possible to be a complete determinist and deny that humans have any moral responsibility. This form of fatalism is, of course, unacceptable for orthodox Christians. Hereafter I will refer simply to 'theological determinism'.

4 There is some question as to whether Thomas Aquinas' understanding of petitionary prayer leads to a combination of a 'no-risk' view of providence with human libertarian freedom. Terrance Tiessen argues that in Thomas' model 'The timelessness of God enables him to "foreknow" and to determine creaturely acts without robbing them of libertarianly free agency.' On the other hand, Eleonore Stump seems to indicate dissatisfaction with Thomas' understanding of prayer because 'it is hard to see how such a belief is compatible with freedom of the will.'

In this paper, I rebut these philosophers, arguing that libertarian freedom is not necessary for a robust account of petitionary prayer.⁵ Specifically, I claim that theological determinism is in fact compatible with an account of petitionary prayer that aligns with several important intuitions regarding our freedom to pray. In making this argument, I draw upon the philosophical theology of the sixteenth-century Italian Reformer Peter Martyr Vermigli.

I will begin by reviewing recent claims concerning the necessity of libertarian freedom for genuine petitionary prayer. I then turn to Vermigli's account of petitionary prayer as it is articulated in his *Loci Communes*. I conclude by showing how Vermigli's account is consistent with three common intuitions many Christians have about freedom and prayer: (1) God does some things precisely because we have prayed for them, (2) we freely desire the things we pray for, and (3) we are the cause of our own prayers.

I. Libertarian Freedom and Petitionary Prayer

In a recent book on petitionary prayer, Scott Davison catalogues a number of 'divinity-based challenges' to pe-

I will not take sides on this particular issue. See Terrence Tiessen, *Providence and Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 190; Eleonore Stump, 'Petitionary Prayer', *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16 (1979): 86.

5 Note that I am not arguing that a libertarian account of freedom is incorrect; rather, I am merely arguing that a libertarian account of freedom is not necessary for a robust account of petitionary prayer.

tionary prayer. These challenges, based on some characteristic of God, amount to arguments concerning the pointlessness of such prayer. Among these challenges he lists omniscience, impassibility, freedom and providence. The last two are especially important for our purposes. When Davison addresses the issues of freedom and providence, he casually dismisses the significance of theological determinism in a matter of one paragraph. Davison begins his dismissal of the compatibility between theological determinism and petitionary prayer by quoting John Calvin's belief that 'providence is so complete and detailed that everything that happens in the world is not just known with certainty but also determined from eternity.'⁶ Davison explains that such a view poses a challenge to petitionary prayer because 'God's ruling from eternity is doing all the work in determining what happens, without any independent contribution on the part of the petitioners.'⁷ Furthermore, such a view poses a serious challenge to the common intuition that our petitionary prayers make an 'independent contribution to the character of the world'.⁸

The assumption underlying Davison's view—an assumption that he does not articulate explicitly—is that for petitionary prayer to make an independent contribution to the character of the world, then the person praying must have genuine options as to whether to pray for a particular thing,

S. If the person does not have alternative possibilities concerning prayer for *S*, then that person has not made an independent contribution to the world. Theological determinism—the view that God's providence is so complete and detailed that everything that happens in the world is unconditionally decreed by God—claims that once God issues such a decree, alternative possibilities no longer exist. Specifically, then, one cannot say that a person praying for *S* has alternative possibilities concerning prayer for *S*. So, according to Davison's logic, petitionary prayer is impossible given theological determinism.

Much like Davison, Eleonore Stump also casually dismisses the possibility that genuine petitionary prayer can be compatible with theological determinism. In her landmark essay 'Petitionary Prayer', Stump expresses an understanding of prayer that makes petitions consistent with the belief in an omniscient, omnipotent and perfectly good God. She does this by arguing for a relational model of prayer.

Prior to advancing her own position, Stump catalogues several ways to provide a consistent account of prayer. These include D. Z. Philipps's view that 'all real petitionary prayer is reducible to the petition, "Thy will be done"', and Keith Ward's view that God is 'the unknowable, non-denumerable, ultimate reality, which is not an entity at all'.⁹ The problem with these views, Stump correctly notes, is that they no longer operate with the assumptions of ordinary, orthodox and traditional views of God and prayer. These revisionist accounts are

6 Scott Davison, *Petitionary Prayer: A Philosophical Investigation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 19.

7 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 19.

8 Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 19.

9 Stump, 'Petitionary Prayer', 81.

of no interest to her because they are not views according to which someone offers 'a petitionary prayer freely (at least in his own view) of an omniscient, omnipotent good God, conceived of in the traditional orthodox way'. She explains that she wants to focus specifically upon prayers that are offered freely (in the libertarian understanding of freedom) because 'if all things are predetermined—and worse, if they are all predetermined by the omnipotent and omniscient God to whom one is praying—it is much harder to conceive of a satisfactory justification of prayer.'¹⁰ This decision leads Stump to dismiss the contributions of Calvin and Luther to our understanding of prayer because 'while they may be thoughtful, interesting accounts, they assume God's complete determination of everything.'¹¹

In some sense, Stump's approach is more charitable to theological determinists who want to preserve the significance of petitionary prayer than Davison's. Whereas Davison dismisses the compatibility of petitionary prayer and theological determinism because in such a situation the prayer 'makes no independent contribution to the world', Stump at least recognizes (1) the important contribution of theological determinists to the theology of petitionary prayer and (2) that it is harder but not necessarily impossible to conceive of a justification for petitionary prayer while holding to theological determinism. Nevertheless, she also concludes that libertarian freedom makes better sense of petitionary prayer than compatibilism does.

lism does.

Davison and Stump are not alone in treating theological determinism as incompatible with petitionary prayer. In describing his 'Two-Way Contingency' account of prayer, Vincent Brümmer begins by observing that in cases of petitions between human beings, 'requests are aimed at persuading the addressee and not merely expressing the attitude of the petitioner.'¹² That is, the petitioner aims at persuading the addressee to do something other than what the addressee originally intended to do. Brümmer then applies this observation about petitions between human beings to his reflections on petitions offered to God, which, he concludes, work in the same way. That is, our petitions 'seek to move God' to fulfil what we have asked for.¹³

Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder make a similar move, arguing from petitions between human beings to those offered to God. Thus, concerning human petitions they state, 'In general, our words do not constitute the speech act of petitioning if we think that our words won't make a difference to whether the petitioned does what we ask.'¹⁴ Like Brümmer, they conclude that prayer is only genuinely petitionary if it makes a difference in what God wills to do.¹⁵

¹² Vincent Brümmer, *What Are We Doing When We Pray? A Philosophical Inquiry* (London: SCM Press, 1984), 29.

¹³ Brümmer, *What Are We Doing When We Pray?* 29.

¹⁴ Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder, 'The Puzzle of Petitionary Prayer', *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 2 (2010): 46.

¹⁵ On the prevalence of this 'Two-Way Contingency Account' see Christopher Woznicki, 'What Are We Doing When We Pray? Rekin-

¹⁰ Stump, 'Petitionary Prayer', 81.

¹¹ Stump, 'Petitionary Prayer', 81.

Clearly, Brümmer's and the Howard-Snyders' views are incompatible with theological determinism. If theological determinism is true, then God has unconditionally decreed everything that will happen in the world. According to their account of petitionary prayer, however, such prayer is effective only if it persuades God to act in ways other than how he would have acted had the prayer not been offered. And if God is in fact persuaded to act in response to some prayer, then it would seem to no longer be the case that God acts merely from his unconditional decree. Rather, God's actions would be conditioned upon human actions. Thus, theological determinism seems incompatible with the view of petitionary prayer advocated by several prominent philosophers who have addressed the topic.

To summarize what we have covered thus far: some philosophers of religion assume that petitionary prayers are meaningful only if both God and human beings possess freedom in a libertarian way; otherwise petitionary prayer would not meet the condition necessary for genuine petitions, namely that the person petitioned can genuinely respond to or be persuaded by prayers. Both parties involved in petitionary prayer, this line of argument contends, must be indeterministically free, and this ability to choose between alternative courses of action in light of another person's course of action is a necessary condition for the meaningfulness of petitionary prayer. Let us call this view the Libertarian Account of

Prayer (LAP):

LAP: Petitionary prayers are genuine petitionary prayers only if the agent praying and the agent receiving the prayer possess libertarian freedom.

One strength of LAP is that it fulfils several important intuitions that many Christians have concerning petitionary prayer. Davison describes one of these intuitions when he claims that meaningful petitionary prayers must make an 'independent contribution to the character of the world'¹⁶—which I take to mean causing events to occur that would not have happened if we had not offered that prayer. Peter Geach makes a similar assumption when he states that 'if X had not prayed, or had prayed otherwise, God would not have brought about situation S'.¹⁷ This assumption should not be surprising, since Scripture seems to indicate that 'the sovereign Lord does some things precisely *because we pray for them*'.¹⁸

A second intuition many Christians have regarding petitionary prayer is that we freely desire the things we pray for. To use the language of the Psalms, people bring 'the desires of their heart' to God in prayer, hoping that God will answer those prayers. The things prayed for by person X are X's own desires, not desires forced upon X.

A third intuition held by a number

¹⁶ Davison, *Petitionary Prayer*, 19.

¹⁷ Peter Geach, *God and the Soul* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1969), 88–89.

¹⁸ David Crump, *Knocking on Heaven's Door: A New Testament Theology of Petitionary Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 290 (emphasis in the original). Consider for example 2 Kings 20:1–11 and Luke 18:1–8.

of Christians is that we are the cause of our own prayers; that is, I cause myself to pray. LAP easily accords with this intuition, since LAP is grounded in an indeterministic account of freedom. Can theological determinism also satisfy these three intuitions that easily comport with LAP?

II. Peter Martyr Vermigli's Account of Petitionary Prayer

The question of whether important intuitions about petitionary prayer, such as those identified above, can co-exist with a view of providence according to which God has decreed all that comes to pass has received much attention within the Reformed tradition. In his *Common Places of Christian Religion* (1572), Heinrich Bullinger responds to several objections against petitionary prayer. Even before defining the act of petitionary prayer, Bullinger treats an objection that arises from theological determinism:

There are some that do gather that those things must necessarily come to pass which are decreed by God's eternal and infallible predestination. And therefore, that God, if he has determined anything, cannot by prayer be removed from it. ... For as much as all things which God has once decreed must of necessity come to pass.¹⁹

Bullinger responds to this objection by claiming that our prayers are accounted for in God's decrees and thus

play a role in bringing about what God has decreed would come about by those prayers. He appears to be attempting to show how theological determinism fits with the 'independent contribution' intuition that has a firm basis in Scripture.

Wolfgang Musculus also sought to address objections to petitionary prayer that arise from theological determinism. Like Bullinger, Musculus realized that, for some people, their understanding of the implications of God's sovereignty presented a stumbling block to offering petitions to God. He wrote, 'We must arm our minds against the wickedness of them, which do fondly imagine that prayer which is made unto God is unprofitable, ineffectual, yea and to no purpose, because all things which have been given us of him have been already predestined before, and would be given also, though we ask not.'²⁰

In this statement, Musculus indicates his conviction that believers should offer petitionary prayers even though God has already decreed all that can come to pass. Thus, Musculus denies the claims of LAP. Where, then, does Musculus find the efficacy of prayer? He says that petitionary prayer is an opportunity to exercise faith. He states that God could 'liberally give us all things unasked for ... but his will is to be called upon of his children, to the intent that they should practice the assured trust of their hearts towards him, and be the more out of doubts of his goodness,

¹⁹ Heinrich Bullinger, *Common Places of Christian Religion*, trans. John Stockwood (London: Thoshaft & H. Middleton, 1572), 163. Spelling and punctuation in all citations from this translation have been modernized.

²⁰ Wolfgang Musculus, *Common Places of Christian Religion*, trans. John Man (London: Henry Bynneman, 1578), 1168. Spelling and punctuation in all citations from this translation have been modernized.

when they do obtain that, which they do desire.²¹

Thus, for Musculus, petitionary prayers are mainly for the sake of the person offering the prayer. Calvin states similarly that God 'ordained [prayer] not so much for his own sake as for ours.'²² Prayer, says Calvin, leads us to 'embrace with greater delight those things we acknowledge to have been obtained by prayer' and to 'meditate upon his kindness more ardently'.²³

Although various Reformers attempted the pastoral task of explaining how petitionary prayer comports with theological determinism by appealing to theological principles, the most robust philosophical explanation of how these two concepts fit together belongs to Peter Martyr Vermigli. This Italian Reformer is not as well-known as the other Reformers, but his influence on the Reformation was substantial. Fleeing Roman Catholic Italy, he made his way to Zurich and eventually to Strasbourg and Oxford. He held important academic posts in each of these cities and played a central role in shaping the Church of England and the continental Reformed churches. Despite attaining academic prominence, he never strayed far from his ministerial roots, remaining acutely concerned with the spiritual well-being of growing Christians. This concern is especially evident in his discussion of prayer in the *Loci Communes* (Com-

mon Places).²⁴

One issue of pastoral concern that Vermigli addresses in the *Common Places* is that some Christians fail to pray as often they should because 'they determine to themselves: Although I desire not these things, yet God will do that, which shall seem good unto him: neither can his will be altered by my prayers.'²⁵ This hypothetical scepticism concerning the meaningfulness of petitionary prayer seems to assume LAP. Vermigli is addressing the objection that if God has already decreed what will come to pass, then prayer is redundant because (1) God has ordained that I would pray and (2) God will bring about what he desires regardless of my prayers.

