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

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Paternoster: thinking faith

WEA
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
Department of Theological Concerns

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Editorial Policy

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

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

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Introducing the New, *Free*, Electronic ERT

The next issue of the *Evangelical Review of Theology* (*ERT*) will be quite different. We have an opportunity to make this a globally influential journal and we hope you'll be part of it.

Sometimes opportunities come in unexpected ways. In this case, the chance to remake *ERT* arose when AG Northeast, the UK-based publisher that has faithfully produced the journal at no cost to the World Evangelical Alliance for ten years, indicated its intention to stop publishing academic journals.

We had wanted to expand our electronic distribution of *ERT* and reduce the subscription cost, but we had no way to do so without endangering AG Northeast's modest profit margin. Now we can.

So, as of our next issue (scheduled for August 2020, to give us an extra month of planning), you will see a brand-new ERT in three major ways.

1. *Electronic distribution* will be free. Subscribers will receive an e-mail containing either a link to each new issue or a pdf attachment. Back issues will be downloadable from a new *ERT* web page.

(Libraries and others still wanting hard copies can receive them at a greatly reduced subscription charge. Contact us for details.)

2. *The contents* will be broadened. We will remain a theological journal, but not purely academic. We will solicit biblically and theologically grounded submissions, from an evangelical perspective, on issues of current concern to the global Christian community. We will seek well-reasoned articles aimed at educated Christians, not just theologians. As Martin Luther, C. S. Lewis, John Stott and many others have shown, world-changing Christian writing can still be accessible to the masses.

We will welcome insightful submissions on current controversies, as long as they are characterized by civility and respectfully acknowledge alternative views. We also hope to publish compelling articles on cutting-edge mission and discipling activities, especially among younger generations or where Christians are a minority.

3. *To whom will we send it? To everybody (we hope)!* We will leverage the World Evangelical Alliance's prominence to recruit submissions from leading Christian voices around the world.

Accordingly, we are not bashful about recommending the new *ERT*. We hope that churches, Christian organizations, theological schools and others will send us lists of interested subscribers. Submit e-mail addresses to Johannes Otto at otto@iirf.eu. The larger our subscription base grows, the easier it will be to attract world-class submissions.

We hope to hear from you with your subscription, submissions, and suggestions!

Bruce Barron, Executive Editor (bruce.barron0@gmail.com)
Thomas Schirrmacher, General Editor

P.S. *ERT* subscribers for 2020 should have received communication from AG Northeast by now about a refund. If you have not received this information, please contact Bruce.

Introduction: Lots to Think About

As this journal prepares for a new format (see previous page), the old format is going out with a bang. Seven articles by first-rate thinkers cover a wide range of topics that every evangelical Christian interacting with the modern world should bear in mind: our own history as evangelicals, character development, spiritual formation, mission effectiveness, cross-cultural communication, public engagement and God's ultimate mission.

Frank Hinkelmann, president of the European Evangelical Alliance and a superb historian, draws on deep archival work to examine the theological and cultural divisions between US, UK and European evangelicals in the 1950s and 1960s. His insights are valuable and timely as very different forces threaten to sow division among evangelicals today.

We have two excellent contributions from the London School of Theology. Marvin Oxenham argues for a recovery of character and virtue in Christian thinking and particularly in theological education. (We also review Oxenham's colourful book in this issue.) Chloe Lynch combines extensive study and personal experience to probe deeply into the problem of a heart that feels unable to maintain friendship with God, and she offers meaningful guidance for those who struggle in this way.

Hans Baer, accomplished scholar and missionary to Thailand, provides a biblically grounded, highly readable account of both the good and bad in relationship building and relief work on the mission field.

ERT readers know Jim Harries of the Alliance for Vulnerable Mission well by now, but this contribution differs significantly from his previous ones. On reading the iconoclastic Catholic scholar René Girard, Harries discovered amazing alignments between Girard's major insights and the spiritual life of Africa, which are detailed in this article.

Godwins Lwinga, a Malawian radio broadcaster and gifted scholar, determinedly challenges the general modern assumption that democracy improves society. While not overlooking the abuses of one-party rule, he points out that in Malawi, democracy has been accompanied by a notable increase in public corruption. He explains the problem, calls the church to involvement in solving it, and suggests that Bonhoeffer's ethics can guide us to make a difference.

P. V. Joseph, a theology professor in India, offered us an essay (from his recent book) on Augustine's understanding of how the Trinity expresses God's mission. I got an enthusiastic 'Yes!' from one of our theological advisors within three hours. The only problem was how to condense Joseph's wonderfully precise writing to 8,000 words. This fascinating study will leave you marvelling at the depths of meaning present in God's Trinity and at the genius of this foundational figure of the early church.

I look forward to the soon-coming day when previously published issues of *ERT* are available free on a website, not only by subscription. These articles and many from previous issues are of lasting value and deserve to be read and reread. Please join us in spreading the word about the new, free version of *ERT.*

—Bruce Barron, Executive Editor

ERT (2020) 44:2, 101-114

The Founding of the European Evangelical Alliance as a Counter-Movement to the World Evangelical Fellowship

Frank Hinkelmann

On 19 September 1952, representatives of several national Evangelical Alliances (EAs) from Europe met in Hamburg, Germany. They came at the invitation of the German Evangelical Alliance (DEA) to officially constitute the European Evangelical Alliance (EEA). Why was the EEA founded? Why did these national EAs not join the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), which had been founded at a conference in the Netherlands in August 1951?

This article traces the motives and reasoning of several national EAs in Europe in establishing the EEA, which were predominantly theologically and partially culturally driven. I also consider how the theological differences unfolded in the following years. Special attention is given to three EAs: the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in the USA, the British EA and the DEA. As we will see, the NAE would become the driving force for forming a new international body representing evangelicals. The British EA had been the coordinating body of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) since the British EA's beginnings in 1846, and the DEA can be taken as representative of those EAs on the European continent that decided not to join the WEF and instead founded the EEA.[1]

Most research on the history of the evangelical alliances has focused on either the nineteenth century or individual countries.[2] In addition, there

1 An additional reason for choosing Germany is that many original sources on the DEA have been preserved on both sides of the Atlantic—in the DEA archives in Bad Blankenburg, and on the WEF at the Billy Graham Center (hereafter BGC) archives, Wheaton, IL.

2 On the nineteenth century, see Gerhard Lindemann, *Für Frömmigkeit in Freiheit: die Geschichte der Evangelischen Allianz im Zeitalter des Liberalismus (1846–1879)* (Munster, Zurich and Vienna: LIT-Verlag, 2011); Hans Hauzenberger, *Einheit auf evangelischer Grundlage: vom Werden und Wesen der Evangelischen Allianz* (Giessen and Zürich: Brunnen/Gotthelf, 1986). On the EA in Great Britain, see Ian Randall and Davis Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance* (Carlisle: Pater-

Frank Hinkelmann *(PhD, Free University Amsterdam) is president of Martin Bucer Seminary, Bonn, Germany, and serves as president of the European Evangelical Alliance as well as vice-chair of the World Evangelical Alliance's International Council. He has published several books on the history of the Evangelical Alliance and evangelicalism, focusing on the German-speaking world.*

have been some studies on specific themes[3] and some more popular *Festschriften*.[4] However, to this date no research has been done on the origin and history of the EEA. The present article fills this gap by evaluating and analysing primary sources from the founding period of both the WEF and EEA.

I. The Beginnings

In the closing chapter of a book commissioned by the WEA on its hundredth anniversary in 1946, author John Ewing, then the WEA's vice president, wondered about the future:

> Now the questions arise, can the Alliance continue its usefulness? And is it likely to be needed under the changed conditions of this new time? That the conditions are changed admits no doubt. A hundred years ago the Alliance stood alone as a uniting Christian fellowship. Since that time many other uniting movements have sprung up.[5]

Ewing expressed the view that the WEA still had a promising future.[6]

However, only a few years later reality showed a different picture. In a document described as 'Recordings of the talks between the German committee of the Evangelical Alliance and representatives of the Evangelical Alliances of Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Austria during the spring meeting of the German branch of the Evangelical Alliance at the Patmos Retreat Centre in Geisweid in Westfalen close to Siegen from 3 to 5 May 1952',[7] General Sir Arthur Smith of the British EA was

noster, 2004); J. B. A. Kessler, *A Study of the Evangelical Alliance in Great Britain* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1968). On Germany: Erich Beyreuther, *Der Weg der Evangelischen Allianz in Deutschland* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1969) and Werner Beyer, (ed.), *Einheit in Vielfalt: aus 150 Jahren Evangelischer Allianz* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1995). On Austria: Frank Hinkelmann, *Geschichte der Evangelischen Allianz in Österreich: von ihren Anfängen im 19. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart*, rev. and enlarged edition (Bonn: VKW, 2012).

3 J. Cochlovius, 'Das Selbstverständnis der Evangelischen Allianz in der Gründerzeit und heute: die Hauptbeschlüsse der Londoner Gründungsversammlung 1846 im Vergleich mit der Glaubensbasis der Evangelischen Allianz von 1972', *Freikirchenforschung* 10 (2000): 157–66; Karl Heinz Voigt, *Die Evangelische Allianz als ökumenische Bewegung: freikirchliche Erfahrungen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Christliches Verlagshaus, 1990); and Karl Heinz Voigt and Thomas Schirrmacher (eds.), *Menschenrechte für Minderheiten in Deutschland und Europa: vom Einsatz für Religionsfreiheit durch die Evangelische Allianz und die Freikirchen im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2004).

4 John W. Ewing, *Goodly Fellowship: A Centenary Tribute to the Life and Work of the World's Evangelical Alliance 1846–1946* (London and Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1946); W. Harold Fuller, *People of the Mandate: The Story of the World Evangelical Fellowship* (Carlisle: WEF/Paternoster, 1996).

5 Ewing, *Goodly Fellowship*, 146.

6 Ewing, *Goodly Fellowship*, 150.

7 German original: *Niederschrift über das Gespräch zwischen dem Deutschen Komitee der Evangelischen Allianz in England, Dänemark, Norwegen, Schweden, Schweiz und Österreich anläßlich der Frühjahrssitzung des Deutschen Zweiges der Evangelischen Allianz im Erholungsheim Patmos in Geisweid in Westfalen b. Siegen vom 3.–5.3.1952*, DEA archives. All translations from German into English are by the author.

quoted: 'In recent years, in the UK the Alliance only had the week of prayer. We were only active on paper—that was all. When the Americans came and looked for a World Alliance, they didn't find any.'[8] F. R. Cattell, General Secretary of the British EA, added, 'The British Alliance did little if nothing except the week of prayer. The NAE led us to a new drive.'[9]

The minutes of those meetings concluded with this statement: '1. The British acknowledge that the British Alliance hasn't been in recent years what they ought to be. 2. A longing can be observed to shape the old British Alliance in a more lively way.'[10]

Before this, in 1950, J. Elwin Wright, general director of the NAE, reported a similarly dissatisfied perspective on the British EA to the NAE's board of administration:

> It was very evident at Clarens [a conference in Switzerland] in 1948 that it [the British EA] was not, as then constituted, at all adequate. While it was 103 years old it did not have the confidence and respect of the leading evangelicals, either in Europe or on the Continent. The principal reasons were (1) an executive secretary who had served 45 years and was in his dotage; (2) his ignorance of the issues between modernism and evangelicalism of the present day; (3) the lack of any constructive program which would challenge evangelical interest.[11]

These comments highlight the problems that the WEA was facing in the years after World War II. Since the EA's beginnings in 1846, the British EA had always been the driving force of the WEA; in many ways the British EA *was* the WEA, especially since the EA added the attribute 'World' when it became legally registered in 1912.[12] *Evangelical Christendom*, the WEA's magazine (itself published by the British EA), addressed this matter in a special edition in fall 1949:

> It has been revealed that there is a feeling that the Alliance is too much centred upon Britain and that the words 'British Organisation', which appear on everything printed here, are misunderstood in some countries as meaning that the World Evangelical Alliance is a 'British Organisation'. This tends to hold some back from closer co-operation with the parent body, and in some cases led to a national organisation being formed with the same aims and objects as the Evangelical Alliance but adopting another name in order to keep its national identity. In actual fact the words should be interpreted as meaning the 'British Section' of the World Evangelical Alliance.[13]

8 *Niederschrift*, 3–4.

9 *Niederschrift*, 4.

10 *Niederschrift*, 4.

11 Wright was referring to Henry Martyn Gooch, who became secretary of the British EA in 1904. Ewing continued to praise Gooch in his centenary tribute to the WEA. See Ewing, *Goodly Fellowship*, 133.

12 Ewing, *Goodly Fellowship*, 129.

13 *Evangelical Christendom*, special issue, *The New Alliance* (October-December 1949), BGC archives collection 338, II. Secretaries/Directors, A. J. Elwin Wright, Box 12, Folder 13, Switzerland, 1948–1958. See also *Richtlinien des gegenwaertigen Standes Evangelischer Zusammenarbeit und der Platz der Evangelischen Welt-Allianz in der zukuenftigen Entwicklung* (n.d., DEA archives), 2. This document was most likely written for the

In a 'Memorandum on the Present Position of Evangelical Co-Operation and of the Place of the World's Evangelical Alliance in Possible Future Development', German leaders expressed similar concern about the WEA's lack of international effectiveness:

> It should be clearly understood that at the present time the WEA is not an internationally controlled organization, and there is no council or committee which has representatives of the different overseas movements serving on it. The last international conference was held in 1907. The organization in Great Britain is only responsible for the work carried on in this country [i.e. the UK], with a friendly link, but no authority, over any of the overseas organizations.[14]

The document further noted that the WEA's articles of association had been drawn up in 1912 and were substantially outdated.

It is clear that the British EA was no longer in a position to be an international driving force. Instead, the NAE in the United States, which had been constituted in 1942, took the lead.

II. Growing North American Interest in Europe

Following the war, North American Christians became increasingly interested in cooperation with Christians in Europe[15] and beyond. The NAE thus emerged as a key player in the further development and renewal of the evangelical movement.[16] The NAE held to the classic evangelical beliefs and to the authority of Scripture but rejected the polemical and separatist approach of fundamentalism. The so-called 'new evangelicals' driving this effort included such key figures as Harold John Ockenga and Billy Graham.[17]

World Alliance gathering at Hildenborough Hall, England in March 1950.

14 *Richtlinien*, 2.

15 Hans Krabbendam, 'Introduction: American Evangelical Missions in Postwar Europe' in John Corrigan and Frank Hinkelmann (eds.), *Return to Sender: American Evangelical Missions to Europe in the 20th Century* (Munster: LIT-Verlag, 2019), 9–16.

16 Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 141ff., describes the founding of the NAE, showing why it did not represent simply a continuation of the EA of the nineteenth century. See also Robert L. Kennedy, *Turning Westward: Anglo-American Evangelicals and German Pietist Interactions through 1954* (PhD dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 1988), 338ff.

17 George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Derek J. Tidball, *Who Are the Evangelicals? Tracing the Roots of Today's Movement* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), 69–72; Garth M. Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God: Harold Ockenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2008). On the NAE, see Denton Lotz, 'The *Evangelization of the World in this Generation': The Resurgence of a Missionary Idea among Conservative Evangelicals* (PhD dissertation, Hamburg University, 1970); Mark Ellingsen, *The Evangelical Movement: Growth, Impact, Controversy* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 98–102. Ockenga coined the term 'new evangelicals'; see David M. Howard, *The Dream That Would Not Die: The Birth and Growth of the World Evangelical Fellowship 1846–1986* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1986), 4. On Graham's involvement in Europe, see Uta Andrea Balbier, *Billy Graham in West Germany: German*

Besides the NAE, the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC), a group remaining in the fundamentalist camp, reached out to Europe, sending Francis Schaeffer as a missionary.[18] These entities were in effect in competition with the WEA and the more ecumenical World Council of Churches, formed in 1948, as interdenominational organizations.[19]

As both the ICCC and NAE had their roots in North American fundamentalism, they initially encountered reticence in Europe. In an April 1948 letter to the chair of the German EA in April 1948, British EA secretary Henry Martyn Gooch warned about 'American fundamentalists' who had created 'a lot of harm with their legalistic zeal' and their literal interpretation of Scripture.[20] He also stated that no American group was connected to the WEA.

This fear of American fundamentalism being exported to Europe repeatedly impacted relations between North American and European evangelicals throughout the period. It helped to keep the ICCC isolated, especially in view of that organization's strong attacks on both the WCC and NAE. As a result, the NAE became the main interlocutor between US and European evangelicals, but fears of its purportedly fundamentalist position remained.

III. The NAE Initiates the WEF

A report in *Evangelisches Allianzblatt*, the DEA's magazine, in 1951 shed further light on the NAE's growing influence and some recent developments:

> Already during the war the NAE begin to act far beyond the American continent as they got in touch with evangelical Christians in Central and South America as well as with brothers and sisters in faith on the mission fields of the Far East, in Indonesia, in India and Ceylon, in Africa, and other places. … After the war was over, the NAE movement also crossed over to Europe. …
>
> Automatically, the question arises, whether or not it would be appropriate and serving the purposes of God in the world in a much better way, when those two alliance movements, the Evangelical Alliance of 1846 and the NAE, join forces. The brothers in leadership in the British Evangelical Alliance took the initiative in this regard.[21]

In August 1948, the NAE leadership invited key international leaders to Clarens, Switzerland for a conference under the heading, 'In essentials,

Protestantism between Americanization and Rechristianization, 1954–70 (2010), www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/16126041-Balbier-3-2010.

18 Markku Ruotsila, 'Francis Schaeffer in Europe: The Early Missionary Years', in John Corrigan and Frank Hinkelmann (eds.), *Return to Sender: American Evangelical Missions to Europe in the 20th Century* (Münster: LIT-Verlag, 2019), 17–31.

19 All four groups are listed in *Gesch. Vorst. Protokoll 18.+21.9.1948 in Weidenau* (DEA archives) as having invited participation by the German EA. The minutes specifically mention Schaeffer as an ICCC representative.

20 H. R. Leusser on behalf of Gooch to W. Zilz, 30 April 1948, DEA archives.

21 'Weltweite evangelische Bruderschaft', *Evangelisches Allianzblatt* 54 (1951): 152–53. The last sentence reflects the greater British openness to the NAE after Gooch retired, as discussed below.

unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, clarity.'[22] Among the prominent participants were Gooch, Martyn Lloyd-Jones and J. Edwin Orr from the UK; René Pache and Gertrude Wasserzug from Switzerland; and Billy Graham, Torrey Johnson, Bob Jones, Harold J. Ockenga and J. Elwin Wright from the US. Others, including the head of the DEA, received the invitation too late and could not obtain permission from the Allied forces in time to travel to Switzerland.

The goal of the conference, with sixty participants from fourteen countries, was to discuss how to strengthen cooperation among evangelicals.[23] In his report on the conference, Wright stated, 'In general, the delegates were in accord on all important issues which were considered'.[24]

The only strong opposition came from Gooch, who saw no need for a new form of cooperation besides the WEA. Gooch wrote to DEA chair Wilhelm Zils in December 1948, 'I note from your letter that you raise the question of the NAE Conference (proposed) in Zurich next year. Please understand the British Organisation is not taking part in such a Conference.' But a few months later, Gooch was forced to give up his position as WEA general secretary after forty-five years, and in his absence the British EA began to take a more positive attitude towards the NAE. Wright of the NAE wrote to Zils in August 1949, 'You will be pleased to hear … that the new Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance in Great Britain, Mr Roy Cattell, is very different from Mr Gooch in his attitude.'[25]

General agreement was also reached at Clarens on adopting the NAE's statement of faith for possible future cooperation. A follow-up conference was planned for 1949 in Zurich but, after a postponement, took place on 7–10 March 1950 at Hildenborough, England, with eighteen delegates from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Holland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.[26] This time the WEA (British EA) was the inviting party. Following the conference, the Austrian delegate reported, 'The conference decided on a co-operation between the Evangelical Alliance and the National Association of Evangelicals, as it was recognised with satisfaction that the statement of this association corresponds with the Alliance statement of faith'.[27]

The following recommendation (amongst others) was agreed on at

22 Welcome letter to the Clarens conference, DEA archives.

23 J. Elwin Wright to all invited delegates, n.d. See also Wright's report on the conference, BGC archives collection 338, II. Secretaries/Directors, G. Clyde Willis Taylor, Box 27, Folder 5.

24 Wright's report on the conference, BGC archives, 2.

25 Gooch to Wilhelm Zils, 6 December 1948; Wright to Zils, 2 August 1949, both in the DEA archives.

26 Report of the World Evangelical Alliance Conference held at Hildenborough, England, 7th to 10th March 1950, DEA archives. The joint secretaries of the British EA, H. W. Hall and Cattell, were also present, but not as delegates.