Vermigli provides two responses to this sixteenth-century version of LAP. First, he says that God calls his people to prayer for 'honour sake, [that] he might attribute the fame unto their prayers'. How do prayers for things God has determined anyhow bring God honour and fame? It is because before God responds to prayers he 'kindles their minds with a desire to obtain those things' that God has determined to grant.²⁶ Thus, when a person's prayer is fulfilled, God is glo-

21 Musculus, *Common Places*, 1140.

22 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 3.20.3.

23 Calvin, *Institutes* 3.20.3.

24 Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The Common Places*, trans. Anthonie Marten (London: Denham and Middleton, 1574). Spelling and punctuation in all citations from this translation have been modernized. The *Loci Communes* are actually a collection of *scholia* that were collected posthumously into one work. Various authors have noted that Vermigli's *Loci* were among one of the most read and quoted works of theology in Elizabethan England.

25 Vermigli, *Common Places*, 300.

26 Vermigli, *Common Places*, 301.

rified because God has brought about his or her desire.

Since Vermigli was himself a preacher, it is no surprise that his second response to the line of thought represented by LAP consists of a pair of illustrations from ordinary life. The first illustration describes a person who wants to swim in a nearby river. To get to the river, the person must travel on whatever path leads to the river. The path, Vermigli explains, is not the cause of the person going to the river; after all, he says, 'if you lack powers of mind and strength of body, you go there in vain.'²⁷ His second illustration is a schoolmaster who, to reach a school, must climb a set of stairs. The stairs, Vermigli explains, are not the cause of his going to school. Using Aristotelian causes to analyse the action, he explains that 'the final cause is his going to teach; and the efficient cause is the powers of the mind and the strength of the body.'²⁸

²⁷ Vermigli, *Common Places*, 301.

²⁸ Vermigli, *Common Places*, 301. That Vermigli makes use of Aristotelian concepts to analyze the causes underlying these actions should not be surprising, given his education in the Aristotelian hotbed of Padua. On Vermigli's relationship to Aristotelianism, see especially Joseph McLelland, 'Peter Martyr Vermigli: Scholastic or Humanist?' in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform*, ed. Joseph McLelland (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), 141–51. McClelland explains: 'More to the point is Martyr's reliance on Aristotelian categories of both ontology and logic. Most obvious is his use of syllogism and of the fourfold causality and teleology of Aristotle. ... Here is a free use of Aristotelian and Thomistic form and content.' See also Luca Baschera, 'Aristotle and Scholasticism', in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. Torrance Kirby,

Prayer, according to Vermigli, is like these two illustrations. The thing that God wills to do is the final cause and a person's petitionary prayers are the efficient cause. God, Vermigli argues, has unconditionally decreed that the thing prayed for, *S*, will come about, and God has also unconditionally decreed the means, *X*'s prayers, by which *S* will come about. Let us call this Vermigli's Determinist Efficient-Causal account of petitionary prayer (VEP).

VEP: Petitionary prayers are God's unconditionally decreed means by which God brings about his unconditionally decreed state of affairs.

Previously, I observed that LAP easily comports with three important intuitions many Christians have about prayer. Thus, we should now ask whether VEP comports with these intuitions as well, for otherwise VEP might not appear to be a viable alternative to LAP.

III. Vermigli's Efficient-Causal Account and Common Intuitions about Prayer

First, many Christians believe that God does some things precisely because we have prayed for them. This intuition is often born out of the ob-

Emidio Campi and Frank James III (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 133–59; Luca Baschera, 'Peter Martyr Vermigli on Free Will: The Aristotelian Heritage of Reformed Theology', *Calvin Theological Journal* 42 (2007): 325–40. For more on Vermigli's use of an Aristotelian account of causation in relation to the writing of Scripture, see Jason Zuidema, *Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) and the Outward Instruments of Divine Grace* (Gottingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 42–44.

servation that our prayers are somehow related to God's actions that follow our prayers. This intuition, however, is not only born from our experience of prayer; it also seems to be warranted scripturally. Biblical theologian David Crump notes that 'we may not be able to twist God's arm, but we can catch his eye and prompt a reply'²⁹ Crump's observation is based on his extensive study of petitionary prayer in the New Testament.

Does VEP comport with this intuition, which has both experiential and scriptural backing? Paul Helm thinks so. He first observes that Christians are convinced that God brings about certain events *because* people ask him. Helm then proceeds to examine more rigorously what 'because' might mean. He suggests that the word indicates the possibility of cases where prayer can be efficacious if God has indicated that certain events will take place only if people pray.³⁰

Helm uses an example of praying for rain to show how such an account might work. He asks the reader to assume the 'all-decreeing' view of God's providence (what I have called theological determinism). He then says, 'In the case of the prayer for rain one would have to say that God did not only ordain "from the beginning" the meteorological sequence that included rain on Thursday, but that he also ordained at least one phase of the sequence (the "rain on Thursday") phase was to follow prayer for rain on Thursday, and that he also ordained the rain because of the prayers.'³¹

Helm's description of what prayer accomplishes in a theologically determinist account of freedom can make sense of people's intuition that God does things *because* we have prayed for them. 'Because' here means that the prayer is an ordained part of the sequence necessary for the ordained event to occur. Here Davison might object that in such a situation our prayers do not make an 'independent contribution to the world'. This may be so, but Davison is making significant assumptions about the nature of providence and freedom and then dictating what sort of account of prayer is necessary to meet those assumptions. If one does not accept Davison's assumptions about providence and freedom, one can affirm both scriptural teaching on God's sovereignty and what our intuitions seem to say about prayer by holding to VEP.

A second intuition many Christians hold about prayer is that things we pray for are born out of our own desires. This intuition at first seems problematic for Vermigli's account of prayer. Vermigli indicates that before granting people what they have prayed for, 'God exceedingly kindles their minds with a desire to obtain those things.'³² At first glance, this feature of VEP seems to undercut the notion that we freely desire the things for which we pray.

Consider the following scenario. Shiloh enters the ice cream shop with her mother, Amelia, hoping her mother will buy her a vanilla ice cream cone. Amelia knows that vanilla is a terribly plain flavour and that Shiloh ought to order chocolate chip if she is

29 Crump, *Knocking on Heaven's Door*, 289.

30 Paul Helm, 'Asking God', *Themelios* 12, no. 1 (1986): 23.

31 Helm, 'Asking God', 24 (emphasis in the

original).

32 Vermigli, *Common Places*, 301.

to experience maximal pleasure from eating ice cream. Amelia, knowing what is best for Shiloh, decides that she will give her chocolate chip even though Shiloh desires vanilla. However, Amelia wants Shiloh to know that she is a good mother who loves her, and she wants Shiloh to praise her for being a good mother. Accordingly, Amelia asks Shiloh to order chocolate chip. Shiloh does not want that flavour but, out of respect for her mother, orders it anyhow.

In this scenario, most people would conclude that Shiloh did not freely desire chocolate chip ice cream. Is Vermigli's insistence that God kindles or stirs our minds to desire to pray for what he would have given us anyway a comparable scenario? It is not, because Vermigli believes that freedom is a matter of voluntariness and that voluntariness is a matter of spontaneity.

Vermigli has a broadly Aristotelian account of freedom. In his commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, he interprets Aristotle's use of the Greek word *hekousion*, which is used to describe a particular type of intentional action, to mean 'voluntary'. Further, Vermigli believes that 'voluntary' reduces to a notion of spontaneity.³³ An action is spontaneous if its principle resides in the agent.³⁴ This means that Vermigli would recognize an action as voluntary only if that action comes forth from the agent's own principles.

33 Baschera, 'Peter Martyr Vermigli on Free Will', 329.

34 See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 3.1. There Aristotle explains that 'counter-voluntary' applies to what comes about by external force or because of ignorance. However, that which is voluntary has its origin in oneself.

With that background, we can ask again: according to VEP, are prayers born freely from our own desires, or are they more like Shiloh ordering ice cream at her mother's direction? The answer is that they are not like the ice cream case. In the case of the ice cream, Shiloh's petition was not spontaneous; the desire she expressed was not in line with her own desires. In our prayers, however, Vermigli would say that our desires are spontaneous. Even though God kindles our desires for what he himself desires to give us, the petitions we offer to God are in line with our own desires, and thus they are spontaneous, making them voluntary as well. So it appears that VEP can meet our second intuition about petitionary prayer.

What about our third intuition, namely that we are the cause of our own petitionary prayers? VEP might run into a problem here since even our prayers have been unconditionally decreed. Such a view is problematic if it is interpreted as a version of fatalism, which would say that since God determines all things that happen, God is the sole cause of those things. Vermigli's own understanding of God's providence, however, is not fatalistic. Vermigli holds that God is the primary cause of all our actions but that we are secondary causes of those actions.

In 'Whether God Is the Author of Sin', Vermigli states that even though 'nothing happens in the world, not even sins themselves, outside of God's will and choice or providence', God is 'not by himself and properly the cause of sin' (*per se et proprie*).³⁵ How does

35 Peter Martyr Vermigli, 'Whether God Is the Author of Sin: Commentary on 2 Samuel

Vermigli defend this position? First, he assumes that 'God is the cause of all things: inferior things receive the impulse of the first cause according to their nature.'³⁶ Second, he reasons that even though God is the first cause, this does not mean that God removes the creature's causal agency. This is because creatures still act within 'their own proper motions', i.e. there is an element of spontaneity in creatures' actions. In the case of any creaturely action, including sin, 'Our will does all, God does all, but one is the first cause and the other the secondary.'³⁷ Furthermore, Vermigli believes that since we are the secondary cause of our actions, they are wilfully performed (because they are spontaneous), and that an action is to be evaluated by its proximate cause.³⁸

Given this understanding of primary and secondary causes, Vermigli would contend that we are the genuine cause of our petitionary prayers, since we are acting freely and are responsible for the prayers offered. Thus, VEP fulfils our intuition that we are the cause of our own prayers.

IV. Conclusion

I began the analysis in this essay by observing that according to some philosophers of religion, a libertarian account of freedom is necessary to

make sense of the Christian practice of petitionary prayer. We saw that LAP is consistent with several important intuitions that many Christians have about prayer. To be compelling and persuasive, an alternative account of prayer should also satisfy these basic intuitions.

Here I have shown that VEP, an account of petitionary prayer that finds its origin in the philosophy of Peter Martyr Vermigli, can in fact meet these intuitions. However, in the course of comparing VEP to our intuitions about prayer we have added an extra feature to the account, namely the feature of secondary causation. Therefore, instead of VEP, I propose the following as an alternative to LAP:

Secondary-Causal Account of Prayer (SCA): Petitionary prayers, offered to God spontaneously by agents who are secondary causes, are an unconditionally decreed means by which God enacts his unconditionally decreed state of affairs.

If the argument presented here is correct, then libertarian freedom is not necessary to offer genuine petitionary prayers to God. Rather, petitionary prayer is compatible with theological determinism. (I am not so bold as to insist that SCA is the definitive, absolutely correct account of petitionary prayer, but it is both plausible and consistent with important, scripturally grounded intuitions about what we are doing when we pray and why our prayers are meaningful.)

V. Coda: Pastoral Implications

The work of pastors indisputably involves praying for their congregation, due to pastors' responsibility to

16', in *Philosophical Works: On the Relation of Philosophy to Theology*, ed. and trans. Joseph McLelland (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 1996), 224.

36 Vermigli, 'Whether God Is the Author of Sin', 239.

37 Vermigli, 'Whether God Is the Author of Sin', 240.

38 Vermigli, 'Whether God Is the Author of Sin', 228.

beseech God on behalf of their flock and due to their love for the people entrusted to their care. This pastoral responsibility includes both public and private occasions of prayer, such as worship services, personal intercession, and prayer as part of pastoral visitations. However, in addition to offering their own prayers, pastors are responsible for teaching and exhorting the flock to pray.

In his classic treatment of pastoral ministry, Richard Baxter writes:

Go occasionally among them, when they are likely to be most at leisure, and ask the master of the family, whether he prays with them, and reads the Scripture, or what he doth? Labour to convince such as neglect this of their sin; and if you have the opportunity, pray with them before you go, and set them an example of what you would have them do.³⁹

At times, Baxter says, the pastor will find that families will neglect this practice of prayer and study because of ignorance or 'want of practice'. When this happens, the pastor ought to help them 'learn to do better as speedily as possible'.⁴⁰

The duty to teach Christians to pray is an often-neglected aspect of pastoral practice. Christians across all times and places know that prayer is crucial to a flourishing relationship with Christ, yet they still struggle to pray. There are several common reasons for this difficulty, such as (1) lack of spiritual fervour, (2) fear that God

will not hear our prayers, or (3) the belief that our prayers will not make a difference anyhow, because God's decrees are unconditional and nothing we say will influence him.

A pastor cannot generate spiritual fervour in the life of a congregation; this is the Holy Spirit's job. But a pastor can certainly address incorrect beliefs that prevent fervent practices of prayer, such as believing that our prayers do not make a difference. As we have seen in this essay, a number of Reformers were concerned with addressing Christians who struggled to pray because they believed that God's unconditional decrees invalidated the significance of petitionary prayer.