27 Gertrud Hoffmann, *Bericht von der Konferenz der Evangel. Weltallianz in Hildenborough vom 7.–11. März 1950, gegeben in Wien a, 11. April 1950 in der Allianzgemeinschaft, I. Bartensteingasse 14*, Austrian EA archives in Pöchlarn.

the end of the conference:

> The Conference agrees that there is a great need for Evangelical work and witness. This need is threefold: Personal, National, International.
>
> *Personal*, because we believe that the old evangelical message alone as given in the Holy Scripture can fully meet man's deepest need.
>
> *National*, because while the voices of modernism and sacerdotalism are constantly heard, we believe that evangelical truth is the most important factor on the formation of sound national character and outlook, and should be given fullest expression.
>
> *International*, because unity is strength, and it is essential that evangelical convictions be made known in International matters. …
>
> This International Committee will be formed of representatives of the National Branches of the World's [sic] Evangelical Alliance, of the National Association of Evangelicals, and of other Evangelical groups. Each member will undertake to agree either with the 1846 Basis of Belief of the W.E.A. or to the Statement of Faith of the N.A.E. The Committee will function until the ultimate objective of a fully constituted International Body can be brought into being, but it is clearly stated that this Committee is of advisory character, and will have no authority or control over the action of any country, all of which remain autonomous.[28]

Also, a larger follow-up conference was planned for 1952. The following months were to be used to work through open questions while the British EA agreed to manage administration for the time being. The minutes of the Interim Executive Committee meeting of January 1951 showed that a constitutional conference had already been scheduled for August of that year. Even the possible name for a new future evangelical body was discussed:

> Some considerable discussion took place over this very important question of the name. Drs Taylor and Wright, as a result of their visit to many countries, had come clearly to the conclusion that the name 'Fellowship' was what was really required, and would indicate the type of organization which was contemplated more clearly than any other word. This would at once remove considerable prejudice and fears that many countries had of another super organization. … This would thus make possible a name that was neither approaching 'World Evangelical Alliance' nor 'The National Association of Evangelicals'. Possibly, 'International Fellowship of Evangelicals' would be as good a title as any.[29]

At the same time, a growing opposition to such plans arose on the European continent. The DEA not only stressed the independence of each national EA branch, but also raised issues with regard to the statement of faith. The Germans proposed to

28 Report of the World Evangelical Alliance Conference, 2.

29 World Evangelical Alliance, *Report of the Meeting of an Interim Executive Committee at Woudschoten, Holland, January 1951*, 2. BGC archives collection 338, II. Secretaries/Directors, J. Elwin Wright, Box 8, Folder 3, Cattell, F. Roy, 1951–1955.

keep the EA's 1846 statement of faith, whereas the British delegation was much more open to agreeing to the NAE's statement.[30]

Interestingly, no further details are recorded about the exact theological concerns of the Germans and other European EAs concerning the proposed NAE statement, beyond their reservations about the use of the term 'infallible' (discussed below). This lack of specificity hints that underlying cultural issues and fears about some kind of American takeover contributed to the division. Also, the EAs of Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland expressed their concern about a new evangelical body that would no longer just gather individual evangelicals together (as the WEA had understood itself) but would also accept denominations, congregations and agencies into membership (as the NAE had done). All these national EAs remained in good standing with the WCC and wanted to maintain that status; moreover, they were not in favour of any competition.[31]

On 5–11 August 1951, the planned conference took place in Woudschoten, the Netherlands, with about one hundred participants from twenty-one countries, of whom eighteen were counted as voting members.[32] On Tuesday, a motion was passed to constitute the WEF.[33] 'It became clear that the Scandinavian branches of the World's Evangelical Alliance, for reasons of their own internal organizations, were not in favour of such a fellowship, but wished the Evangelical Alliance to continue as in the past.'[34] However, delegates from fourteen countries[35] agreed to constitute the WEF, while the national EAs were assured that they will keep their independence and national identity. This decision was to be brought for ratification to each national member. A statement of faith was unanimously accepted: 'We believe in the Holy Scripture, as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy; and the supreme authority in all matters of faith'.[36]

A 'continuing committee' of eight

30 World Evangelical Alliance, *Report of Conference at Hamburg on Tuesday, 27th February and Wednesday, 28th February 1951*, DEA archives.

31 See 'Extracts from Letters from W.E.A. Branches on the Continent' (n.d.), BGC archives collection 338, I. Historical Files, Box 1, Folder 20, Woudschoten 1951.

32 For the list of participants, see 'International Conference of Evangelicals. Woudschoten, Holland—August 5–11, 1951', BGC archives collection 338, II. Secretaries/Directors, J. Elwin Wright, Box 8, Folder 3, Cattell, F. Roy, 1951–1955. There are contradicting dates given on the date of the conference. While some sources say August 5-11, others say August 4-10 or August 4-11. The minutes say that the meeting started on Saturday night, 4 August and ended on Friday, 11 August 1951.

33 See *The Motions Passed at the International Conference Held at Woudschoten, Holland, August 4-11, 1951,* BGC archives collection 338, II. Secretaries/Directors, J. Elwin Wright, Box 2, Folder 3, General Council Minutes; 1950-1967.

34 *Summary of the International Conference at Woudschoten, Holland, Aug. 4–10, 1951*, 1.

35 The motion was passed by majority vote, 14 to 4. Those opposed were Denmark, France, Norway and Sweden. See *The Motions Passed at the International Conference Held at Woudschoten*, 1.

36 World Evangelical Fellowship Constitution, 1–2, BGC archives collection 338, Historical Files, Box 1, Folder 20, Woudschoten 1951.

members was elected, and participants left Woudschoten with the expectation that things would move forward as agreed upon. The reports in Christian media on the conference were positive too.[37]

However, behind the scenes broader discomfort was percolating. The controversy centred on two issues: the use of the term 'infallible' to describe Scripture in the statement of faith, and a perceived anti-ecumenical stance by the WEF.

A meeting of European EAs was scheduled for Siegen, Germany on 3–5 March 1952. Five EAs were represented: the UK, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Switzerland. During this conference, the board of the DEA held a separate meeting and reached the following conclusion:

> The foundation for a 'World Fellowship', as proposed in the constitution of Woudschoten, doesn't appear viable to us, because it is too narrow and too legalistic. In addition, this can be gained only by the loss of those brethren who over many decades have stood together with us in the World Alliance [i.e. the Scandinavians].[38]

This decision was communicated to the delegates of the other countries, and those from Sweden, Denmark and Switzerland agreed with the DEA's position.

The remaining time at the conference was full of controversial discussions regarding the NAE's influence over the WEF. Whereas the British delegation was positive that they could influence the NAE to a more moderate position, Rev. Petersen of the Danish EA concluded otherwise:

> The NAE is predominantly made up of people who have detached themselves from other ecclesiastical institutions and gone their own way. We are afraid of this fiercely independent spirit of the NAE. The British will also have no power to control the NAE, even when they join them to do so, because they see their missionaries and their work as more evangelical than ours. The NAE might be good in the USA, but we don't need them on the continent.[39]

In a memorandum published immediately after this conference, the British delegation tried to refute some of the arguments against the NAE and to defend the use of the word 'infallible':[40]

> The British hold strongly the view that the intention of the 1846 Basis and 1951 Statement of Faith were

37 See 'Weltweite Evangelische Bruderschaft', 151–56.

38 *Niederschrift über das Gespräch zwischen dem Deutschen Komitee der Evangelischen Allianz und den Vertretern der Evangelischen Allianz in England, Dänemark, Norwegen, Schweden, Schweiz und Österreich anläßlich der Frühjahrssitzung des Deutschen Zweiges der Evangelischen Allianz im Erholungsheim Patmos in Geisweid in Westfalen b. Siegen vom 3.–5.3.1952*, DEA archives.

39 *Niederschrift vom 3.–5.3.1952*, 5.

40 World Evangelical Alliance, *Memorandum Prepared by the British Delegation Who Attended the German Conference Held at Patmos, 3rd–6th March 1952*, DEA archives. (Patmos was the name of the retreat centre in Siegen that hosted the conference. Other sources give the conference dates as 3–5 March.) The British EA felt that those present were not willing to distinguish between the NAE and the ICCC and their different position towards the WCC. Following the conference in Germany, much correspondence went back and forth between the DEA and representatives of the WEF.

essentially the same. In the words of our Articles of Association, the defence and advancement of what is commonly known as Evangelical Truth according to the text and teachings of the Holy Scriptures was (we believe) safeguarded in 1846 by that Basis which was sufficient for that date, and is now safeguarded by the 1951 Statement of Faith.

While we respect those who may think there is some basic difference between 1846 and 1951, we are not able to agree.

We believe the intention of 1846 was to safeguard what we in Great Britain know as the 'Conservative Evangelical' position. The Evangelical Alliance of Great Britain must humbly confess that a tendency to depart from this position in recent years largely led to ineffectiveness.

Para. I. There is no intention in this paragraph of requiring belief in 'a mechanical verbal inspiration'. In the British view the word 'infallible' is redundant and therefore unnecessary. But it was accepted at Woudschoten by a majority vote, and we therefore accept it.[41]

Other participants from continental Europe used catchwords like 'narrow and legalistic', 'fundamentalism', 'verbal inspiration', 'Judaistic eschatology' and 'wrong theory of inspiration' to describe the WEF's view of Scripture. They further objected to the WEF's expectation that members would sign the statement of faith annually.

IV. The Idea of a European Evangelical Alliance

The pendulum was swinging. At the Siegen conference, the idea of an EEA was mentioned for the first time.[42] After the four national delegations other than the British arrived at agreement on their position, they jointly informed the British 'that the German, Scandinavian and Swiss brethren have no joyfulness to affiliate with the World Evangelical Fellowship. We want to remain in fellowship with the British brethren.' At the completion of the three-day conference a decision was taken to form a 'European Committee of the Evangelical Alliance'. This committee was asked to act as the interim leadership of the EA in Europe. Several names of possible committee members were suggested.[43]

In a letter of 31 July 1952, Zils as chair of the DEA invited fellow EAs across Europe to a founding assembly of the EEA on 19 September 1952 in Hamburg. Official delegates from the EAs of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland and Austria constituted the EEA. The British EA was invited but decided to send only an observer, agreeing to join the EEA some weeks later.[44] The official con-

41 World Evangelical Alliance, *Memorandum Prepared by the British Delegation.*

42 *Niederschrift vom 3.–5.3.1952*, 7.

43 *Niederschrift vom 3.–5.3.1952*, 10, 12. Interestingly, Friedrich Heitmüller of Hamburg and René Pache of Switzerland remained involved with the WEF and were even part of its International Council for some time. Heitmüller was strongly disappointed with some of the positions on Scripture held by other German EA members, as illustrated in a letter to Zils of 25 August 1952, contained in the DEA archives.

44 See *Bericht über die Unterredung zwischen Pastor Zils, Berleburg, und Pastor Dol-*

stitution of the EEA and a statement of faith were agreed on, and a board was elected. There was great unity on the way forward as no major discussions were recorded. In spring 1953, European EAs from France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Finland and Yugoslavia were invited to join the EEA and to attend a conference planned for September 1953 in Siegen, Germany.[45]

Meanwhile, the WEF also attracted some followers in Europe. At a WEF General Committee meeting at Clarens, Switzerland on 28–30 July 1953, European participants came from Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany (Friedrich Heitmüller), Greece, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Switzerland.[46]

V. Theological Accentuations

The newly approved constitution of the EEA stated very clearly in its first paragraph that it was taking the original 1846 WEA basis of faith as its foundation. A leaflet published and distributed by the DEA (probably in 1952) stated:

> The European Evangelical Alliance acknowledges as a foundation of fellowship and for its work those nine points which were agreed on at the founding session of the Evangelical Alliance in London, 1846. It appropriates the three declarations which were added by the fathers of the Evangelical Alliance to these nine points, in order to specify and mark the rights and the boundaries of brotherhood in the Alliance.[47]

The first of those nine points referred to the 'divine inspiration, authority, and sufficiency'—not the infallibility—of Scripture.

No further theological discussions were recorded within the EEA ranks, except for a letter of protest from the British EA, threatening to leave the EEA, due to an article published in the DEA's magazine in spring 1953. The British described the article as 'unsatisfactory in regard to the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture and [references to] theological liberalism amongst certain theologians on the Continent and in Scandinavia, although references to such were all outside of the ranks of the Evang. Alliance'.[48] This incident and some

man, Cambridge, in Berleburg am 7. August 1952, DEA archives. The British EA also indicated that the difference between the continental EAs and the British EA on their view of Scripture were more substantial than previously noted. However, a month later the British EA agreed to send two delegates to the committee meeting of the EEA.