Why are Christians tempted to find prayer superfluous in light of God's eternal and unconditional decrees? I would suggest that one reason has to do with an implicit belief in LAP. Some Christians might reason that if the only meaningful kind of petitionary prayer is LAP, then the incompatibility between LAP and theological determinism would render their prayers ineffective. Furthermore, some Christians might assent to a doctrine of theological determinism and yet at the same time operate with a notion of prayer that is more influenced by LAP than by their doctrine of providence, because at first glance LAP seems to make petitionary prayers more efficacious. Although the evidence is anecdotal, I have often heard people in Reformed churches encourage others to pray as though Reformed theology—specifically theological determinism—was not true.

If what I have argued for in this essay is correct, then prayer in the Reformed tradition is still meaningful even though this tradition does

³⁹ Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor, or the Duty of Personal Labors for the Souls of Men* (New York: American Tract Society, 1829), 157.

⁴⁰ Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 157, 158.

not affirm LAP. If pastors who identify with a Reformed understanding of providence want to fulfil their responsibility to disabuse their flocks of double-mindedness when it comes to petitionary prayer—i.e. assenting intellectually to theological determinism but praying as though LAP were true—then they would benefit from looking back to the theology of Reformers like Peter Martyr Vermigli. Doing so would not only help to address objections that commonly arise because of an implicit belief in LAP but would also provide strong justification for accepting a view like SCA. My Secondary-Causal Account of Prayer emphasizes the significant role that our prayers play in God's accomplishment of his wise and sovereign plans. In fact, SCA tells us that God views our prayers as an essential component of bringing about his will in this world.

Bruce Ware states this point well: 'Although God is fully capable of "doing it on his own", nonetheless, he enlists people to join him in the work that alone is his. And one of the chief means that he employs for our participation with him in this work is prayer.'⁴¹ Instead of leading to a belief

that prayer is in some sense insignificant, the denial of LAP and the acceptance of SCA result in a recognition that prayer matters immensely. Prayer is the way in which God involves us in his work of ruling over creation.

What this means, practically speaking, is that God has ordained prayer to be one way in which Christians fulfil the cultural mandate of Genesis 1. According to the opening chapters of Genesis, God himself is king and human beings serve as God's representatives and agents in the world. Richard Middleton explains: 'The *imago Dei* designates the royal office or calling of human beings as God's representatives and agents in the world, granted authorized power to share in God's rule or administration of earth's resources and creatures.'⁴² When we pray, we participate in God's rule on earth. If congregations were to understand the weightiness of this concept—one that aligns precisely with SCA—then perhaps they would no longer fail to pray because of ignorance or want of practice.

of God', in *For the Fame of God's Name: Essays in Honor of John Piper*, ed. Sam Storms and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 139.

⁴² Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 27–28.

⁴¹ Bruce Ware, 'Prayer and the Sovereignty

Caring about the Persecuted Church: Balancing the Lessons of Romans 13 and Revelation 13

Thomas K. Johnson

In 2007 a young Turkish man, the father of two children, was planning to take a theology class that I was scheduled to teach when he was brutally martyred. Two other Christians, one Turkish and one German, were also murdered with him in the office of their Bible printing shop in Turkey. All three were cut up with knives.

Shocked and angry, I became deeply involved in reporting on and drawing attention to this terrible incident. Afterwards, I felt compelled (by God, I think) to reflect more deeply on how Christians continue to experience discrimination, persecution and sometimes even martyrdom in many countries around the world. This reflection included thinking about the different types of governments that exist around the world, since governments usually have some important role in relation to discrimination and persecution and are often the direct perpetrators. I also contemplated our international duties within the body of Christ, since we live in a globalized world in which we can learn almost instantly about—and also try to influence—events happening in distant places.

I. Two New Testament Passages about Governments

The New Testament has much to say about these issues. In the New Testament we can find two complementary views of the state or of government, and we must keep both of them always in mind as we practice Christian discipleship and seek to aid our brothers and sisters who live in difficult and dangerous situations.

On one hand, Romans 13:1–7 describes what a state *should* be and do:

Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They

are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honour, then honour.

In this passage, Paul instructs Christians that they should generally obey the law and pay our taxes. His message might have been somewhat disconcerting amidst the unstable and often capricious governance of the Roman Empire, but it is usually not hard to obey for those who live in free countries, where we have official protection of human rights and where the rule of law prevails.

On the other hand, Revelation 13:1–10 depicts what a state or a government can become when everything goes wrong:

The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast,

and they also worshiped the beast and asked, 'Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?' The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world. Whoever has ears, let them hear. 'If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed.' This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people.

Revelation tells us that a state can become a devouring beast, destroying everything in its path and attacking Christians with especially demonic hatred. This was not only the experience of the church in the first century, under the persecutions by Nero in the sixties and Domitian in the eighties; it is also the experience of tens of millions of Christians today.

In 2015, I was actively involved in the preparations for, and I then attended, the historic global consultation in Tirana, Albania on the persecution of Christians. When someone at the consultation claimed that the slaughter of Christians then taking place in Syria and Iraq should be called genocide, no one disagreed. On the contrary, Christians from other

countries responded by saying that what was happening in their nations should be considered genocide too! As recently as 2015, multiple Christian genocides were occurring at the hands of beastly governments.

Today, Christians in many countries are under direct attack, or facing the imminent threat of attack, by either oppressive governments or unrestrained religious extremists. The beast of Revelation 13 is not just a reality from ancient history; *the beast is with us!*

In this light, those of us who are not under threat—those who live in nations where the government generally fulfils Paul's vision in Romans 13—need to carefully consider the challenging words of Jesus in John 13:34–35: 'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'

A generation ago, the great Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer taught us that visible love is the mark of a Christian, basing his teaching on these words of Jesus in John 13.¹ Jesus has given our unbelieving neighbours, called 'everyone' here, the astonishing right to evaluate our claim to be disciples of Jesus. They are to make this evaluation on the basis of our love for fellow Christians. Therefore, this love must be more than a feeling; it must become visible through sacrificial action for fellow Christians in need. In our globalized society, we need to consider very deeply what it means for Christians everywhere to

honestly love fellow Christians who live under a variety of beasts. We have a lot to learn.

We should also contemplate what learning to love Christians who live under the beast will do for us. I suppose that many of us who do not encounter persecution on a regular basis are a bit lukewarm about the gospel. We take the gospel and the church for granted, as if they are not so special. One benefit of honestly engaging with persecuted Christians is that it may break us out of our spiritual lethargy. How can one remain unmoved when hearing or reading stories of martyrdom, or of tens of thousands of our brothers and sisters in Christ fleeing for their lives? And actually responding to their plight by seeking to change the situation for persecuted believers could have an even greater effect on us!

An additional benefit is that such engagement with persecuted Christians may prepare us to deal more effectively with emerging problems in our own countries. In stable democracies, we do not have thousands of people fleeing for their lives, but we do sometimes face real and serious discrimination on account of our faith.²

And none of us know what the future may hold for those who enjoy freedom of religion today. Many Christians now facing severe persecution did not expect it in their coun-

¹ See Francis Schaeffer, *The Mark of the Christian* (LAfri Fellowship, 1970), now available from InterVarsity Press.

² An example would be the way the radical gay rights movement has challenged the legal status of some Christian institutions because they teach traditional values. Discrimination against Christians in the free world is usually because of the application of Christian ethics to public questions, not because of attending a worship service.

tries just a short time ago. In some parts of the world, discrimination has evolved into persecution, which leads to martyrdom. So getting involved with Christians who face persecution may equip us for future uncomfortable events in our own settings. Moreover, this love in action, demonstrated by Christians for their brothers and sisters in other lands, will be noticed by a watching world, leading some to consider Jesus whose disciples we have proved to be.

II. Analysing the Biblical Texts

In Romans 13, Paul presents a very compressed version of a political theory that merits extensive explanation beyond what I can give here. Let me note simply that Paul assumed several other themes and texts in the Bible. For example, he assumed what Jesus said in Matthew 22:21: 'So give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.' Paul also assumed what Jesus said to Pilate in John 19:11: 'You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.' And Paul clearly thought that most people serving in government can distinguish between good and evil, so that usually states can punish the evil and reward the good in a meaningful, reliable fashion, even if very imperfectly. Still other biblical assumptions underpin what both Jesus and Paul said about government: the fact that we are created in God's image, the fallen nature of each human being, the existence of an objective moral law, and the authority of written documents.

When we consider where in the world today Christians and others enjoy a significant level of freedom of religion and other basic human rights

protections, I believe we can see a general pattern. I see the influence of the biblical themes that were assumed in Romans 13 as upstream influences in the cultures and education systems of these countries, helping to produce the current experience of freedom and human rights protection. It is not by accident that some countries enjoy freedom and other countries do not. In the countries where the people enjoy freedom, even if the populace does not widely acknowledge Jesus as their Saviour, there has usually been some significant influence of a few key ideas from the Bible within the last few hundred years. This is the cultural influence of the Bible being felt in the political sphere.

I refer to this part of the world as 'the Romans 13 world'. People in these lands believe that there is a realm of life that does not belong to Caesar. They may believe that those who govern them—the modern equivalents of Pontius Pilate—are accountable to God for their actions. They may believe that people have a special dignity, even if they do not know where this dignity comes from. They believe that even top government officials should obey written laws.³

³ In a report prepared by Thomas Schirrmacher for the WEA's Religious Liberty Commission, I read a fascinating account of an official from Communist China who had heard that Christians prayed the communists out of power in East Germany in the 1980. This official was afraid that Christians would also pray the Chinese communists out of power! I see this as an example of the influence of a biblical theme, the direct accountability of all people to God, even among people who do not yet acknowledge that they believe in God—in this case, a Chinese communist official who was probably obligated to profess atheism.

As for Revelation 13, there have been so many wildly speculative theories about the beast, the dragon, and the antichrist that responsible theologians may hesitate to address these themes at all. That would be a mistake. I cannot offer a complete interpretation of the book of Revelation here, but I think that the apostle John was giving us a pictorial interpretation of the events of his time, with the goal of helping believers throughout history to respond to similar events.

In the 30 years before John wrote this text around 95 AD, as already noted, Christians had endured two waves of persecution, under the emperors Nero and Domitian.⁴ Though there were probably differences between the two, in both cases the Roman Empire became beast-like. The first period of persecution, under Nero, probably lasted about forty-two months, until his death and a change of government. Tradition claims that both Peter and Paul were martyred under Nero, making it an especially painful time for Christians. I think the apostle John lost trusted friends during Nero's persecution. John viewed both persecutions as ultimately instigated by Satan, who is represented by the dragon. The beasts of Revelation were not part of the author's prophetic vision of some mysterious time in the future; they were his depiction of what the churches had already expe-

rienced, but presented in such a manner as to prepare future Christians for what would happen again.

John also mentions a false prophet later in Revelation; I think this refers to the redevelopment of emperor worship at his time in history. Some people within the Roman Empire were afraid that the empire would completely fall apart, leading to chaos and poverty. They thought that the religion of emperor worship, along with a very powerful emperor, would unify and save their society. The religion of emperor worship served as an ideological justification for having an all-powerful emperor. Those who coveted social stability hoped that the Roman Empire would take control of everything external in society while the religion of emperor worship would get inside people's hearts and minds, leaving no place that belonged only to God and not to Caesar. In this way, the false prophet, representing false religion, gave spiritual support to a beastly government.

In this context, the central creed of the early Christians, their profession that 'Jesus is Lord', was precisely the opposite of and an explicit denial of the central creed of emperor worship, 'Caesar is lord'. Both figures claimed to be lord of everything in life; both were foundations of a complete worldview and approach to life. When the combination of the Roman Empire and emperor worship became totalitarian, claiming the people's whole heart, mind, and life, it came into complete spiritual and moral conflict with Christians and the biblical message.

4 Some have proposed that John wrote the book of Revelation not around AD 95 but in about AD 68, before the destruction of Jerusalem. Following what I take to be the view of Irenaeus (AD 132–202), I think that the later date is more likely, but this question has little effect on the theme of this message, except that John would not yet have experienced Domitian's persecution.

III. Contemporary Examples

At the 2015 Tirana consultation, I heard a Christian woman from Syria, Rosangela Jarjour, describe what she had undergone and observed in the preceding few years. Her heart-wrenching message on the horrors she had experienced there reminds us that the beast of Revelation 13 is not only ancient history; rather, a state (or supposed state) acting like a devouring beast is the daily experience of many Christians today.

As I listened to Rosangela, I wished I could tell her that the persecution of her group of Christians would last only another few months, because it would not exceed the forty-two-month period referred to in the book of Revelation. But I do not find in Revelation a promise that all severe persecutions will end in forty-two months. Maybe John was referring to the length of the period of intense persecution that occurred under Nero in the first century; maybe the reference is symbolic (perhaps recalling similar language in the book of Daniel). But I don't think we can promise any specific group of suffering Christians that their time of tribulation will end after three and a half years.

What I am sure of is that today millions of Christians are living under the beast, in a Revelation 13 world that is overtly hostile to Christianity, while others live in a Romans 13 world, enjoying freedoms that are partly the result of the Bible's influence. And Jesus has told us that the watching world will know that we are disciples of Jesus by the way in which we Christians—including those two groups of Christians with very different life experiences—love each other.