45 Letter from the EEA Secretary (B. Petersen, Denmark) to 'our Evangelical Alliance brethren in France, Holland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Finland and Yugoslavia', 6 April 1953, DEA archives.

46 See *Minutes of the First Meeting of the General Council Committee of the World Evangelical Fellowship Held at Clarens—28th to 30th July, 1953*, 1, BGC archive collection 338, Secretaries/Directors, G. Clyde Willis Taylor, Box 25, Folder 9, Executive Meetings 1951–1955.

47 From a leaflet published and distributed by the German EA (contained in the DEA archives) without any further bibliographical information, probably published soon after the Patmos conference of 1952 to which it refers.

48 *Protocol from the Meeting of the General Council of the European Evangelical Alliance in Connection with the first European Conference of the European Evangelical Alliance, in the Vereinshaus 'Hammerhütte', Siegen, West-*

talks given at a subsequent EA conference led to extensive correspondence between evangelical leaders in Germany and Great Britain, but the British EA remained a member of the EEA.

VI. Moving On

In view of the major dispute between the WEF and EEA in the early 1950s on the appropriate view of Scripture, which contributed to the establishment of two separate evangelical bodies, it seems surprising that during the following years only a few further discussions on the view of Scripture were recorded. Even at the EEA's annual general assemblies, the subject was scarcely ever mentioned. Only at the EEA General Assembly in Copenhagen, Denmark in 1957 did the relationship between the WEF and EEA become a point of discussion, probably in light of the WEF's desire to hold an international conference in Europe, which the EEA opposed.[49] No copy of the minutes seems to have been preserved, but only a response to questions raised at the assembly, which the British EA addressed in detail. The British EA further stated:

> We also sense a danger of an undue liberal influence sometimes intruding in European Evangelical Alliance outlook—a liberal and modern tendency which we know is not countenanced by our President, pastor Zils. …
>
> We also think that there are some brethren in the Evangelical Alliance of Europe who dislike the World Evangelical Fellowship Basis of Belief. We sincerely hope this is not true, for the British Evangelical Alliance would indeed have difficulty understanding anyone who without mental reservation accepts the Basis of Belief of 1846 in the language of the day, and yet who is unable to subscribe to the modern version as drawn up by the World Evangelical Fellowship.[50]

The EEA representatives raised questions at this 1957 meeting about the WEF's attitude towards the WCC and the NAE's influence on the WEF. The most important question about Scripture was 'Does not the WEF Basis lay down belief in 'verbal inspiration?' The answer was as follows:

> These words do not appear in the Basis. The word INFALLIBLE causes difficulty to some because it is liable to be wrongly interpreted as signifying 'mechanical' view of inspiration. In actual fact the British delegation were NOT in favour of adding this word to the Basis because they considered it redundant and therefore unnecessary. We also thought it misleading. However, by majority vote it was included. In all matters of doctrine there must be some latitude in interpretation of *details*, but there can be no compromise regarding the *principle* of belief that the Bible *is* (and does not merely contain) the Word of God and as such is en-

ph., Germany, September 10th, 1953, 2, DEA archives. See also *Entwurf einer Erklärung der englischen Vertreter bei der europäischen Konferenz in Siegen* (n.d.), DEA archives.

49 This is hinted at in a September 1957 *Memorandum for the European Evangelical Alliance*, signed by Arthur Smith and Gilbert Kirby and preserved in the DEA archives.

50 *Memorandum for the European Evangelical Alliance*.

tirely reliable and sufficient.

We do indeed believe, consistently with the Bible's own claims, that the Holy Spirit spoke through human authors so directly that their words were in a very real sense His words, but we do not imagine that the process was a mechanical one.

The word INFALLIBLE does mean that we believe God ensured that no mistakes appeared in the Holy Scriptures as originally given and that the Bible conveys with accuracy God's message to man, whether given in literal or symbolic form or by way of parable.[51]

At the EEA's October 1960 General Assembly, held in England, the EEA–WEF relationship was again discussed. Special attention was given to the NAE's relationship with the ICCC. Because ICCC representatives (such as René Pache from Switzerland) had been present at the 1951 Woudschoten meeting, the NAE was accused of cooperating with the ICCC. EEA leaders seemed unwilling to believe the WEF's statement that it had broken off fellowship with the ICCC, even though leading ICCC figure Carl McIntire had been attacking the NAE since the late 1940s, accusing it of having become too ecumenical.

Through the British EA, the WEF reached out regularly to EEA members, inviting them to join the WEF as well. This invitation was consistently rejected, and in 1962 a representative of the Swedish EA emphatically demanded that the WEF be told definitively that a link with the EEA was out of the question.[52] However, the EEA board did not follow this course and continued talks with the WEF, especially as the General Secretary of the British EA, Gilbert Kirby, assumed the role of WEF Secretary General in 1962. The EEA board met with Kirby in September 1962, but positions had not changed in any way by this point.

The first change of attitude on the EEA side could be observed in 1964:

> The brethren present here are of the opinion that under certain conditions a closer collaboration would be possible; that is, both sides should not stop at the different formulations of their basis. We trust each other that both sides, both the WEF and the EEA, will have basically the same unbroken position on Scripture. On this basis, it is conceivable that the EEA will join the worldwide WEF and represent the WEF's concerns, which it recognizes as its own, in Europe.[53]

What led to this change of attitude is unclear. Perhaps the EEA was reassessing its understanding of Scripture in response to the growth of liberal theology on the European continent. Several speeches given at EEA general assemblies in the mid-1960s on the authority of Scripture hint at this explanation.[54] In 1965, the EEA board

51 *Appendix B to Memorandum for the European Evangelical Alliance*, October 1957, 1 (emphasis in original), DEA archives.

52 See *Europäischer Rat der Evangelischen Allianz: Sitzung des Präsidiums vom 10.–11. Juli 1962 im Bapt. Theol. Seminary in Rüschlikon bei Zürich*, DEA archives.

53 *Rat der Europäischen Evangelischen Allianz: Sitzung des Präsidiums vom 17.–18. März 1964 im Bibel- und Erholungsheim in Männedorf/Zürich*, 1, DEA archives.

54 In 1965, Otto Rodenberg spoke on 'Concerning the Truth of Holy Scripture' and

published a more detailed statement on its view of Scripture. Here are some relevant excerpts from that statement:

> We note with deep concern certain trends in modern theology which gain increasing acceptance. Essential Biblical truths are questioned, and the nature of the Gospel is misrepresented through irrelevant Bible-criticism. …
>
> We accept the whole of Holy Scripture as the divine revelation inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Word of God with absolute authority determining the doctrine and the conduct of the believer.
>
> Therefore we must reject any view which regards the Bible merely as another historico-religious document, seeing in it only the testimonies of gifted men but without binding or continuing importance.[55]

At the EEA's 1967 General Assembly in Vienna, M. Derham from London represented the WEF and explained conditions for a possible merger of the WEF and EEA.[56] In late 1967, Germany and Denmark applied for WEF membership, followed by Switzerland in early 1968.[57] The minutes of the WEF Council's 1968 business meeting in Lausanne stated the following:

> Since some of these [national European EAs] have recently reaffirmed their faith in the historic creeds, and the original statement of faith of the World Evangelical Alliance, and in addition have drawn up a fresh and detailed statement of their position on the authority of scripture, … we have concluded that these are equivalent to our constitutional statement of faith for purposes of membership.
>
> We recommend therefore the ratification of this action in the case of those European Alliances which were members of the World Evangelical Alliance and not to be taken as a precedent for others.
>
> Motion prevailed that statement be ratified.[58]

In this way, an intra-evangelical conflict that had persisted for nearly twenty years was finally resolved.

Samuel Külling spoke on 'Are We to Defend "Fundamentalism"?'

55 European Evangelical Alliance, *Our Position in Relation to the Holy Scriptures*, revised draft of 1963, DEA archives. I have been unable to locate a final copy in English, but the text quoted by Howard, *The Dream That Would Not Die*, 88 is the same.

56 *Rat der Europäischen Evangelische Allianz: Ratstagung in Wien vom 19.–21. September 1967*, 2, DEA archives. Howard, *A Dream That Would Not Die*, 36 and especially note 2, is mistaken in stating that Germany and Switzerland were accepted as WEF members in 1953. This mistake is probably because Heitmüller (Germany) and Pache (Switzerland) were giving reports at the conference.

57 *Europäische Evangelische Allianz: Ratstagung vom 17.–20. September 1968 in London: Bericht des Präsidenten*, DEA archives.

58 Quoted from Howard, *The Dream That Would Not Die*, 88.

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A Renaissance of Character and Virtue

Marvin Oxenham

In the history of mankind, there have been seasons in which the effects of the Fall seemed to have been mitigated. The *Venere of Venus* by Botticelli and the *Vitruvian Man* by Leonardo da Vinci remind us of one such remarkable period, known as the Italian Renaissance, in which the rediscovery of the arts, science and classical culture redressed the darkness of barbarian ignorance, degradation and tyranny and reclaimed a place for human flourishing.

This article envisions a renaissance passing through theological education and the church to benefit society. We need one because we have slipped off the shoulders of giants and need to regain the lost tradition of character and virtue.

I. The Tradition of Character and Virtue

In the twelfth century, Bernard de Chartres penned the words *nanos gigantum humeris insidentes* to indicate that we are all dwarves and are meant to be carried on the shoulders of giants. By those words, he was seeking to encourage educators in cathedral schools to build on the studies of the great scholars who had come before them. As an example of this sentiment, the beautiful stained-glass window in the Chartres cathedral portrays the four evangelists as ordinary men sitting on the shoulders of the Old Testament prophets and thereby seeing further by their understanding of the Messiah.

Postmodern individualism is often not friendly to the giants of the past, but there are some traditions that we evade only to our harm. The tradition of character and virtue is one such tradition that should be recovered.

When we speak of the tradition of character and virtue, we are referring to an age-old conceptual framework that contends that human nature can flourish as it cultivates virtue.[1] There is nothing more important than virtue, it suggests, for living virtuously is what we are designed for and therein we find human purpose and deep happiness.

This tradition, accordingly, claims that the solution to social change is not found in structures or ideologies but in individuals. As the character of individuals improves, society will improve; hence, as Christoph Stück-

1 'Human happiness is the activity of the soul in accordance with virtue' (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.7).

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elberger says, 'If we want virtue, we must cultivate virtuous people.'[2]

The tradition we are looking at diagnoses 'barbaric' societies in terms of their vices, such as the 'seven deadly sins' of injustice, ignorance, untruthfulness, pride, greed, indifference and acedia. The therapy for these vices is found in returning to the virtues. These include the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and courage; the foundational virtues of constancy and humility; the social virtues of compassion, goodness, decency, diligence, civility, gratitude and honesty; the intellectual virtues of attentiveness, curiosity and open-mindedness; the personal virtues of dignity, humour, patience and appreciation of beauty; and the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. The tradition then claims that, as these virtues shape individuals, we will witness a social renaissance and a healthier *polis*.