In 2013, I participated in an international consultation on religious

freedom research in Istanbul, Turkey. Many had perceived that the persecution of Christians in many countries was getting worse, so about fifty researchers and activists gathered to discuss the problems. We quickly realized that Christians from around the world and across traditions within Christendom needed to cooperate much more extensively in responding to growing persecution. So the World Evangelical Alliance, working with the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, and the Pentecostal World Fellowship, called for a meeting of representatives of persecuted churches, which became the 2015 Tirana consultation. Because we were concerned about an ISIS attack, we held this meeting secretly in Albania. About seventy representatives from countries where the church is under strain and about seventy-five representatives of churches in the free world attended.

In preparation for Tirana, I edited materials for distribution to the delegates. As part of this effort, we combed through information and analysis from evangelical and Roman Catholic researchers (primarily the evangelical organization Open Doors and the Catholic agency Aid to the Church in Need) on the status and causes of persecution in countries around the world. Some of the stories I read made me sick. One day I quickly reminded myself of where my wastebasket was, in case I began vomiting at my desk. But I also became much more deeply aware of important patterns in global persecution. At that time, in thirty-nine of the countries on the Open Doors World Watch List (which ranks the fifty nations where it is most dangerous to be a Christian), some type of Islamic extremism

was one of the main sources of persecution. In several other countries, the leading cause was some type of Hindu or Buddhist nationalism. In a few places, organized crime or simple corruption was the primary problem. The country rated as engaging in the worst persecution of Christians at that time was a communist state, North Korea.

In the past few years, I have met representatives of persecuted Christians from some surprising places—surprising in the sense that I did not expect those people to be able to travel so freely: Syria, Iraq, Iran, Nepal, Kurdistan, Kazakhstan, Vietnam, Cambodia and China. But I have never met a Christian from North Korea. Not many Christians from North Korea are able to travel to tell their story, but the reports I have heard suggest that the combination of communism with a personality cult makes a ferocious beast.

What should we do about these situations? What is the duty of love that Christians in the Romans 13 world owe to Christians in the Revelation 13 world? One of the purposes of the meeting in Albania was to enable leaders of the persecuted church to address Christians from the rest of the world directly, helping them to develop better to-do lists and express their love and concern in visible, practical, effective ways.

The Tirana conferees eventually developed two to-do lists, one oriented towards churches and the other towards the world. I think these lists are extremely valuable and must be implemented in our circles. But two matters seemed to be of preeminent importance.

Our first duty is to pray for the persecuted churches. Even if we do

not know much about their theology, ethics, and worship, we can pray for them. Praying for them—and letting them know, where possible, that we are praying for them—responds to the two requests that persecuted Christians communicated most passionately and consistently at the Tirana conference. The first of these themes is the fear that they will be forgotten or abandoned by other Christians. They do not want to die for their faith without other Christians knowing about their martyrdom. The second theme is their prayer request for boldness in witness and proclamation while many of their members are being killed. I have heard people say, ‘Pray that we would be bold till we die, so that there will still be a church in our country to bring the gospel to our neighbors after this time of persecution is past.’ I think it is appropriate to include prayer for persecuted Christians in private, in our families, and in our regular congregational prayers, as well as to have special Lord’s days dedicated to prayer for the persecuted churches.

The second matter of urgency that confronted us in Tirana was to address our tragic Christian history of internal intra-Christian persecution. All too often, we Christians have been not just the persecuted but the persecutors as well! At the suggestion of Pope Francis, our Roman Catholic colleagues took the lead in asking us to affirm, ‘We repent of having at times persecuted each other and other religious communities in history, and ask forgiveness from each other and pray for new ways of following Christ together.’

The evangelicals and Protestants present at Tirana readily accepted this repentance while also confess-

ing their own failings. I see this as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit. This achievement was of extreme value, and by itself it made the time and treasure invested in the meetings worthwhile. The message may not yet have reached every local community yet, but in principle, internal Christian persecution should be finished!

Some other themes in our Tirana to-do lists are important and must be implemented. With regard to our relationships with fellow Christians, we said:

In communion with Christ we commit ourselves:

- a) To listen more to the experiences of Christians, Churches, and of all those who are discriminated against and persecuted, and deepen our engagement with suffering communities.
- b) To pray more for Churches, Christians, and for all those suffering discrimination and persecution, as well as for the transformation of those who discriminate and persecute.
- c) To speak up more with respect and dignity, with a clear and strong voice together, on behalf of those who are suffering.
- d) To do more in mutual understanding to find effective ways of solidarity and support for healing, reconciliation, and for the religious freedom of all oppressed and persecuted people.

Our second to-do list emerging from the Tirana consultation was oriented towards the world, calling for the types of actions that should, in my opinion, help gradually—over the very long term—to change Revelation 13 countries into Romans 13 coun-

tries. The consultation called on:

All persecutors who discriminate against and oppress Christians and violate human rights to cease their abuse, and to affirm the right of all human beings to life and dignity.

All governments to respect and protect the freedom of religion and belief of all people as a fundamental human right. We also appeal to governments and international organisations to respect and protect Christians and all other people of goodwill from threats and violence committed in the name of religion. In addition, we ask them to work for peace and reconciliation, to seek the settlement of on-going conflicts, and to stop the flow of arms, especially to violators of human rights. *All media* to report in an appropriate and unbiased way on violations of religious freedom, including the discrimination and persecution of Christians as well as of other faith communities.

All educational institutions to develop opportunities and tools to teach young people in particular about human rights, religious tolerance, healing of memories and hostilities of the past, and peaceful means of conflict resolution and reconciliation.

These words are very significant. Representatives of almost all the organizations in the world that call themselves Christian churches were calling on the other main institutions in society, government, media, and education to take up their proper roles to reduce the persecution of Christians and related human rights abuses. This is not something we can do in five minutes after church. This

requires serious long-term efforts by people responsible for our churches, government, media and educational institutions. And, I believe, these duties fall especially on those Christians and church groups who have a rich intellectual and educational history on which they can draw to strategize how to express effective love for persecuted Christians in the fields of government, media and education.

As I said earlier, the governments in the Romans 13 world usually have some important moral influences upstream that continue to influence what they decide to do today. In many or most countries with religious freedom, somewhere in the last 200 years, biblical themes made a significant impact on discussions of human dignity or of freedom of conscience. We have to use the realms of church, government, media and education to try to make that happen for Christians in the Revelation 13 world. Many researchers think that the persecution of Christians around the world has become worse than at any time in recent history. Multiple beasts are rearing their heads. We must use all legitimate means to respond.

IV. You Can Do Something

The global persecution of Christians feels like such a big problem that one may wonder how to make a meaningful impact. Just what can you or your church do? Let me give some suggestions:

1. Pray!
2. Start to read about the problem. My favourite source for reliable information is the World Watch List (accessible via www.opendoorsusa.org), which provides both shorter

and longer reports about the countries where religious persecution is extreme. Also, the International Institute for Religious Freedom (<http://iirf.eu>) contains a substantial and growing body of serious literature that addresses many dimensions of the problem.

3. Learn more about human rights documents and principles and what they say about religious freedom. At least since the United Nations endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), freedom of religion has been regarded as an important human right, even if many nations ignore it. It would be a worthwhile step if all Christians knew something about human rights.
4. Find out what your government says and does with regard to religious freedom and persecution. Do not be surprised if your government is not completely consistent with its own principles. Ask your public officials if they are implementing their own principles in both domestic and foreign policy.
5. If you are associated with a school or university, encourage your institution to hold an educational event and/or encourage advocacy activities on behalf of human rights and religious freedom.
6. Ask your church to develop a partnership with a particular persecuted church.

The very location of our 2015 Tirana consultation on discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom should

be a source of encouragement to everyone who thinks the plight of persecuted Christians is beyond our ability to have an impact. We came to Albania partly for security reasons, but also to celebrate the wonderful change that has occurred there. Under its former communist regime, Albania would have been near the top of the list of persecuting countries. For many years during that country's totalitarian period, it was essentially illegal not to be an atheist. But this

changed with the end of communism, and now Albania enjoys a good level of freedom of religion. Severe persecution eventually comes to an end, and freedom often returns.

Please take a moment now to pray for the persecuted church and ask God what he would have you do about this issue, which should be a high priority for any Christian who is concerned for the welfare of the whole body of Christ.

The WEA's 2019 General Assembly: Energy and Urgency

Bruce Barron, ERT editor

During preparations for the World Evangelical Alliance's General Assembly (GA) on November 7–12 near Jakarta, Indonesia, some leaders proposed calling for a 'decade of disciple making'. Others questioned the wisdom of declaring that for the next ten years we will do something that we should be doing all the time. (When we reach 2030, will we stop making disciples and move on to something else?)

I was one of the skeptics, but the conference won me over. The programme team, with its thoughtful approach to holistic, intergenerational disciple making, demonstrated that the idea of a decade of emphasis would be useful. After all, there is ample evidence that most Christians don't take discipling seriously enough.

Indonesian leader Bambang Budijanto highlighted the need. After ten years in the United States as Compassion's regional vice president for Asia, Budijanto returned to Indonesia to discover that no one had reliable data on how the Indonesian church was doing. So he helped to found the Bilangan Research Center, a sort of Indonesian equivalent to the Barna Research Group in the US.

Barna has reported that only 20 percent of US Christians are involved in discipling. Budijanto found a more encouraging result—40 percent—in Indonesia. But that still leaves 60

percent of the church unmobilized. (For the WEA's toolkit of resources to encourage discipling, see <https://tpsweb.site/wea/>.)

Programme developers underscored the need to share evangelical truths effectively with the next generation by giving ninety minutes of plenary presentation time to Tan Seow How, pastor of a Singapore church whose 4,000 attenders have an average age of twenty-two. How detailed his approach to youth empowerment, contending that many churches are led by 'alphas' who prefer to maintain control and 'will not allow spiritual children to grow up and come to maturity'. Few congregations can implement all of How's creative youth-focused methodology, but any congregation can encourage all its members to reach out intentionally to youth and can more fully incorporate youths' voice.

Those present in Indonesia included the first Catholic ever to attend a WEA General Assembly as an official observer: Msgr Juan Usma-Gómez, bureau chief for the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. 'I yearn for the day when all Catholics will be evangelical and all evangelicals will be catholic', Usma-Gómez said. (See the January *Theological News* on the WEA website for an interview with Usma-Gómez.)

The WEA introduced a four-point pledge to uphold evangelical essen-

tials, be authentic followers of Jesus, nurture intergenerational leadership, and link the organization's global focus with national-level impact by strengthening its national affiliates.

That last point is especially strategic. Beyond the call to discipleship, the most pervasive theme at the General Assembly was the need for unity and mutual support. On one hand, delegates from around the world recognized the WEA's value in giving a global identity to evangelicals, especially in countries where they are beleaguered and small in number. As Nik Nedelchek, who went from smuggling Bibles in Bulgaria under Soviet control to heading the European Evangelical Alliance and is now the WEA's ambassador to Orthodox churches, put it: 'Diplomatic recognition is important for a group that used to be seen as a sect.'

On the other hand, the WEA could do more practically to support national alliances. Tendero vowed that this situation will change, citing several planned initiatives. The most substantial among them is the WEA's new Global Institute of Leadership, developed in conjunction with Bakke Graduate University, which will help national alliances self-assess and then grow through training in board governance, leadership skills, communication, vision casting, financial sustainability and public service engagement. The WEA also hopes that its stronger national alliances will mentor weaker ones, or even help to start evangelical alliances in many of the sixty-two countries that don't currently have one.

For Westerners experiencing a church in decline, it was inspiring to see such vibrancy of faith emerging across the Global South, from the

WEA International Council's superbly equipped leader—Goodwill Shana, a Zimbabwean lawyer and megapastor who has played a major role in constitutional development in his country—to the 8,000 Indonesian Christians who inserted a spirit of celebration into the opening session. Meanwhile, WEA global ambassador Brian Stiller indefatigably reminded people that the recent numbers look promising, despite our struggles in the West. By his count, in 1960 there were about 90 million identifiable evangelicals in the world and now there are 600 million. (For an explanation of how that growth happened, see his 2018 book *From Jerusalem to Timbuktu*.)

The WEA is a highly energized undertaking, so massive in scope and so decentralized that it's hard for any individual to keep up with. Tendero, who displayed a map showing that he had visited forty-two countries since 2016, believes that the appointment of two deputy secretaries general—Godfrey Yogarajah for ministries and Ray Swatkowski for operations—has been very helpful. In any case, despite its relatively limited resources, the WEA is doing amazing work on behalf of the world's estimated 600 million evangelicals.

You can learn more about what the WEA does by reading Tendero's State of the Movement message, starting on the next page. After that comes Thomas K. Johnson's presentation on the significance of *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*, the book on the essentials of Christianity published last year with participation by all major Christian groups in Turkey. (See the July 2018 ERT for Thomas Schirmacher's message upon the initial release of this book.)

The State of the Evangelical Movement

Efraim Tendero

Greetings! It is a great joy to be here with you. We are especially grateful to the Indonesian Evangelical Alliance and Pastor Niko Njotorahardjo for their exceptional generosity in hosting our General Assembly.

In my role as Secretary General, I think often about the apostle Paul and his ministry as recorded in his New Testament letters and the book of Acts. Paul traveled throughout the Christian world of his day, enduring great hardships to encourage believers.

Paul knew that all his efforts would be in vain if the local churches did not prosper. He referred to the churches as his 'joy and crown' (Phil 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19). He prayed earnestly for them (Eph 1:16–19; 3:14–19). He felt a deep, daily emotional burden for the churches (2 Cor 11:28). And he was especially concerned to see the church function together in unity. This theme is very prominent in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians and pervades even his personal communications, such as when he begs Euodia and Syntyche to quit squabbling in Philippians 4:2.

The World Evangelical Alliance today is a lot like Paul. We travel all over the world, seeking to support, unite, and empower believers. Just as

Paul defended the Gospel before governors of the Roman Empire, we represent the gospel before national governments and at the United Nations. We pray diligently for the church around the world and feel an especially great burden for the churches that are remaining faithful to God in dangerous circumstances. And just as Paul's work was meaningless unless the local churches flourished, so the WEA can do nothing unless we have strong national alliances.

This is especially true because we are not a top-down organization. We have no hierarchical leadership. The WEA is respected and treated as an important voice at the global level only because of the cumulative voice and effectiveness of evangelical alliances in countries around the world.

Our vision as the WEA is to unite evangelicals globally for Gospel transformation. This is a collective effort. The WEA works only because all of us are committed to active participation in a global network of evangelicals that produces unity, Gospel witness, and discipleship.

In our global organization, nearly everyone raises his or her own support or serves on a volunteer basis. Nevertheless, the commitment level of our global, regional, and national

Efraim Tendero is Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance and Bishop Emeritus of the Alliance Bible Christian Churches of the Philippines. He delivered this address on November 8, 2019 at the WEA General Assembly in Bogor, Indonesia. Bishop Tendero also wishes to thank the many other leaders and entities within the WEA whose work, due to time limitations, he could not mention by name in his message.

leaders is extraordinary. I want to thank all of you for your generous, dedicated contributions without which we could not exist, let alone thrive.

The World Evangelical Alliance's role is to unite and empower evangelicals globally, giving them identity, voice, and platform in every nation. That mission drives everything we do. In this message I will summarize how we are doing it and what we need to do better in the upcoming years, as God enables us. I hope you will sense how our efforts consistently aim at supporting our networks and especially our regional and national alliances.

I. What We Have Done

1. Improving the Organization

As you know, this is our first General Assembly in eleven years. When I was elected Secretary General, we had not elected our governing body, the International Council or IC, for seven years. Over the course of seven years, inevitably some people's commitments and activities change. So electing a new IC was very important in building our organizational strength. I am grateful for our active IC. They are deeply engaged in ensuring good governance and accountability, providing oversight, and giving wise guidance to the WEA staff.

We also revised our bylaws to streamline our organizational structure, membership categories, and upgrade the Office of the Secretary General. Instead of just one person, we now have three people carrying out the office's work, including Godfrey Yogarajah for programs and ministries and Ray Swatkowski for op-

erations. We are now stronger, more effective, and better positioned for a smooth leadership succession.

Our Senior Leadership Team also includes our Associate Secretary General for Theological Concerns and the directors of the four other Ministry Departments we have created: missions and evangelism, church in community, communications and public engagement. All our commissions, task forces, and initiatives (to which we refer collectively as 'networks') have been placed under one of these Ministry Departments for improved coordination. For all our departments and networks, achieving increased engagement with our regional and national alliances is a high priority.

We communicate regularly with the seven regional general secretaries—covering Asia, Africa, Latin America, North America, Europe, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific region. We meet monthly by teleconference to update each other and coordinate our work.

To make our entire organization accessible and responsive to the needs of our member alliances, we have decentralized our operations, creating six global hubs so that we can be closer to the regional and national alliances and readily available throughout the entire world.

We harnessed the partnership of our members who provided the hospitality for the annual meetings of global leaders in Seoul, Korea in 2016; Bad Blankenburg, Germany in 2017; Fort Lauderdale, Florida, USA in 2018; and Nairobi, Kenya in 2019.

We have created a Task Force on Development to enable the WEA to expand its efforts while remaining financially sustainable. We thank God for our Global Ambassador, Brian

Stiller, who has agreed to assist us with short-term leadership in the area of financial development.

2. Strengthening National and Regional Alliances

To assist believers around the world, especially those in countries where Christians are frequently under strain, we seek to establish national and regional alliances where none have existed. We have formed two new regional alliances, one for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and one in Central Asia, along with twelve new national alliances.

Since every national alliance is autonomous, each one must be able to function effectively on its own in terms of board governance, staff leadership, and addressing prominent issues. The WEA has responded to those needs by offering trainings on five topics: leadership, public engagement, advocacy, theology of persecution and suffering, and making use of available mechanisms through the United Nations. Furthermore, we have just launched a Global Institute of Leadership, which will offer peer mentoring by regional coaches and experienced leaders of national alliances, along with online resources. We believe that these new training and mentoring resources will bear great fruit in the form of peer learning and replication of successful work.

3. Global Advocacy for Religious Freedom

Advocacy for religious freedom is one of our most important activities. This advocacy is essential to our goal of enabling the gospel to be preached throughout the world. We also, as a

matter of principle, support religious freedom for all people, not just Christians. In doing so, we gain respect and partners for our efforts.

We are one of many voices on the topic of religious freedom, so we do not try to claim credit for any particular successes, but our work on this front has been substantial. We did much of the background work and preparation that enabled the Global Christian Forum's December 2015 conference on religious persecution to be so effective. We also continue to sponsor the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church each November. Our Religious Liberty Commission does extensive research and analysis on situations in specific countries. We are on the board of the Religious Liberty Partnership, a collaboration of agencies involved in ministry to the persecuted church.

The International Institute for Religious Freedom, which is part of our Department of Theological Concerns, has participated in about fifty government conferences on religious freedom and twenty discussions in national parliaments. It has also sponsored or been involved in the program for eleven United Nations conferences. The most recent of these was the Second World Summit on Religious Violence and Religious Freedom, held at the UN headquarters in Geneva six months ago. The IIRF has also opened an office in Brasilia, Brazil to serve Latin America.

Our Geneva Liaison Office takes up cases from an average of twenty national evangelical alliances per year. Based on careful research, it submits reports and appeals to United Nations bodies and to the embassies of the governments we are lobbying, usually on matters of religious freedom. Our

Geneva office is increasingly playing an important bridging role between WEA member alliances on one hand and global human rights institutions and governments on the other hand.

When Pastor Andrew Brunson was imprisoned in Turkey, we spoke directly with the Turkish ambassador to the United States regarding his case. We believe that our conversation, along with many others, helped to secure Pastor Brunson's release.

When Bulgaria proposed legislation that would have curtailed the rights of religious minorities, our national alliance in Bulgaria and our global advocacy team in Geneva worked together to communicate our concerns. We were successful in getting the undesirable provisions removed from the legislation before it was passed.

When Kosovo was considering a similar bill, our national alliance arranged for me to meet personally with the country's President and the Speaker of the Parliament. Again, the bill did not pass.

When two Sudanese pastors and a third person from the Czech Republic were sentenced to twelve years in prison for allegedly spying against the state, we called on the Sudanese government to grant them clemency. The Czech national was released within twenty-four days and the two pastors were freed three months later.

Our efforts to protect religious freedom in Algeria, where churches have recently been shut down by government authorities, are ongoing. Some churches were reopened in 2018 after we encouraged the US State Department to look into the situation. However, in recent months, Algerian authorities have closed six more churches. Our member alliance

in Algeria is appealing for support and prayers.

On the other hand, we just enjoyed a wonderful success this week when the Palestinian National Authority granted full recognition to our evangelical alliance in Palestine, which they have been seeking for twelve years.

When Pope Francis visited the United Arab Emirates last February for a conference on human fraternity, I was there too representing the WEA. In my message, I gently urged my hosts to move toward religious tolerance. I reminded them that forced religious belief is no belief at all.

Christians all over the world are suffering for their faith. It is gratifying to know that we play a significant role in standing up for them and encouraging them.

4. Building Our Commissions and Networks

We thank God for our many commissions and networks that are addressing particular issues. For example, our Peace and Reconciliation Network has spearheaded advocacy on behalf of peacemaking in various countries.

Our Mission Commission is strongly advancing the idea of polycentric mission—that is, the idea that mission should be from everywhere to everywhere, not just from the West to the rest—by publishing books, mobilizing mission organizations and organizing mission consultations.

Our Women's Commission has held a global consultation that connected female leaders from around the world, and our Youth Commission has been similarly bringing youth leaders together for meaningful collaboration.

With our support, our national alliance in the Philippines held the first-ever Jesus Global Youth Day, organized by Generation Next, in Manila last August. Fifty thousand youth leaders from about fifty countries came together for this event, and we also had virtual participation from 83,000 local sites around the world. One outcome of this event was a challenge to churches to lower the average age of their membership to twenty-three during the next decade.

Our Sustainability Center, located in Bonn opposite the entrance to the United Nations facilities there, has organized several side events at UN conferences and has established stable relationships with the UN climate secretariat and other UN bodies. In fact, the Center has become co-chair of a working group within the UN's International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development, a network of 180 global institutions of all faiths.

Our Department of Theological Concerns has helped to launch the Society of Christian Scholars, a global network of Christians seeking to effectively represent and communicate the gospel in academic settings.

This department has also developed 'Re-Forma', a global basic training program that we hope will reach one million untrained pastors.

5. Interfaith and Intrafaith Relations

Our interfaith and intrafaith work is some of our most exciting activity, though also perhaps where we are most often misunderstood. It is exciting because the WEA, as a voice for evangelical Christians globally, is recognized as among the most important

religious organizations in the world.

Some have expressed understandable concerns that our evangelical message could be compromised as we build friendships and collaborations with people of other faiths. But we have found that we can relate graciously with other faith groups while clearly maintaining our commitment to Jesus Christ as our 'calling card' in every encounter.

We have changed the designation of the Office of Ecumenical Relations to the Office of Intrafaith and Interfaith Relations. The International Council approved earlier this year a detailed statement of principles defining how we will carry out our intrafaith and interfaith interactions.

On the intrafaith side, which refers to our dealings with other groups that identify as Christian, we have established friendly, ongoing institutional relationships with all major Christian confessions. As part of this work, we have appointed specific, highly knowledgeable individuals such as our ambassadors to the Vatican, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Churches, and the Russian Orthodox Churches.

We also meet frequently with the heads or general secretaries of all non-evangelical and evangelical global denominations.

We have carefully structured our relationship with the World Council of Churches so that we can cooperate well where possible and can listen and have mutually respectful discussions in areas of disagreement. We collaborate with the WCC and the Vatican within the Global Christian Forum, again sometimes joining hands as partners and sometimes respectfully discussing differences.

Our intrafaith work also involves

reaching out to evangelical friends like the Lausanne Movement, Transform World, Empowered 21, and the World Pentecostal Fellowship. We initiated several conversations with their leaders so we can avoid duplication and instead collaborate effectively.

On the interfaith side, we have established an ambitious dialogue program with Muslim leaders. In these meetings we work toward peace and reconciliation, give a clear witness to the salvation that Jesus Christ offers, and advocate for our brothers and sisters living in Muslim-governed lands. We have paid visits to every grand mufti and every Muslim minister of religion. We have also participated in every major Muslim-Christian global dialogue conference as well as broader conferences like Religions for Peace, on an average of once a month.

Beyond this, we are preparing to enter a global dialogue with Jewish representatives and have started to engage with global or national leaders of other world religions.

In our pluralistic world, as we relate to other groups we must constantly keep in mind what we as evangelicals are best known for: boldly and graciously proclaiming and demonstrating the Gospel.

II. What We Need to Do

We thank God for what has done and continues to do throughout our network of alliances. But we realize that significant challenges remain.

First, we need to strengthen our communications systems and networks so that leaders in all parts of the world are aware of and can access available resources. Global communication, even to remote areas, is more

possible today than ever before. Our challenge is to use the means available to us not only to share information and create networks where people with like passions can encourage and strengthen each other toward fulfilling the vision that God has given us.

Not only do we need to share our success stories more broadly, but we also need to communicate our successes and best practices, gather information, and facilitate cross-national sharing of ideas. Accordingly, we are upgrading our communication systems by integrating universally available technologies. We will increase our use of social media to tell stories, share ideas, and interact on important issues that will strengthen our collective ministries. We are grateful that God has provided funding for additional communications staff to support this work.

Second, we need to increase our capacity to raise funds. We are expanding our development efforts to connect with people who share our ministry passion across the US and around the globe.

We are grateful that many people engaged in WEA ministries have been able to raise funds to support their ministry. We also want to equip leaders of regional and national alliances to expand their own fundraising capacity. We are currently searching for skilled people who can mentor and train national alliance leaders in raising funds.

Third, we are not yet a truly global organization. We have national alliances in 131 nations, at various levels of organizational maturity. But there are about sixty-two more countries where we have no representation.

We will be aggressive and focused

in establishing new alliances and strengthening the current ones to maturity. We want to have a national alliance in every country. Our main strategy will be to ask stronger alliances to 'adopt' other countries and either mentor sister alliances there or help to create one if none exists. We will do this in partnership with the respective regional evangelical alliances.