This tradition runs deep and wide across history. If we look to the East, it is a prevailing theme in Confucianism,[3] and in the West it as a cornerstone of both Greek and Roman classical culture. Plato wrote extensively about virtue, and Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, laid out what would become one of the most pervasive ontological and teleological visions of human nature.

The Romans carried on this same tradition, mostly through Stoicism and the writings of Cicero, Seneca and Marcus Aurelius. After the fall of the Roman Empire and the end of the golden classical era, the discourse around character and virtue was kept alive and developed by innumerable other philosophers, educators and writers:

- According to Petrarch, 'The humanities as a whole aim at creating a good man (*vir bonus*), than which nothing more useful (*utilius*) can be imagined.'[4]
- Erasmus sought to revive Christian virtue in the light of the religious corruption of his time as the means to transform both mind and character.[5]
- According to Comenius, a person who is well informed but not morally formed is merely a 'useless encumbrance on the earth'.[6]
- The primary goal of Locke's education plan was to create a virtuous, well-bred and wise young man, and not to create a scholar.

2 Christoph Stückelberger, 'Integrität: Die Tugend der Tugenden—Der christliche Beitrag zu einer globalen Tugend für Wirtschaft und Politik', farewell lecture at the University of Basel, Department of Theology, 2 November 2016, unpublished manuscript. C. S. Lewis makes a similar claim: 'You cannot make men good by law: and without good men you cannot have a good society. That is why we must go on to think of the second thing: of morality inside the individual.' Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (accessed at http://www.samizdat.qc.ca/vc/pdfs/MereChristianity_CSL.pdf), 43.

3 Central to Confucius' teaching in the *Analects* is the idea of *ren* as the 'perfect virtue'.

4 R. E. Proctor, *Defining the Humanities*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 3.

5 Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 109.

6 Jan Habl, 'Character Formation: A Forgotten Theme of Comenius's Didactics', *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 15, no. 2 (2011): 147.

- Hume was a leader in eighteenth-century Enlightenment experiments around character education.[7]
- Marx believed that character education and an emphasis on key virtues represented the key to social transformation.[8]
- In *The Idea of a University,* John Cardinal Newman prioritized the formation of students as 'gentlemen' as more important than the cultivation of studies.[9]
- Character education was central in Kant's views on education.[10]
- For John Dewey, character education was a key democratic function.[11]
- James Madison, one of the founders of American democracy, stated, 'Is there no virtue among us? If there be not, we are in a wretched situation … to suppose that any form of government will secure liberty and happiness without any form of virtue in the people is a chimerical idea.'[12]
- Alexis de Tocqueville, the famed student of nineteenth-century US democracy, stated, 'Liberty cannot be established without morality, nor morality without faith.'[13]
- Montesquieu made it clear that virtue was the essential ingredient for justice and order in a democratic society: 'When virtue ceases, ambition enters those hearts that can admit it and avarice enters them all.'[14]
- A renewed discourse around virtue was also a key feature of the Italian Renaissance.

Although not all these figures may be considered 'heroes of virtue' and worthy of emulation, their writings demonstrate the permeating nature of the theme of virtue in Western culture.

At least until early modernity, the tradition of character and virtue was also substantively embraced by early Christianity, subsumed theologically and kept alive as a core expression of the Christian faith. As we look to church history, in fact, we find the golden thread of character and virtue as a recurring theme in the work of

7 James Arthur et al., *Character Education: The Formation of Virtues and Dispositions in 16–19 Year Olds with Particular Reference to the Religious and Spiritual* (Report to the House of Lords, Canterbury Christ Church University and University of Bristol, 2006), 5.

8 Marcia Horniak, 'Moral Character', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/moral-character/.

9 See Marvin Oxenham, *Character and Virtue in Theological Education* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2019), 233.

10 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Educating for Shalom*: *Essays on Christian Higher Education* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), Kindle loc. 2094.

11 Mark L. Jones, Paul A. Lewis, and Kelly E. Reffitt (eds.), *Toward Human Flourishing* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2013), 18–19.

12 James Davison Hunter, *The Death of Character* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 4.

13 Tocqueville, quoted in Elizabeth Kiss and Peter Euben, 'Aim High: A Response to Stanley Fish', in Kiss and Euben (eds.), *Debating Moral Education* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 208.

14 Montesquieu, *L'Esprit des lois*, quoted in Hunter, *The Death of Character*, 6.

many Christian thinkers and practitioners:

- In 190 AD, Clement wrote about the 'paideia of God' in direct connection with the classical virtue tradition.[15]
- Origen spoke of holding fast to perfection in virtues, persevering in acquiring and preserving virtue, praying for virtue from God, reverencing virtues, searching the Scriptures to ascertain what the virtues are, seeking virtuous works, striving for virtue, training in virtue and working out opportunities for virtue.[16]
- For the early desert fathers and mothers, controlling the passions of vice and cultivating virtue was the first step to union with God.[17]
- Cassian's *De Institutis Coenobiorum* and the *Collationes* were deeply influential in virtue training practices in the monasteries.[18]
- In his *De Officiis*, Ambrose placed the pagan approach to virtue in a Christian context.[19]
- Augustine wrote in *City of God*, 'Virtues in this life are certainly its best and most useful possessions.'[20]
- Virtue is central both in Benedictine and Franciscan spirituality.[21]
- Thomas Aquinas stated, 'The natural perfection of the human person consists in acting in accordance to virtue.'[22]
- Thomas a Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* deals extensively with virtue and with the shaping of our character after the character of God.[23]
- For Melanchthon, education was not only about subject matter but about creating virtue to live out one's faith.[24]
- In *Pia Desideria*, Spener proposed a reformation of education to include *formation* and not only *information.*[25]

From the sixteenth century onward, however, this tradition seems to have dwindled and eventually been generally lost. I do not have sufficient space to examine fully the reasons for this shift here, but indubitably the combined forces of Romanticism and Existentialism contributed to replacing virtue with experience and sentiment. The Enlightenment also added to the demise of character and virtue, displacing wisdom and goodness with knowledge and reasonableness

15 David H. Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 11.

16 David W. T. Brattston, *Traditional Christian Ethics*, vol. 3 (Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2014), 511.

17 Benedicta Ward, *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975), xxvi.

18 See Oxenham, *Character and Virtue*, 213.

19 See Oxenham, *Character and Virtue*, 183.

20 Augustine, *City of God*, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120119.htm, 19.

21 See Oxenham, *Character and Virtue*, 213.

22 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/03d/1225-1274,_Thomas_Aquinas,_Summa_Theologiae_%5B1%5D,_EN.pdf, sections 1–2.5.5.

23 Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History*, 65, 66.

24 Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History*, 72.

25 Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History*, 96.

and giving priority to logical and scientific capacity over moral character. The mind came before the heart, and success came from what you knew and could do rather than from who you were.

Developments in political and social Liberalism can also be cited as debunking virtue frameworks in favour of individual lifestyles and moving questions of good and evil from the realm of fact to the realm of value. As a result, objective 'virtue language' was discarded in favour of a subjective 'value language' and ethical living became an issue of 'authenticity'[26] and personal choice rather than conformity to universals.

The good news is that the long decline is now being countered by a renewed attention to character and virtue. In philosophy, for example, theories such as Alasdair MacIntyre's virtue ethics, which revisits the Aristotelian moral heritage, are gaining renewed credibility. In social discourse as well, analysts are recognizing that character education diminishes crime rates, increases mental well-being and impacts the labour market.[27] The corporate world is likewise admitting that non-virtuous business practices lead to disorder and inefficiency, and professions like law, media and business are acknowledging the importance of virtue.[28]

On a more popular level, we have seen Nobel Peace Prizes awarded to individuals and organizations that demonstrate the virtues of justice, generosity, compassion and peace, and many popular films have portrayed the impact of virtues such as courage, justice, compassion and empathy. But probably the renewed attention to character and virtue has been most evident in the field of education.[29] The work of scholars like Kohlberg, Lickona, Berkowitz, Carr, Arthur and Kristjánsson substantiates the claim that the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have constituted a revival phase for neo-Aristotelian practices in character and virtue education.[30]

But what about the church and theological education? Where do they stand in all this?

II. Virtue and the Church

An examination of where the evangelical church stands in terms of the tradition of character and virtue must begin with a recognition that it too has generally lost track of this

26 Charles Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

27 Jonathan Birdwell, Ralph Scott and Louis Reynolds, *Character Nation* (London: Demos, 2015), 9.

28 Anthony Kronman, *The Lost Lawyer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 5: 'Prudence is the lawyer's central virtue'; Magali do Nascimento Cunha, 'Global Values in Media', in Christoph Stückelberger, Walter Fust and Obiora Ike (eds.), *Global Ethics for Leadership: Values and Virtues for Life* (Geneva: Globalethics.net, 2016), 393–400; Aliza Racelis, 'Developing a Virtue Ethics Scale: Exploratory Survey of Philippine Managers', *Asian Journal of Business and Accounting* 6, no. 1 (2013): 16.

29 For a treatment of how character education can be seen as a response to the 'infernos' of contemporary higher education, see Marvin Oxenham, *Higher Education in Liquid Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 193–96.

30 For references to the work of these authors, see Oxenham, *Character and Virtue*.

thread. The Protestant Reformation contributed towards dislodging the language of virtue, for the cultivation of virtue was seen as an expression of salvation by works and as a denial of the total depravity of man. Although much more can be said about this heritage, it is not without consequence to us today that Luther considered Aristotle a buffoon, a rancid philosopher and the worst enemy of grace, one whose works should be excluded from university studies.[31] Closer to the present, evangelicalism has been described in terms of escapism, conversionism, otherworldliness and activism, and none of these features is a particularly fruitful ground for the development of character and virtue. If one believes that the only things that truly count are evangelism and the afterlife, there is little place for the transformation of character and the renewal of society.

Whatever the reasons may be, the tradition of character of virtue in the evangelical tradition has been conspicuous by its absence. This diminished focus can be seen by examining a range of popular evangelical books on discipleship. They tend to frame discipleship outcomes in terms of service and performance, understanding theology and Scripture, denominational enculturation, mystical encounters with God, consecration, leadership abilities, enhanced relationships and therapeutic healing. Rarely do we find an emphasis on discipleship that is linked to morality, and much less to the language of character and virtue.

Speaking more broadly, it is fair to say that explicit virtue discourse and practice are not on the radar screen of much contemporary evangelicalism. The growing emphasis on 'Christian events', worship-based spirituality and practices of therapy and healing tend to crowd out the cultivation of virtue. In some contexts, virtue can even be seen with suspicion, especially as the moral pendulum swings from excessive legalism to uncritical tolerance. Furthermore, goodness has traditionally been less attractive to evangelicals than truth. Many are ready to fight hard and bloody battles over sound doctrine while the broader realm of good character is left uncultivated.

Sadly, as during the times of the Renaissance, religion can also offer more problems than solutions. Churches can be accomplices to the vices of society. They can generate scandals. They can be known for their lack of love. They can abuse cheap grace and forget their mission to be the salt and light of virtue in barbarian societies. Nowhere, in fact, can the need for virtue be seen more clearly than in the dynamics of ecclesial failure. Churches rarely fail due to poor theology or practical incompetence; they die when leaders are not humble, and leaders burn out when church member are not civil. Churches split when justice becomes tyranny and when truthfulness becomes closed-mindedness. Churches become lukewarm when there is not enough temperance or courage. Churches become clanging cymbals when they miss out on the theological virtues of faith, hope

31 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 2007), 165. For a more detailed treatment of Luther's views of Aristotle, see Jared Wicks, 'Luther and "This Damned, Conceited, Rascally Heathen" Aristotle: An Encounter More Complicated Than Many Think', *Pro Ecclesia* (Berlin) 16, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 90–104.

and love.[32]

And yet, there is hope. Against these grim generalizations, it may appear paradoxical, or perhaps emblematic, that virtuous character ranks high on the wish list of every local church. In a survey of five thousand church members, the highest expectations of ministry were associated with the character of the minister.[33] The Lausanne Movement has called Christian leaders to the virtues of service, humility, integrity, purity and lack of greed,[34] and N. T. Wright has stressed the need for a 'revolutionary idea of virtue'.[35] Deep down, we know that the secret to vitality is not better music, more events or more sophisticated theology. What the church needs is not just better scholars and better preachers, but better women and men.

Together with this hope, our gospel proclaims that, thanks to the atoning work of Jesus, we can be freed from the slavery of sin and enabled to walk in righteousness (Rom 6). If we translate the well-known texts of Romans into the language of character and virtue, we can see that Christians have the unique potential to shun vice and cultivate virtue. And this is the key difference between the Christian gospel and the philosophical tradition of character and virtue. The latter largely failed because it was stunted by the realities of the Fall and, although the renaissance project of the ancient classical world was worthy, it did not have the power to translate its vision fully into reality.

In Christ, however, a renaissance of character and virtue becomes possible. Thanks to God's divine power, humans can receive everything they need to escape the vices and live a life of virtue (2 Pet 1:3–4). Through the atoning work of Christ and the empowering work of the Holy Spirit, the church can bear the fruit of virtue and become a community marked by loving, joyful, peace-bearing, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and temperate individuals (Gal 5:22–23). Indeed, no social institution is as suited as the church to produce virtue, and communities of fruit-bearing, Spirit-transformed, sin-freed, gospel-empowered individuals are the most effective and productive agent of social renaissance (2 Pet 1:5, 8).

III. Virtue in Theological Education

Where, then, can we start? If society needs virtue, and if the church is well-equipped to provide it, what forces can position the church to set off a new renaissance? I contend that theological education is a key player, especially given its business of shaping the church's leaders.

But here we must start again with contrition, for, not unsurprisingly, the story of theological education follows a similar pattern to what we have seen in society and in the church. In the earliest forms of theological education, character and virtue thrived, in terms of both scholarly engage-

32 Judy TenElshof, 'Encouraging the Character Formation of Future Christian Leaders', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42, no. 1 (1997): 83.

33 R. P. Meyer, 'Theological Education as Character Formation', *Theological Education*, Supplement 1 (1988): 96, 113.

34 Lausanne Movement, 'The Cape Town Commitment', https://www.lausanne.org/content/ctc/ctcommitment, IID–3.

35 N. T. Wright, *After You Believe* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 25.

ment and practical training of church leaders. As far back as the fourth century, Chrysostom argued for giving attention to the cultivation of character amongst priests[36] and Ambrose of Milan famously claimed that it was useless to look for a spring (of good church leadership) in the mud (of impure character).[37] Some of the earliest 'training' programmes in the Christian tradition can be seen in the practices of the desert fathers who laid out pathways of struggle against vice as the road to union with Christ—a formational emphasis that carried into the monastic tradition and, to some degree, into the early universities.

But like society and the church, theological education lost this tradition somewhere in modernity and, while still holding on to the intellectual virtues, generally laid aside the broader vision of virtue and character. Theological education became mostly about instruction (passing information from one mind to another) and training (cultivating skills and competencies), and less about providing a holistic education intended to shape students into becoming fully human.

To illustrate where theological education is today, let us compare it to an ancient Roman *quadriga.* The four horses pulling the chariot might be imagined as (1) academic achievement, (2) ministry competence, (3) spiritual formation[38] and (4) character and virtue education. Generally speaking, the horse of academic achievement is well fed and trained, especially as theological institutions pursue formal accreditation and gain status in the secular contexts of higher education. The second horse is also healthy, as most theological schools produce graduates that are skilled in many areas. The third horse, spiritual formation, has an ambivalent role, both because its object and practices are often indeterminate and also because it normally operates in the extra-curricular realm.

But the place occupied by the fourth horse is most worrying. It is often completely vacant or, at best, occupied by a limping, under-nourished horse. This is disturbing because, as in the *quadriga,* this is the horse that holds the inner-left position and is crucial in anchoring the entire chariot as it thunders around the bends of the Circus Maximus. Character and virtue education does not appear explicitly in most mission and vision statements, strategic plans, programme outcomes, credit-bearing curricula or pedagogical practices of theological colleges, and this should be a matter of great concern.

Two practical appeals can be made to redirect theological education towards contributing to a renaissance of character and virtue. The first concerns a theological reformulation of the tradition. Our generation is,

36 Those responsible for the appointment of priests, according to Chrysostom, 'do not all look to the one thing which ought to be the only object kept in view, the excellence of character.' See Richard John Neuhaus, *Theological Education and Moral Formation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 51, 52.

37 'Purity of character enables the priest [to be] the fountain providing the church with the springs of good counsel and the waters of salvation.' Ambrose, *De Officiis*, quoted in Neuhaus, *Theological Education*, 51.

38 For an argument on the difference between spiritual formation and character education, see Marvin Oxenham, 'Why Not Spiritual Formation', in Oxenham, *Character and Virtue*, 27–34.

by and large, illiterate in this regard, and theological institutions are strategically poised to revitalize what we have lost. Doing this should not be difficult, for character and virtue are before the eyes of theologians and need only be uncovered.

We can, in fact, easily find this theme in the biblical theology of creation, fall, redemption and consummation, as man was created for virtue, has fallen from virtue, is redeemed to virtue and is destined to virtue. We can see virtue and vice in the stories of both Old and New Testament, where heroes and villains are put forth for *mimesis* of character. We have entire books in the Bible that are explicitly about virtue, vice and wise living, such as Proverbs and James. The New Testament frequently utilizes the consolidated classical device of 'ethical lists'; it contains at least fourteen lists of virtues (of which the Beatitudes are the best-known) and eight lists of vices.

Moreover, the recurring motif of virtue can be traced through virtually all the New Testament epistles as they outline the realities of the Christian faith. Explicit texts like Romans 6 corroborate the recapitulation theory of the atonement,[39] and 2 Peter 1 tells us that 'adding virtue to our faith' is a central undertaking for those who participate in the divine nature. This first appeal is then a *theological* challenge, to develop a theology of character and virtue alongside systematic theology, dogmatics, historical theology and practical theology, in dialogue with the tradition.[40]

The second appeal is that theological schools should explore and initiate formational practices that will not only teach *about* character and virtue but will also contribute to shaping virtuous character in their students and graduates. There is nothing worse than information about character and virtue that does not lead to transformation. Rather, programme learning outcomes should be intentionally focused on impacting the character of graduates, and pedagogical practices should be aligned with achieving these outcomes. This step will require courage and innovation, and some curricula may need radical change, perhaps even at the expense of some forms of accreditation. It is beyond the scope of this article to enumerate these practices, but there exists a vast body of educational literature related to character and virtue education, and theological education should commit to making use of it.[41]

One objection must be addressed here, lest we be misled. Character and virtue education is not a moralistic return to legalism or prescriptivism. We are not inviting theological institutions to develop and enforce end-

39 When we speak of recapitulation, the key term is *anakephalaiosis* (or *recapitulateo*), meaning the restoration of the image of God. Athanasius spoke of recapitulation, as did Hans Küng in *On Being a Christian*. This vision of the atonement portrays the saving work of Christ not only in terms of forensic forgiveness, but also in terms of the freedom from sin to be righteous. The key term *dikaiosunē* (righteousness) in Romans 6 was also used by classical philosophers to speak about virtue. See Gary Black, Jr., *The Theology of Dallas Willard: Discovering Protoevangelical Faith* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 125.

40 Examples of contemporary theologians involved in this task include Stanley Hauerwas, N. T. Wright and Miroslav Volf.

41 For a detailed treatment of this issue, see Oxenham, *Character and Virtue*, 261–370.

less lists of prescriptive rules and require strict obedience. The goal is not to define and prescribe goodness and virtue, but to shape character. One of Aristotle's most useful metaphors indicates that it takes more than one sparrow to make spring, meaning that only deeply habituated virtue will produce the desired character.[42] In our zeal for what is good, we should avoid the pitfalls of Pharisaism. We should not be in the business of prescribing the occasions when we might pull a donkey out of a ditch; rather, we should aim to nurture individuals of character who will naturally choose what is good.

As a practical example, consider the issue of alcohol consumption. This can be a problem in society, in church and in church leadership. How can a theological school address this? The wrong way would be to meticulously prescribe rules about how much alcohol can be consumed and about what levels of inebriation are appropriate. The approach of character and virtue is to instead identify the virtue that is at work, which in this case is the virtue of moderation. Based on this foundation, the educational emphasis shifts to helping students cultivate the virtue of moderation in all aspects of their lives until it becomes an embedded, 'natural' feature of their character.

The assumption inherent in this approach is that if you are a moderate person, you will make moderate choices, think in moderate ways, make choices in favour of moderation, be emotionally attracted to living in moderation and feel bad when you are not moderate. As this overarching character trait is fostered, the issue of alcohol consumption is effectively addressed not by rules but by virtue.

IV. Renaissance in Theological Education

Theological education has an immense capacity to serve the church and society. But unless the tradition of character and virtue is revitalised, it will fail to deliver its potential. The learning outcomes of theological programmes that involve developing knowledge, understanding and competencies are important and should be retained, but we need to chart new outcomes and supportive pedagogies that will contribute to embedding virtue into the lives of graduates. We are seeking a transformation of character and a renewed emphasis on outcomes that have to do with *being*, alongside those outcomes that relate to *doing* and *knowing*.