Our national alliances will, of course, retain their autonomy, but we want to assist them to do their work with consistently high quality. We have developed a self-assessment tool that national alliances can use to examine their own performance and capacity. Working through our Global Institute of Leadership, we intend to help our national alliances apply this tool and then improve in their areas of need.

Externally, our relevance and impact are observed most strongly in our advocacy on global issues such as religious freedom, creation care, peacemaking, human trafficking, and refugee populations. We want to build on the gains we have achieved in our global advocacy. In particular, we must amplify the evangelical voice on behalf of freedom of religion, es-

pecially in places where Christians are a minority. I believe that our most promising way to enhance our advocacy is by creating a culture of healthy and interdependent partnership among our national and regional alliances, commissions, and networks.

We also want to strengthen our relationships with other faith groups as well as with the United Nations and other global networks so that our voice can be clearly heard.

Finally, we must constantly be looking for more effective ways to fulfill the Great Commission. In partnership with the International Evangelism Association and the Billy Graham Training Center, we have introduced disciple-making ministry in thirty-eight countries. In this General Assembly, our primary focus is intentional, intergenerational and holistic disciple making. During the next decade, we want to accelerate high-quality disciple-making efforts that will usher in global spiritual renewal and awakening, so that we can see the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ forever.

Together, let us advance the Kingdom of God. Maranatha!

An Astonishing and Completely Normal Book from Turkey

Thomas K. Johnson

A year ago, in late 2018, a book appeared that was simultaneously most astonishing while also completely normal. As a student I read some astonishing books, texts that changed the course of history, whether Plato's *Republic*, Augustine's *Confessions*, Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*, or Karl Marx's *The Communist Manifesto*. In such books, it is the usually the content of the book which is astonishing; but in the recent astonishing book, the content is a routine presentation of basic Christian teaching.

What is astonishing is the authorship of the book: official representatives of all four branches of Christianity, each of which has highly competent senior spokespeople in Turkey. I am speaking of the book *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*, written by Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, and Oriental Orthodox leaders, published by the Joint Commission of Churches in Turkey, now readily available in Kindle. In response to the century of pressure on Christians in the Middle East, at times reaching genocidal levels, all branches of Christianity have joined forces to confess and explain their shared faith, first in Turkish, now in English for the international community.

The churches in Turkey have once again taken global leadership, this

time by so publicly and dramatically displaying the new paradigm in intra-Christian relations; this is suitable follow-up on the decisive role of the churches of Asia Minor, today's Turkey, in the formulation of the classical Christian creeds in the fourth and fifth centuries. As in any paradigm shift that potentially influences the lives of hundreds of millions, it is wise to assess the nature of the shift. I will do so by placing this book in the unfolding recent history of documents regarding intrafaith relations.

I. The Previous Pattern of Intrafaith Relations

Looking at intra-Christian relations since the 1970s, one sees a pattern of getting to know each other by means of talking about each other, with a strong emphasis on getting to know the truth claims of the other branches of Christianity. For example, in the preamble to the joint Vatican/WEA statement on meetings from 1993 to 2002, 'Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of Koinonia', one reads, 'The purpose of these consultations has been to overcome misunderstandings, to seek better mutual understanding of each other's Christian life and heritage, and to promote better relations between Evangelicals

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and Catholics.' The writers of the text labored to understand each other's understanding of the Christian message and life. This required comparing truth claims in great detail.

While this was only the explicitly stated purpose of that decade of interaction, one sees a similar character in the other two primary documents of that era. These documents are 'The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission, 1977–1984', published in 1985, and "'Scripture and Tradition" and "The Church in Salvation": Catholics and Evangelicals Explore Challenges and Opportunities', published thirty-two years later in 2017, the result of intensive discussion from 2009 to 2016. A review of these texts, or even perusing the tables of contents of these texts, reveals an extraordinarily precise examination of what Catholics and Evangelicals believe about themes such as the Bible and its interpretation, spiritual authority, tradition, Christ, the gospel, salvation and the church. A study of the three documents provides a distinct introduction to Evangelical and Roman Catholic theology and ethics. To repeat, the focus of the interaction was on the truth claims of the respective branches of Christianity, which were examined in precise detail.

This focus was also seen in other intra-Christian discussions, not only in Evangelical-Catholic interactions. For example, the North American Orthodox-Catholic Consultation of 2003 invested tremendous energy into the 'Filioque' question. Does the Holy Spirit proceed 'from the Father' or 'from the Father and the Son' (Filioque), as the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, respectively, had confessed in slightly differing versions of the Christian creeds? In their official

statement, they very carefully recommended that 'Orthodox and Catholic theologians distinguish more clearly between the divinity and hypostatic identity of the Holy Spirit, which is a received dogma of our Churches, and the manner of the Spirit's origin.'¹ The manner of the discussion again illustrates the focus on respective truth claims within intrafaith interactions.

II. The New Pattern of Intrafaith Relations

Beginning around 2010, one sees a new type of interaction among the multiple branches of Christianity, while the older type of interaction also continued. This is a transition from dialogue to cooperation, a transition from talking with each other towards jointly addressing common problems. The document that signalled the new pattern was 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World', jointly issued in 2011 by the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, and the World Evangelical Alliance.²

¹ For the text and background, see Thomas K. Johnson, *The Trinity in the Bible and Selected Creeds of the Church* (Bonn: Martin Bucer Seminary, 2013), 19–20, available at https://www.academia.edu/36948453/The_Trinity_in_the_Bible_and_Selected_Creeds_of_the_Church_Resources_for_Study.

² See the WEA press release 'A New Page of History Is Written', Bonner Querschnitte, 29 June 2011, <https://www.bucer.de/ressource/details/bonner-querschnitte-182011-ausgabe-172-eng.html>. For commentary on the need for this text, see Thomas K. Johnson, 'In Context: Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World', World Reformed Fellowship, 2011, available at https://www.academia.edu/40718713/In_Context_Christian_Witness_in_a_Multi-Religious_World.

This code of ethics was a response to opposition to Christian proclamation in several countries, sometimes in the form of anti-conversion or so-called anti-proselytism laws, sometimes in the form of prejudicial claims that Christians had used inappropriate means to entice people to become Christians. We were accused of using humanitarian aid, medical care or education as a bribe to manipulate people into pseudo-conversions to Christianity. And therefore, opponents of Christianity thought, Christian proclamation should be forced to a halt.

One must admire the holy boldness displayed in the opening line of this response by representatives of some 95 percent of all people who are called Christians: 'Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian.'³ Then comes the complementary principle: 'At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.'

To be noted is the way in which proclamation of the gospel is set within ethical principles arising from the creation of all people in the image of God. Rather than being limited by complaints coming from the world, Christian proclamation is to be

guided by ethical principles built into creation, which might even be shared by people who do not yet believe in Jesus. Without denying that some Christians may have sinned, the solution was to establish a public code of ethics by which religious proclamation (by Christians or by adherents of any belief system) may be evaluated. For our purposes of the present message, namely perceiving the generational patterns within intrafaith relations, one must notice the transition from discussing our respective understandings of Christian truth claims towards also jointly solving problems arising for all Christians.

This same paradigm development was displayed in the Tirana consultation 'Discrimination, Persecution, and Martyrdom: Following Christ Together' of 2015. Organized by the Global Christian Forum on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Vatican), the World Council of Churches, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, and the World Evangelical Alliance, the consultation brought 150 church leaders together. 'Seventy-five Christian church leaders from churches and countries that know "Discrimination, Persecution, Martyrdom" were listened to by seventy-five top global Christian church leaders from other countries.'⁴

At the end of the meetings, those gathered issued a surprising statement. Among other things they said, 'We repent of having at times perse-

See also Thomas Schirrmacher and Thomas K. Johnson, 'Why Evangelicals Need a Code of Ethics for Mission', *International Journal for Religious Freedom* 3, no. 1 (2010), available at https://www.academia.edu/37017831/Why_Evangelicals_need_a_Code_of_Ethics_for_Mission.

³ The whole text is available at https://www.bucer.de/fileadmin/dateien/Dokumente/BQs/zu_BQ100-199/zuBQ172/ChristianWitness_recommendations.pdf.

⁴ See the WEA press release 'Historic Gathering of Global Christian Leaders to Discuss a Common Reaction to "Discrimination, Persecution, Martyrdom"', Bonner Querschnitte, 17 November 2015, <https://www.bucer.de/ressource/details/bonner-querschnitte-492015-ausgabe-385-eng.html>.

cuted each other and other religious communities in history, and ask forgiveness from each other and pray for new ways of following Christ together', a clear reference to intra-Christian persecution. Then the delegates issued a tremendously serious 'to do' list related to supporting and protecting Christians from all churches facing discrimination, persecution and martyrdom.⁵

In contrast with the documents on intra-Christian relations from the previous generation, the Tirana consensus message contained no comparative truth claims. The text is openly Trinitarian and gospel-centred, yet there was no mention of the differences among Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox views. Shoulder to shoulder, senior representatives of almost all Christians gathered to respond to the oppression of Christians.

III. The Initiative from Turkey

Christians in Turkey are heirs to a most distinguished history. Much of the mission work described in the New Testament was in Asia Minor; followers of Jesus were first called Christians in Antioch, today's Antakya in southern Turkey; and the great international councils of the ancient church were held in the regions we now call western Turkey.

Though the Christians in Turkey repeatedly suffered devastating wars and persecutions in the medieval and early modern eras, they represented 20 to 25 percent of the population as

recently as 1914. Starting in 1915, some three million Christians died in a series of genocides, followed by a century of repression and discrimination, initiating a long-term exodus of believers. Christians are now less than half of one percent of the population in Turkey. Recent prominent martyrs add to the severe pressure felt by Christians in Turkey.

Rather than splinter or retreat, Christians of the most diverse heritages and ethnicities are clearly resurgent, amidst reports of spiritual renewal in the churches. Prompted partly by requests from the Turkish government and schools for a definition of what Christianity is, Christians in Turkey are confessing their faith together. One is reminded of the way in which the church of the first centuries confessed 'Jesus is Lord' to counter the confession of the Roman imperial religion that 'Caesar is Lord'. Going beyond the great Christian creeds, their efforts to author a book together must have taken countless hours in committee, so their official representatives could evaluate every word to be sure it was consistent with the best convictions of each of the churches. We should receive this book as a gift to the entire body of Christ.

Under the old paradigm, Christian groups met to get to know each other better and clarify their similarities and differences. Building on that previous work, within the new paradigm, Christians are jointly affirming their shared faith and proclaiming that faith to the world in unified fashion. That is a significant development deserving close examination.

The book begins with a brief introduction which discusses monotheism, the Bible, Jesus Christ (including his death and resurrection),

⁵ The full consultation message is available at https://www.bucer.de/fileadmin/dateien/Dokumente/BQs/BQ300ff/BQ385/DPM_Message_English_.pdf.

and salvation by faith (quoting John 3:1–16), with a few paragraphs about the churches and their practices, including worship, rituals and holidays. There follows a chapter on the ‘Existence and Oneness of God’, which explains the four ways in which humans get to know God: through reason, through revelation, through Christ, and through the Holy Spirit. These four ways are not separate from each other; they are components of the holistic way we know God and his salvation.

The desire for a holistic presentation continues into the description of God as Trinity. Starting with the unity and complexity seen in creation, they describe the unity and complexity of God: ‘Just as creation’s oneness derives from the oneness of God, so also creation’s multiplicity has its source in the principle of God’s plurality.’⁶ But knowing God as Trinity is not the result of reason; this theme prompts an explanation of revelation. ‘God has communicated to humankind the most correct knowledge concerning Himself in His own written Word, the Bible, and in His incarnate Word, the Lord Jesus Christ. The knowledge communicated to us through this divine self-disclosure that we call Revelation is certain to contain propositions, especially concerning the identity of the Creator, that are beyond the mind and understanding of man.’⁷ What follows is a brief explanation of Christian teaching about the Trinity, such as one would expect from any competent pastor, entirely

normal but astonishing because it is in unity from the pens of official representatives of all four branches of Christianity.

The explanation of salvation places the work of Christ into God’s eternal plan from before the creation of the world to have a people among whom he would dwell. Humanity was created as the pinnacle of creation, in the very image of God, to care for God’s world. The human race was given freedom but used this freedom to revolt against God. God did not give up on mankind; he began a plan of redemption to be implemented over many centuries, starting some 4,000 years ago with Abraham, while the world was buried in idolatry. Through the sacrificial system taught by Moses to the people of Israel, God showed that sin and guilt must be paid by a sacrifice. John the Baptist declared that Jesus is ‘the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!’ (Jn 1:29). The death of Jesus on the cross was the true sacrifice that paid for sins, bringing an end to the era of physical sacrifices. ‘By faith, we Christians participate and share in this unique Sacrifice, offered once in all of history.’⁸

We could summarize the entire book, but that is not necessary. Some might look for a strongly worded statement on *sola scriptura*, fearing such a book could betray an excessive dependence on the authority of one church. We will not find such intra-Christian debate here. Rather one finds statements such as this: ‘Outside of the Holy Bible there is no book presenting a historical project estab-

⁶ The Joint Commission of Churches in Turkey, *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings* (Kindle edition), Location 153.

⁷ *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*, Location 160.