As part of this undertaking, a new vision of quality and quality assurance is needed in theological education. In secular higher education, quality encompasses such aspects as enhancing democracy and citizenship through participation, student-centredness, redressing power structures, favouring growth in competencies, contributing to the economic well-being of nation-states, helping humanity to make progress through knowledge and research, and favouring international comparability and mobility. These are all good things, but a vision of quality seen through the *missio dei* has to do with being 'conformed to the image of his Son' (Rom 8:29) so that

42 Virtues can be defined as 'stable dispositional clusters concerned with praiseworthy functioning in a number of significant and distinctive spheres of human life'. James Arthur, *Teaching Character and Virtue in Schools* (London: Routledge, 2017), 28.

our character becomes like that of Jesus. God's purpose is that, through the power of the gospel, the moral, intellectual, civic, personal and theological virtues that were embodied in Jesus will also appear in us. That mission should also define the quality of a theological institution, its accreditation standards, the criteria of its donors and the vision of churches that rely on the school.[43]

Amidst the Babylonian captivity of contemporary higher education, theological education must fight to keep its identity. In his recent book *For the Life of the World,* Miroslav Volf critiques theological education, saying that we have tried to 'recast our discipline so as to acquire a legitimate home in the great edifice of science, but instead we have dug a hole and pitched [ourselves] to its bottom'.[44] In doing so, Volf argues, we stutter to reply to the basic question of what theology can offer in response to the most important question of all: what makes a flourishing life.[45]

The pitfall of scholastic irrelevance is not new. As far back as the first century, the philosopher Seneca was reprimanding fellow philosophers who were falling into this trap, quibbling over syllogisms and over matters of no consequence:

> Do we knit our brows over this sort of problem? Do we let our beards grow long for this reason? Is this the matter which we teach with sour and pale faces? Would you really know what philosophy offers to humanity? Philosophy offers counsel. … Men are stretching out imploring hands to you on all sides; lives ruined and in danger of ruin are begging for some assistance; men's hopes, men's resources, depend upon you. They ask that you deliver them.[46]

Theologians and theological institutions can easily fall into pedantry, offering no counsel, no deliverance and no relief from burdens. They can even bring great harm to graduates. In no other discipline is the cost of scholastic irrelevance so high. But theological education can offer deliverance from vice and introduce its students to a rewarding life of virtue. Given the exponential impact of training high-quality leaders for the church and the church's unique capacity to benefit society, there is no better place to instigate a new renaissance of virtue than in theological education.

43 'We strongly encourage seminaries, and all those who deliver leadership training programs, to focus more on spiritual and character formation, not only on imparting knowledge or grading performance, and we heartily rejoice in those that already do so as part of comprehensive "whole person" leadership development.' Lausanne Movement, 'The Cape Town Commitment', IID–3.

44 Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun, *For the Life of the World: Theology That Makes a Difference* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2019), 4.

45 Volf and Croasmun, *For the Life of the World*, 45.

46 Seneca, 'On Quibbling as Unworthy of the Philosopher', *Letters to Lucilius,* XLVIII, https://www.docdroid.net/SpwJztN/seneca-moral-letters-to-lucilius-v8.pdf#page=154.

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Don't Give Up Hope: Continuing in Friendship with God amidst Acedia

Chloe Lynch

Both in my own life and in the lives of others whom I have served as pastor, there have been occasions where the fundamentals of evangelical spirituality have seemed lost for a season. The Bible may fall to one side, increasingly unread, one's once-vibrant prayer life now stuttering. Devotional habits may become an uphill struggle, with social media and reflexive checking of e-mails an easier alternative than sitting before God in the midst of one's heaviness. Passivity then reigns.

For those who wish to avoid any confrontation with the deep significance of this spiritual weariness, passivity is not the only option. Activity works similarly: plunging oneself into work operates as a powerful distraction from this state of affairs. Indeed, where such work is perceived as 'ministry', the illusion is even more powerful, for the escape from God is reframed as service to him.

In this state of spiritual weariness, one does not necessarily stop believing the gospel or give up one's relationship with God entirely. Rather, the task of engaging with God on anything like a personal basis now feels apparently too onerous. There may be no obvious reason for this change in a long-established pattern of typically evangelical spirituality—no sudden upheaval or loss, no great grief to overwhelm the person's heart. Yet it may nevertheless seem to such people that everyone else is encountering God more deeply than they are and, over time, the hope that this will ever change may begin to ebb.

As a pastor, I had no name for this condition until, in my academic work, I happened upon the concept of acedia, traditionally recognized in Roman Catholicism as one of the seven deadly sins. Although he was not the first to discuss acedia, Thomas Aquinas wrote significantly on this topic in the thirteenth century. He conceived acedia as an attack on our friendship with God, characterizing it as sorrow over our greatest good.[1] That is,

1 In this discussion, I draw upon Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* (2nd ed., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province), www.newadvent.org/summa, and especially upon II-II questions 28 and 35, as well as his *On Evil*, ed. Brian Davies, trans. Richard Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), question 11.

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when acedia holds sway, what should be joy in our ever-deepening participation in God becomes instead only sadness.[2]

In presenting acedia in this way, Thomas differentiated between the symptoms of acedia, which he discussed separately, and the thing itself. However, contemporary considerations have typically focused on the symptoms. In particular, Western believers have come to think of acedia as a kind of listlessness. In fact, we have focused on this symptom to such an extent that the language of 'sloth', which describes precisely this listlessness and passivity, has all but obliterated the concept of 'acedia' in the popular understanding of sin.

As a result, when I introduce acedia to first-year undergraduates at a British evangelical theological college, I see a blankness pass across their faces. Though Protestant writers may have published on acedia in academic journals alongside their Catholic counterparts, evangelicalism has not been talking about this concept at the local church level. Thus, my students (and even at least one of my colleagues) have quite literally never heard of the concept—until I mention sloth, at which point it is as if the light has been turned on.

Thomas Aquinas did not confuse acedia's symptoms with acedia itself. He recognized that what we typically mean by 'sloth' is actually only a manifestation of acedia. At its root, he said, acedia is more than this. It is sorrow in relation to what should instead be our deepest joy, namely our relationship with God. Listlessness, or the deep passivity and laziness which we have dubbed 'sloth', is a symptom of acedia, just as restlessness and hyperactivity are also;[3] the latter two of these constitute an attempt to escape acedia's sorrow through busyness, whereas passivity flows from a perception of this sorrow as inescapable.

Yet acedia can be escaped, resulting in the recovery of joy in the ever-deepening participation in friendship with God which is humanity's greatest good. First, however, if this dangerous pattern of sin is to be evaded, those offering pastoral counsel must be clear as to what acedia's sorrow concerns and what its source is. Only then can they begin to offer remedies that lead towards joy.

I. Sorrowing over Friendship with God

In describing acedia as sorrow over spiritual good, Thomas understands this spiritual good as the divine good, the good to which all other spiritual goods are ultimately directed.[4] Charity, this divine good, should entail rejoicing, and thus acedia is the vice specifically opposed to it.[5] Accordingly, to understand acedia's sorrow, we also need a clear understanding of charity (the divine good over which acedia sorrows).

Thomas claims that charity can be understood as friendship with

2 This sadness is not depression, though there may be some kinship. See Robert W. Daly, 'Before Depression: The Medieval Vice of Acedia', *Psychiatry* 70, no. 1 (2007): 30–51.

3 Thomas, *Summa,* II-II 35.4 names 'sluggishness about the commandments' and 'wandering after unlawful things' as characteristic of the 'daughters' of acedia.

4 Thomas, *Summa*, II-II 35.1, 2; Thomas, *On Evil*, 11.2.

5 Thomas, *Summa,* II-II 35.2.

God, a gift given by God in Christ by which humanity may share in God's happiness. This is the end, Thomas proposes, for which humanity was created. Such friendship, dependent upon God's self-communication to humanity as its shared ground (the *communicatio*),[6] is characterized by mutuality of benevolence and affection. The first of these, benevolence, means actively seeking the good of others for their own sake, making the other's good one's own. In the divine-human friendship which is charity, God's benevolence consists in his offer to humanity of participating in his own goodness, a good which is indeed ultimate for humanity. The loving response of mutuality towards God by which humanity completes this benevolence is to receive and co-operate with that gracious offer, a willing of God for ourselves, although not for our own sake but rather that we should be for his sake, belonging to him and obeying him.[7]

Charity's mutuality is characterized, second, by an affection whereby one shares oneself with others to the extent of becoming 'one heart' with them.[8] This affective union by which each inclines towards the other, without thereby losing their difference, is directed towards an ever-deepening end where the union will be real (rather than only affective) in the context of the eschatological hope of God and humanity living together. This will issue in the joy of not simply inclining towards the beloved but, finally, of participating fully in God.[9]

This union in charity is intended to be humanity's ultimate end or happiness, its consummation being fulness of joy and the completeness of Sabbath rest.[10] Joy, as the soul's delight in a good presently possessed, is a fruit of charity[11] and, in Jean-Charles Nault's words, 'is at the terminus of the movement of love'.[12] Joy's measure in us depends on two things. First, our degree of present joy is determined by our measure of charity; second, to the extent that we do not yet fully participate in charity, joy depends also on hope. That hope refers to the expectation of future divine fellowship, a hope for completion of our participation in the divine-human friendship.[13] Thus, our joy is both a present delight to the degree that we already participate in friendship with God and also a not-yet enjoyment which we experience now as hope.

Acedia, however, opposes this joy that charity would effect.[14] In its sorrow, acedia perceives as evil the good

6 A shared ground is required by all friendships. On this shared ground, see Joseph Bobik, 'Aquinas on *Communicatio,* the Foundation of Friendship and *Caritas', Modern Schoolman* 64 (1988): 13–14.

7 The points discussed in this paragraph are drawn from several sections in Thomas' *Summa:* II-II 23.1, 27.1, 31.1.

8 Paul J. Wadell, *Friends of God: Virtues and Gifts in Aquinas* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 32–33; Thomas, *Summa*, II-II 27.2.

9 Thomas, *Summa*, I-II 25.2, 28.1.

10 Thomas, *Summa*, I-II 3.1; II-II 28.3, 35.3.

11 Thomas, *Summa*, I-II 31.3; II-II 28.4.

12 Jean Charles-Nault, *The Noonday Devil: Acedia, the Unnamed Evil of Our Times*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2015), 70.

13 Thomas, *Summa*, II-II 28.1.

14 Though charity overflows inevitably in love for neighbour (Thomas, *Summa*, II-II 23.5), acedia's focus is charity's divine good rather than this overflow to the neighbour's good. It is envy which opposes charity's love of neighbour (Thomas, *Summa,* II-II 36.1).

of the divine *communicatio* 'as participated in by us',[15] and thus it cannot delight in the presence of the beloved. Acedia mars the enjoyment of the present measure of one's participation in God, saddened by its inchoate nature and even scorning the good one possesses.[16] It operates against this participation with implications both for the acts of love which constitute one's response to divine grace and for the progressive inclination of one's affections towards God.