⁸ *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*, Location 421.

lished by God to save humankind.⁹ 'Which book has influenced societies to develop, practice and defend human rights and values, gender equality and democracy, freedom of thought and expression?'¹⁰ 'The message of the Holy Bible has reached us without change or corruption. Even in translation, its light is so powerful that the literature and intellectual life of every Christian nation has experienced revolutionary, sweeping change after acquiring a translation of the Holy Bible.'¹¹ Even the discussion of reason as a way to know God is designed to support biblical beliefs, a normal apologetic method.

Some will look for a paragraph on justification by faith alone. This could disappoint a careless reader. That exact terminology may be lacking. One finds such statements as these: 'According to the Christian faith, human salvation from sin is a free gift of grace. A person cannot bring about his own salvation.'¹² This is joined with a careful presentation of the forgiveness of sins. We may wish to add a sentence when we are teaching on this subject, but that will be an explanation of what is written, not a denial of what is in this book.

The discussion of the Bible and faith leads to ethics. Our Turkish brothers and sisters do not disappoint. As is common for Christians, they connect love and law. 'Many of the religious laws given in the Bible,

especially the Ten Commandments, can be used to determine ethical measurements, standards and values of human behaviour. According to Christian tradition, the common starting point of all of these laws is love.'¹³ They continue, 'Christians have attempted to implement their faith by building schools, hospitals and soup kitchens in addition to houses of worship. Every church has an active aid program that tries to help its local poor. Various foundations contribute to the education of poor students through scholarships.'¹⁴ In relation to civil law, they write, 'Everything prohibited by secular law may not be a sin, while not every sin may be prohibited by secular law. If this situation forces us to make a choice, Christians should listen to God's Law and their conscience.'¹⁵ Continuing their emphasis on God-given human dignity they add, 'Abortion is the greatest assault on human life and, therefore, also to Almighty God. Our Holy Bible clearly shows that God's great love and care for a person begins from the moment of conception.'¹⁶

IV. Conclusion

Our brothers and sisters in Turkey have written an astonishing book; though normal in Christian teaching, it is overwhelming as a unified proclamation of basic Christianity to the whole world. Even if it is hard for us,

⁹ *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*, Location 682.

¹⁰ *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*, Location 693.

¹¹ *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*, Location 694.

¹² *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*, Location 589.

¹³ *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*, Location 740.

¹⁴ *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*, Location 770.

¹⁵ *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*, Location 778.

¹⁶ *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*, Location 781.

the rest of the body of Christ should, once again, accept the leadership of the churches in Asia Minor. Not all our fathers and mothers in the faith immediately accepted the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople in the fourth century, but history shows it would have been better for our churches if we had accepted their leadership more quickly. The same is true today. We should humbly accept the leadership coming from Turkey. Not only individuals but official representatives of all the churches in Turkey have implemented 1 Peter 3:15, 'Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.' We should go and do likewise, in public cooperation with the other branches of Christianity.

Our context today is not exactly the Gnosticism or Arianism faced by

the early church and addressed in the creeds, though those problems constantly recur. The Turkish context is a history of violence, genocide and oppression, now facing a Muslim-majority culture mixed with global secularism. There are serious analogies to the situations faced (or soon to be faced) by Christians around the world.

The method used in this book cannot be imagined without the recent history of intra-Christian relations, both the process of getting to know each other by talking about each other's truth claims and also the process of joint responses to opposition. The churches from the four branches of Christianity in Turkey have presented a unified proclamation, *apologia*, and ethics in response to opposition and persecution. The global body of Christ needs to find courage to follow.

Books Reviewed

Dion Forster

The (Im)possibility of Forgiveness? An Empirical Intercultural Bible Reading of Matthew 18:15–35

Reviewed by Peirong Lin

Juan María Tellería Larrañaga

Teología del Antiguo Testamento: El mensaje divino contenido en la ley, los profetas y los escritos

Reviewed by Andrew Messmer

Michael S. Lundy and J. I. Packer

Depression, Anxiety, and the Christian Life: Practical Wisdom from Richard Baxter

Reviewed by Dallas B. Pitts

Brian Brock and Bernd Wannenwetsch

The Malady of the Christian Body: A Theological Exposition of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, vol. 1

The Therapy of the Christian Body: A Theological Exposition of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, vol. 2

Reviewed by H. Drake Williams III

Stanley K. Fowler

More Than a Symbol: The British Baptist Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism

Reviewed by Andrew Messmer

Book Reviews

ERT (2020) 44:1, 88-89

The (Im)possibility of Forgiveness? An Empirical Intercultural Bible Reading of Matthew 18:15–35

Dion Forster

Stellenbosch, South Africa: African Sun Media, 2018

Electronic copy, 262 pp., bibliog., index, illus.

Reviewed by Peirong Lin, Human Resources Director and Research Coordinator, Theological Concerns Department, World Evangelical Alliance and Affiliated Researcher at Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium

This book is the second dissertation of Dion Forster, director of the Beyers Naudé centre at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa. This centre 'reflects upon the role of theology in the publics and environments of academic life, churches and broader society'. The book displays the centre's aims as Forster reflects theologically on the issue

of forgiveness along racial lines in South Africa, a lasting legacy of apartheid.

Forster describes his project as seeking to answer a particular concern for 'a lack of forgiveness and community harmony within the church'. Although South Africa is quite religious, its church remains deeply segregated along racial and economic lines. Through positive intergroup contact, Forster analysed how the hermeneutics of forgiveness can change through positive intergroup engagement.

The project was interdisciplinary in nature, combining biblical studies and empirical theology. Matthew 18:15–35 was used as the 'reflective surface' throughout. Forster focused on his denomination, the Methodist Church of Southern Africa, Heidelberg circuit.

Chapter 1 introduces the overall project, offering insights into the research problem. Chapter 2 provides a detailed explication of Ken Wilber's integral AQAL theory, which maps meaning construction and identity onto four ontological

and existential quadrants of existence. The third chapter details the next important theoretical component of the project, intergroup contact theory. Arguing that mere contact between different racial groups that have deeply ingrained biases is insufficient, Forster describes in detail the necessary conditions to enable positive intergroup contact that can lessen anxiety and facilitate empathy between the groups.

Chapter 4 delivers a comprehensive exegesis of Matthew 18:15–35. Forster begins by describing the importance of this passage for the project. His exegesis focuses on social implications, and he concludes the chapter with an AQAL reading of the text.

In chapter 5, Forster brings together the different theoretical concepts, showing how they will be used empirically. He describes the focus group meetings he arranged in an effort to facilitate positive interaction among two groups—a white and a black congregation within his denomination. Two intergroup meetings were held, and each group convened separately before and after the two intergroup sessions.

Chapter 6 presents the findings, which largely confirmed Forster's hypotheses. For the black community, the need for a shared experience of shared harmony and identity was an important aspect of forgiveness, whereas the white community understood forgiveness mainly as a spiritual experience between the individual and God. However, there were indications that intergroup interaction led each group to broaden its perspective so as to encompass the meanings important to the other group. The positive intergroup engagement helped to facilitate this hermeneutical shift by increasing empathy, reducing anxiety and thus opening the way to deeper dialogue. The final chapter thus concludes

that theological hermeneutical shifts are achievable through positive intergroup engagement.

Although this issue was not within Forster's research scope, matters of group dynamics would be essential to the implementation of Forster's method in other church contexts. In addition, personality factors of both the facilitator and individual group members do not receive much attention; these factors will almost certainly influence the overall process.

However, the book documents an effective response to an on-going public issue within the South African context. It links theory and praxis successfully, showing how the church's practical work can be meaningfully informed by theological reflection.

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***Teología del Antiguo Testamento:
El mensaje divino contenido en la
ley, los profetas y los escritos***

Juan María Tellería Larrañaga

Barcelona, Spain: Editorial CLIE, 2018

Pb., 730 pp., succinct bibliography

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Whereas the English- and German-speaking worlds have had a plethora of books published on Old Testament theology (hereafter OTT) over the past two centuries, the Spanish-speaking world has not. In fact, Tellería Larrañaga's *Theology of the Old Testament* is just the third book published on the topic by a Spaniard, and the first from a non-Catholic perspective (199). Thus,

this publication is not only historically significant but also serves to help us evaluate the current state of theological reflection in Spain.

The book is divided into five major sections. In an introductory chapter, Larrañaga addresses issues that broadly touch on the relationship between the OT and history (*Historie*). He is heavily indebted to historical criticism and has been influenced by minimalism (31), and therefore he assesses large portions the OT as historically unreliable (e.g. Genesis 1 to Exodus 14 are 'myths' and 'legendary compositions' and not historical; 15–16, 25–27). Larrañaga concludes that the OT is not to be treated as a history book, but rather as a theology book that is born out of reflection on God's mighty acts in history (25–26).

The second section, or 'First Part', of the work is a nearly 190-page *Forschungsgeschichte* on OTT, broken up into five sections: Patristic, Medieval, Reformed, and Contemporary World 1 and 2. However, this section functions more as an extended collection of biographical vignettes of various Christian writers, with a brief summary of their respective hermeneutical principles; their respective OTTs are never really treated. Many readers could skip this section without much loss.

The third section, or 'Second Part', subtitled 'The Nucleus of OT Thought', is the most important. It spans nearly five hundred pages and is broken up into five chapters. After the 'Preamble', which focuses primarily upon the character of God (especially through his divine names) and other celestial beings, Larrañaga works through his OTT based on a unique methodology otherwise unknown to the reviewer. Following a comment made by Gerhard von Rad (an oft-cited authority for Larrañaga) in his OTT, he understands Romans 9:3–5

as containing eight topics that Paul would have treated had he been given the chance. Larrañaga then advances beyond von Rad in stating that these eight topics form four sets of 'thematic binaries' that 'maintain a close dialectical relationship amongst themselves' and 'constitute a harmonious whole' (221). These sets form the titles and topics for the remaining four chapters of this section and constitute Larrañaga's unique methodology: 'Adoption and Glory', 'Covenants and Law', 'Worship and Promises', and 'Patriarchs and Messiah'. Using the categories provided by Gerhard Hasel's famous work on issues in OTT, I would suggest that Larrañaga's methodology is an expansion of the 'Thematic-Dialectical' method, thereby implying that he does not advocate a *Mitte* to OTT.

Although Larrañaga's methodology is interesting, it does not hold up to closer scrutiny. None of the major critical commentaries on Romans that I have examined (e.g. Moo, Dunn, Longenecker) argue that the topics mentioned in Romans 9:3–5 are to be interpreted as 'thematic binaries', although some do argue for a different organization and relationship between the topics. Additionally, von Rad's comments on the Romans text are limited to just one sentence, which makes for shaky ground upon which to base one's methodology. Unfortunately, Larrañaga does not defend his methodology.

The fourth part, entitled 'Apocryphal Literature', addresses in some twenty pages how various OT theological issues were interpreted during the inter-testamental period. Finally, in a four-page conclusion Larrañaga insists that the OT must be read in the light of Jesus Christ, and that the God of Israel must be the God of all.

Although Larrañaga identifies himself

as coming from a 'completely reformed and conservative' perspective (222), his work will serve pastors and students within the broadly liberal camp. Those with more conservative views will at times be more frustrated with the author's condescending tone than challenged by his arguments, and his habit of referring to them as 'ultraconservative', 'fundamentalist' and 'radical', without interacting with their arguments, will not be appreciated. Nevertheless, the book is pedagogically sensitive, and Christians of all persuasions can benefit from his many helpful insights into the OT.

There are two significant deficiencies with the work: it contains no index (topical, authorial or scriptural) and only a 'succinct bibliography' of sixty-one works (in Romance languages and English).

Although this work is not on par with those of von Rad, Bruggemann or Waltke on the same topic, it does serve to illustrate the growing interest in theology among Spaniards, as well as their growing ability to meet the challenges of the task. What remains is for a Spaniard to write an OTT that will serve the larger group of conservative Protestants within the country.

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Depression, Anxiety, and the Christian Life: Practical Wisdom from Richard Baxter

Michael S. Lundy and J. I. Packer
Wheaton, IL: Zondervan, 2018
Pb., 175 pp., index

Reviewed by Dallas B. Pitts, Assistant Professor of Religion, Baptist College of Health Sciences, Memphis, Tennessee, USA

I have always wanted to review a work written by a Puritan, but since we are a few centuries apart, I thought I may never have the chance. Now my wish has come true, thanks to this updated work containing selections from Richard Baxter's *A Christian Directory*, particularly on the subjects of depression and anxiety. Baxter supplied the church with such a magnitude of pastoral works that it is fitting for Lundy and Packer to give us this small but potent dose of Baxter's pastoral wisdom to us to contemplate.

As our society continues to press forward, ever busier but also in need of rest and peace of mind, the wise words from Baxter plus the contributions of Lundy (a physician) and Packer (a theologian) are invaluable for Christians. The authors assert that as many as two-thirds of North Americans will receive treatment for depression and anxiety in their lifetimes. This is hardly astounding, as fewer and fewer people rely on soul care practices and turn instead to pharmaceuticals. I certainly do not oppose medicines that can help restore chemical balance in our brains, but we should not rely solely on medicating symptoms without getting to the root of the problem. Packer and Lundy seek to help us rediscover the soul care that Baxter so clearly offered.

The book has two main sections: an introduction to Richard Baxter and his counsel on depression. Each section contains chapters on Baxter as a 'spiritual physician' and his place in our time, along with two chapters in the second section on his advice for Christians regarding anxiety and depression. An appendix covers Baxter's understanding of the duty of physicians.

Chapter 1, written by Packer, describes Baxter's life, his entry into ministry and his written pastoral contributions, mostly notably *A Christian Directory*. Packer effectively reveals some of the major premises of the *Directory* and the work's value for depressed Christians today.

In chapter 2, Lundy explains the importance of Baxter's approach for the medical community and how the physical realm is profoundly impacted by the emotional and spiritual. Lundy illustrates his understanding of this emotional-physical connection by recounting stories from his own medical training at Tulane University. His primary aim is to offer a defence of Baxter's method of soul care as a means of diagnosing depression or anxiety while also offering a filter for modern readers to appreciate Baxter as a man of his own time.

Lundy also explains terms that could confuse readers not familiar with seventeenth-century parlance. These explanations are important in preparing readers for the second section of the book, which looks at Baxter's wisdom in the *Directory* in greater detail.

Lundy concludes the first section with several pages on Baxter's pastoral wisdom and its sources. As we might expect, God was the ultimate source. But Puritans like Baxter were willing to apply knowledge from the medical world and moral philosophy, recognizing that

all true knowledge and wisdom comes from God, no matter what the earthly source may be.

In the second section, Lundy presents an updated and abridged version of Baxter's pastoral advice for Christians suffering from depression, anxiety and grief. Although it is easy to get lost in the archaic vocabulary, Baxter's diagnosis of certain problems has striking similarities with our modern diagnosis of anxiety and depression, especially with regard to the observation of symptoms. Much of what Baxter has to say about symptoms of anxiety and depression (which he called 'melancholy') resembles what can be found in the current *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* or DSM-5.

After introducing symptoms, Baxter gives twenty-one 'directions' to treat melancholy, from resetting the mind towards God to medicinal treatment by a physician. In doing so, he reflects the Puritans' readiness to use every tool at their disposal to help the souls of those they pastored.

The last chapter of section two examines Baxter's original work 'The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow, by Faith'. It discusses the causes of sorrow, ranging from physical pain to deliberate sin, and then its cures. A final appendix contains Baxter's directions to physicians as to what God requires of them. It is valuable to make the Puritans' wisdom more accessible to modern readers through updated and abridged versions. These teachings in smaller installments give a good grasp of God's work in our forebears for the good of the church. The book is less a commentary of Baxter's work than an updated presentation of it. I consider it a strength of the book that it allows Baxter to speak for himself as much as possible, while providing necessary explanation of archaic terms.

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***The Malady of the Christian Body:
A Theological Exposition of Paul's
First Letter to the Corinthians,
vol. 1***

***The Therapy of the Christian Body:
A Theological Exposition of Paul's
First Letter to the Corinthians,
vol. 2***

**Brian Brock and Bernd
Wannenwetsch**

**Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016
Vol. 1: xxvi + 253 pp.; vol. 2: xii + 283
pp.**

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We are fortunate to have many high-quality commentaries on 1 Corinthians. Several of these address the letter from the perspective of Greco-Roman backgrounds at Corinth or Paul's Jewish background. Expositions of 1 Corinthians also exist, but few have provided a theological exposition of Paul's letter.

In these two volumes, Brock and Wannenwetsch accomplish a fresh exposition of 1 Corinthians that crosses the disciplines of biblical studies, systematic theology and theological ethics. They also provide a unique look at the ideas in 1 Corinthians in relation to many theological ideas that are influencing modern society.

The stance by which the authors choose to examine 1 Corinthians is a distinctive feature of their work. They acknowledge that interpreters come to the text with many different presuppositions and recognize that some bias will come with their exposition. Nevertheless, they aim to be text-driven. They aimed to receive the greatest direct exposure to the text

by reading it in English and in German translations as well as in the Greek. In their meetings together, they even had full texts of the epistle hung on the wall, to push them to focus directly on what Paul had written. The authors aimed to withdraw from their backgrounds and come with an 'empty hands' approach to the text, namely one that is spiritual, prayerful and 'quasi-monastic.' They described the resulting encounter with 1 Corinthians as powerful.

As Brock and Wannenwetsch focused on the German and English translations, they found that the differences in translation sparked much conversation for their commentary. Following their exploration of the text, they then consulted other commentaries from ancient, medieval and modern times. Frequently, they found that their exposure to the text provided fresh insight that others had overlooked.

The authors are Reformed in perspective, with a dual emphasis on both letter and spirit. They also aimed to analyse the text before them before progressing to others within the canon, following Hans Ulrich's words, 'Every word of Scripture deserves its own hermeneutic.' In short, they aimed for a 'hermeneutic of discovery'. As theologians, they also chose not to embroil themselves in discussions about textual or historical puzzles.

Brock and Wannenwetsch chose three distinct lines for their exposition: reading the apostle Paul over against ourselves, reading him as fellow travellers, and reading him dramatically. They let Paul's expressions of his argument take priority over modern understandings. Instead of constructing roadblocks to the interpretation of the text due to modern concerns, they placed apostolic authority over modern objections.

As fellow travellers reading Paul's

writing, Brock and Wannenwetsch discovered that they could encourage each other by reading 1 Corinthians together. Also, they experienced how their two distinct church traditions—mainline German Lutheran and Holiness influenced by US Congregationalism, respectively—influenced their interpretation. In reading Paul dramatically, they focused on Paul's progressive, linear and almost homiletical treatment of each issue. They also considered the overall drama of Paul's apostolic and fatherly dealings with the Corinthians.

Most of the time, the books address each chapter of 1 Corinthians in order. Brock and Wannenwetsch provide a well-written and easy-to-read explanation of each chapter, frequently beginning with a core idea and then referring back to it as they conclude their exposition. Chapters of their book are divided into sections to make reading easier. Eleven excursions are interspersed throughout their expositional essays. Many of these are thought-provoking, such as 'Moral Dimensions of Characterization and Scripture's Plain Sense', 'Familial Language as Political', 'Sex and the Apostle', 'Paul's Formation of the Self', 'Bodies and Their Communicative Surfaces', and 'Theology and God Talk'.

The authors make many valuable points. For example, in discussing Paul's desire that the Corinthian church seek unity in 1 Corinthians 1:10, they realize that Paul does not provide a simple commandment such as 'Be unified.' Instead of simply appealing to unity, they rightly note, Paul wishes to work with the Corinthians through the 'messy materiality of their manifold conflicts'. In other places, they speak of emotion in the text, an aspect that is frequently overlooked in exegetical commentaries. For example, they not only point out but also develop the feelings of mourning and boasting in 1 Corinthians 5:2 in relation

to the importance of disciplining the man caught in incest. In 1 Corinthians 11, they rightly point out the duplicity in modern church life of dismissing 11:2–16 as culturally mediated while nearly universally employing 11:23–26 in the administration of the Lord's Supper. They are especially effective in addressing issues of abstinence, sexuality, prostitution, celibacy, marriage and divorce in 1 Corinthians 5–7.

Another strength is the insightful use of church history. Brock and Wannenwetsch frequently draw on perceptive interpretive insights from a wide array of figures, including Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Alexandria, Chrysostom, Augustine, Aquinas, Barth and Bonhoeffer. At times they cite modern theologians such as Käsemann.

Although Brock and Wannenwetsch state that they will not focus primarily on the Greek text, they do employ it on several occasions, and their comments on the Greek text are valuable as they reflect on particular words and grammatical constructions. Further comments on the Greek language would have strengthened these volumes.

On some occasions, however, the authors do not show awareness of conclusions reached within the field of biblical studies. They refer to Gnosticism or proto-Gnosticism as having influenced the Corinthians—a view held by few within biblical studies. They assume that the wisdom in chapter 1 is Greco-Roman rhetoric, although scholarly discussion is discussing several options. Also, the division of their two volumes into *Malady of the Christian Body* (1 Corinthians 1–9) and *Therapy of the Christian Body* (10–16) seems odd. Few divide the epistle in this way. Their exposition frequently underplays the Jewish influence in the epistle, which emerges from Paul's background and can be seen in

various citations, allusions, echoes and themes within 1 Corinthians.

Evangelicals will like several aspects of these books. They will be encouraged by the authors' statement that an inescapable discussion of exegesis, theology and the application of ethics must arise from the reading of 1 Corinthians. Evangelicals will also appreciate the authors' focus on the plain and literal sense of 1 Corinthians.

These books are written so that a layperson as well as a pastor can use them. Students of theology and ethics will appreciate them. Scholars looking at 1 Corinthians will benefit from the many fresh insights not often seen in exegetical commentaries.

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More Than a Symbol: The British Baptist Recovery of Baptismal Sacramentalism

Stanley K. Fowler

Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers (arrangement with Paternoster), 2002

Pb., 276 pp., bibliog., index

Reviewed by Andrew Messmer (described on page 89)

Although Fowler's work was originally published in 2002, reviews of it have appeared in only two American-based journals. I believe that the importance of this work has not received the attention it deserved, especially as it relates to Baptist self-understanding and broader ecumenical issues, thereby justifying renewed attention to it.

Fowler's work focuses on baptismal sacramentalism amongst British Baptists and is divided into an introduction and five chapters. In the introduction, he states that his purpose is to analyse

the twentieth-century shift towards a sacramental understanding of baptism amongst some British Baptist scholars (3). Specifically, he analyses works from 1609 to 1966 (5–7, 12). He states that his major contribution is the conclusion that traditional assumptions about Baptist baptismal theology are often inaccurate (3).

In chapter 1, Fowler discusses the pertinent sections from eleven confessions and seventeen individual authors from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. He concludes that the 'dominant view' of baptism in the seventeenth century was as an 'instrumental function in the application of redemption', thereby making it very much like the Puritan-Calvinistic theology of the time (31, cf. 248–49). However, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries baptism was seen strictly as an ordinance rather than a sacrament, and as an act of human obedience as opposed to a means of grace (87, cf. 249).

In chapter 2, Fowler discusses the pertinent sections from eleven authors and documents of the twentieth century. Beginning with H. Wheeler Robinson in the 1920s and culminating with G. R. Beasley-Murray in the 1960s, some British Baptist scholars began arguing for baptismal sacramentalism. However, this advocacy occurred without recourse to the supposed seventeenth-century 'dominant' Baptist view; rather, it was based on a fresh exegesis of Scripture carried out within an ecumenical climate (154–55, 249).

Chapter 3 presents Fowler's interaction with New Testament exegesis in three primary ways. First, he provides brief interpretations of seventeen New Testament texts that potentially or actually relate to baptismal sacramentalism: John's baptism; Jesus baptism; Matthew 28:19; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 8:14–17;

10:44–48; 19:1–7; 22:16; Romans 6:3–4; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 5:25–27; Colossians 2:12; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21. Second, he responds to three criticisms against baptismal sacramentalism that arise from Matthew 28:19–20 and Acts 2:36, as well as from texts that treat water and the Spirit. Third, he summarizes and responds to Karl Barth's critiques of baptismal sacramentalism as they relate to ten New Testament texts.

In chapter 4, Fowler discusses the relationship between baptismal sacramentalism and six theological and systematic perspectives: faith, grace, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the necessity of baptism, and other sacramental traditions. The summary chapter draws attention to the fact that non-British Baptists have not seriously interacted with British baptismal theology and encourages them to do so.

Fowler is to be commended for his several lucid explanations of texts (biblical and otherwise), his succinct summaries of complex ideas, and his perceptiveness and clarity of expression. Although I found no spelling errors, the Greek font is irregular at times. A glossary of significant terminology would have been helpful, as would a review of post-1966 discussion of baptismal sacramentalism. The overall argument is convincing at some points, but not at others. Chapters 3 and 4, along with part of chapter 2, are dedicated to defending Baptist baptismal sacramentalism exegetically and theologically. Although this is not the primary focus of the work, it is the most important for *sola Scriptura* Baptists, and it is also the most compelling. Fowler's repeated claim that baptism is

the *normative* means of the experience of personal salvation, as opposed to the *necessary* means of the same, is very compelling (e.g. 170).

However, chapter 1, which is dedicated to defending the Baptist roots of baptismal sacramentalism and is arguably the major contribution of the work, is less convincing, for two reasons. First, as Fowler himself confesses, twentieth-century British Baptist scholars do not consciously depend on Baptist baptismal theology from the preceding three centuries (97, 129, 155, 249). Thus, the modern British Baptist movement is not a 'recovery' of previous beliefs, but rather a 'discovery' in its own right. Second and more importantly, Fowler has not convinced me that baptismal sacramentalism was the dominant view amongst seventeenth-century Baptists (he concedes that it was not so amongst eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Baptists). The texts that he cites frequently use ordinance language such as 'ordinance', 'sign', 'signify' and 'token', and only rarely do they use sacramental language such as 'means' (e.g. Keach's *Catechism*, question 93). Moreover, Fowler himself recognizes that baptismal sacramentalism of the seventeenth century 'consistently asserted' that baptism 'bestows spiritual benefit', which could refer either to salvation itself or to post-salvation blessings such as enabling, assurance, and the like (31–32).

Fowler has ably demonstrated, however, that seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Baptist baptismal theology was not universally of the *nudum signum* order, but rather was much more varied and diverse. Many, indeed, believed that baptism was 'more than a symbol'.