How, then, should we understand the nature of the sorrow which grounds acedia? To answer this question, we must first recognize that Thomas appears to identify varying degrees of acedia. Without question, acedia can be a mortal sin which destroys the spiritual life that charity effects. Nevertheless, Thomas also allows that sins which are 'mortal in respect of their genus' actually become mortal only 'when they attain to their perfection'. Accordingly, acedia can be (only) a venial sin when it is 'a mere beginning of sin in the sensuality alone'. It is not mortal sin until it reaches 'the consent of reason', something which occurs only when the flesh has utterly conquered the spirit.[17]

In its most serious (mortal) form, then, acedia constitutes a movement of the will, a sorrow described by Thomas as consenting in the 'dislike, horror and detestation of the Divine good' *as we participate in it* (rather than of the divine good *per se*).[18] In the estimation of Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, this more serious sorrow, which is an aversion of the will, is the manifestation of sorrow in the intellectual appetite. She contrasts this with the sorrow manifested as a passion in the sensitive appetite, going so far as to deny that sensitive sorrow about the divine good is sinful.[19] It is, however, hard to agree with this last assertion. Although passions are not intrinsically sinful, they are culpable when directed either towards something evil or towards something good but in an immoderate way.[20] Since the passion of sorrow with respect to participating in the divine good is disordered, it is surely sinful even if does not yet qualify for Thomas' category of mortal sin. Moreover, acedia as venial sin may indeed flower into mortal sin because although the will, or rational appetite, has 'politic sovereignty', it is not unconquerable; that is, the passions, when wrongly ordered, can operate to direct the will rather than the will disciplining

15 Thomas, *Summa*, II-II 28.1; Thomas, *On Evil*, 11.3.

16 Thomas, *Summa*, II-II 28.1, 35.1. Thomas suggests that acedia is an evil on a second count too: not only is it evil in itself, in its misconstrual of that which is good as though it were evil, but it is also evil in its effect, for it oppresses people in such a way as to draw them away from good deeds, perhaps because they despair of the value of such things.

17 Thomas, *Summa*, II-II 35.3.

18 Thomas, *Summa*, II-II 35.3.

19 Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, 'Resistance to the Demands of Love: Aquinas on the Vice of *Acedia*', *The Thomist* 68 (2004): 183. This contrast is made more explicit on p. 185 and in note 41, where DeYoung glosses over Thomas' admission that acedia 'can be prompted by movement of the sensitive appetite' and claims that times of being burdened with suffering, grief, physical weariness and lacking in joy are not acedia.

20 Thomas, *Summa*, II-II 35.1.

the passions.[21] When this happens, sadness moves from what we might today perceive as emotion or feeling into the realm of a wilful response of dislike or detestation of one's participation in friendship with God.

In any case, both kinds of sorrow should be considered acedia and thus both call out for a remedy. Indeed, the *Summa* makes clear that whereas the willed consent to this detestation is found in domination of the spirit by the flesh, even acedia as *venial* sin—that is, the 'movement … in the sensuality alone'—is characterized by this flesh-spirit opposition.[22]

One aspect of the diagnosis of acedia is not fully clear in the *Summa*. On one hand, the source of acedia's sadness may be that the work of divine-human friendship is perceived as oppressive to the flesh and therefore not pursued. On the other hand, the perceived oppressiveness of this spiritual engagement could be the *result* of acedia, not its source. DeYoung argues strongly for the first position,[23] whereas Laura Lysen contends for the second.[24]

Thomas' statement in *Summa* II-II 35.1 that acedia 'implies a certain weariness of work' (*taedium operandi*) can be construed as supporting the first position, provided that we understand the specific work against which the flesh is opposed as that entailed by the divine-human friendship.[25] On the other hand, in presenting spiritual torpor, or sluggishness, as a 'daughter' of acedia in II-II 35.4, Thomas could be construed as claiming the second position, that an unwillingness to engage charity's work is acedia's result and not its source.[26]

To untangle this debate, though important, is not necessary here, for our concern is not to determine acedia's source but to engage acedia's remedies. The flesh-spirit opposition which underpins acedia might first manifest as sorrow over the inchoacy of one's participation in the divine-human friendship (Lysen) or as torpor concerning the acts that constitute that participation (DeYoung). Yet, however this opposition

21 Thomas, *Summa*, I-II 9.2.

22 Thomas, *Summa*, II-II 35.3.

23 DeYoung, 'Resistance', 188–203.

24 Laura M. Lysen, 'Vicious Sorrow: The Roots of a "Spiritual" Sin in the *Summa Theologiae*', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 30, no. 3 (2017): 336–41. Indeed, for Lysen, acedia's source is its sorrow and the sorrow is specific: a sorrowing over the inchoate nature of one's participation in God (338–39).

25 Nault characterizes this as 'the second definition of acedia', concluding that the two definitions 'converge' because 'sadness about what ought to gladden us most: participation in the very life of God' (first definition) is the other side of acedia's second definition as something that 'crushes or paralyzes activity … [and] affects the deepest motive force of activity, namely, charity, the participation of the Holy Spirit' (Nault, *Noonday Devil*, 73–81).

26 Lysen contends that the *Summa* (II-II 35.4 ad. 3) supports the second position, saying that sorrow on account of shirking burdensome work is not a vice, for only the sorrow of acedia, a sorrow on account of the divine good, is vicious ('Vicious Sorrow', 337). A counter-argument might be possible here, however, in that the burdensome nature of work is perhaps not the point of the comparison here. Rather, the point may be that sorrow must be in relation to the divine good and that weariness or sorrow over burdensome work, which constitutes a seeking of 'undue rest in so far as it spurns the *Divine good*' (Thomas, *Summa*, II-II 35.4 ad. 3, emphasis mine), can be deemed to be the vice of acedia.

first manifests, each reality leads to the other—i.e. sorrow to weariness or vice versa—and, as spirit gives way increasingly to flesh and the will succumbs to the sensitive appetite, acedia will worsen. Whether unwillingness to do the hard work of participating in the divine-human friendship, as it has already been given to us in Christ, is the original source of acedia's sorrow or simply the subsequent 'daughter' of that sorrow will not matter when a person is caught in the midst of that sin.[27] By then, the vicious cycle has already begun. What matters at that point is to remedy the acedia by putting an end to the flesh's resistance to participation in God's friendship.

II. Learning to Continue in Friendship's Loving Gaze

To reverse the natural flow of acedia towards mortal sin, the will must be enabled to move away from its potential wilfully to despise God's friendship. Whereas sorrow can hinder or even prevent the use of reason, such that the capacity to seek rest in the desired good is reduced,[28] the situation is not irretrievable. Yes, the passion of sorrow can muddy our perception to such an extent that eventually our desires and even our will come to accept this muddied perspective as truth. Yet as long as one of acedia's daughters, despair, has not taken root, all is not lost. Until the will confirms its embrace of acedia by ceasing to wrestle against it, thus ratifying its complete surrender to despair, a remedy remains.

That remedy is despair's opposite, the hope on which we have already seen that the joy of charity in part depends. As a passion, hope has the capacity to jolt a person from sorrow into a renewed expectation of the divine good as not only good but also possible. For hope is capable of undoing not only the sorrow over the goodness of one's participation in the divine good (i.e. acedia), but also the conviction that one's attainment of that good is impossible (despair). Hope is, then, the precursor to charity's joy.[29] For when one can hope both that one's participation in the divine good is *actually* good and that a fulness of participation is, in time, possible, one can then engage fruitfully in what Thomas presents as the ultimate remedy for acedia: contemplation of spiritual goods in general and of the Incarnate One in particular.[30]

What, we might ask, is the responsibility of the person suffering from acedia in engaging this remedy? Though Lysen implies that DeYoung frames acedia's remedy in terms of renewed effort in the responsibilities of God's friendship—and Lysen explicitly rejects this proposed remedy as being work and, therefore, diamet-

27 This debate is perhaps most important with regard to the question of agential responsibility in acedia. Daly ('Depression', 41–43) notes that the literature most clearly accords significant agency with regard to acedia's *rectification,* 'church and society generally deem[ing] … it within the power of the penitent … to make right his conduct and character'. Whether the person with acedia could be held originally *responsible* for the inception and development of the malaise is less clear.

28 Thomas, *Summa*, I-II 37.4, 39.1.

29 Lysen, 'Vicious Sorrow', 344–45.

30 Thomas, *Summa*, I-II 38.4; II-II 20.4, 35.1.

rically opposed to resting in divine goodness[31]—the two perspectives may not be so far apart in practice. In fact, DeYoung's emphasis on attending to the responsibilities of the divine-human friendship could be read as a form of the same contemplation, or resting in divine goodness, which Thomas identifies and which Lysen holds up as acedia's true remedy. Of course, any kind of effort or work by the person suffering from acedia can take on the frenzied restlessness which is in fact a daughter of acedia rather than its remedy. Yet work is perhaps not always diametrically opposed to rest. More particularly, resting in divine goodness surely does not preclude a work that is responsive. Without a doubt, the divine-human friendship is indeed a gift and no amount of work can earn our participation in it. Nevertheless, work which is directed towards love, rather than towards a restlessness which is an escape from that love—a work which knows its nature not as initiating but as a response to the one who first loved—is not contrary to the rest in divine goodness which is charity's joy.

The kind of work which consists of responsive human participation in the unparalleled mutuality of friendship with God is itself an aspect of contemplation for, as we look upon him in all his goodness, we desire increasing participation in him and deeper relationship with him. It is true that the gaze upon him in which we see his love for us comes first but, inevitably, contemplation then also invites us to participate in that love with our own acts of loving response. This pattern of response, which unavoidably involves the vulnerability that characterizes mutuality and the transformation that attends life lived with another, is, I think, what DeYoung intends by the 'work' of divine-human friendship.[32]

Those who gaze on Jesus yet choose not to respond in the vulnerable work of transformative reorientation of life—as well as those who do not gaze at all—risk giving primacy to flesh over spirit. In light of this, one might perceive works of responsive love as sowing to the spirit and thus as protecting against the advance towards a willed acedia, and possibly even as reversing that movement. In that sense only, perhaps we could describe effort as a kind of remedy for acedia—as long as we recognize that the remedy is a contemplation of the already-given love to which our works of love can be only a response.

Works alone do not suffice in remedying acedia. Thomas himself appears to indicate that even the most committed friends of God may find themselves subject to acedia in the movement of the sensitive appetite, notwithstanding any effort they might have been making to participate in friendship with God.[33] What matters, above all, is first an unimpeded gaze upon Love himself and second, where that gaze is interrupted, maintaining the capacity to continue an active waiting in hope for the darkness to be made light again.

31 Lysen, 'Vicious Sorrow', 343.

32 Moreover, technically DeYoung does not present this response as acedia's remedy. Instead, she describes its absence as true of those with acedia ('Resistance', 197–200); implicitly, its presence characterizes the one who makes that response as participating in charity and overflowing in joy.

33 Thomas, *Summa*, II-II 35.1, 35.3.

III. Practising Friendship's Delight

James Smith writes helpfully on the subject of directing persons towards love. Describing humanity as 'beings who first and foremost (and ultimately) intend the world in the mode of love',[34] he suggests that this love is structured as desire, specifically desire for a particular vision of the good that is human flourishing. Further, since we are fundamentally affective beings before we are cognitive beings, our desire draws us towards that good.[35] In the Thomistic model that I am following in this paper, humanity's ultimate good is presented as friendship with God. Acedia, however, represents sorrow in relation to that good, an affective response by which a person begins to turn from that good and to call it 'not good'. In seeking remedies to acedia, then, we are seeking to understand how a person might more deeply receive God's friendship, responding to it wholeheartedly in joy rather than turning away from it in sorrow. What, then, does it take to redirect one's desire, or gaze, towards our greatest good, namely the ever-deepening participation in friendship with God in Christ?

Smith proposes that to direct desire towards a particular telos, we need particular dispositions or habits. Habits 'constitute the *fulcrum* of our desire' by predisposing us towards a certain end, he says. Whilst not denying reflexivity as a human possibility, Smith presents conscious self-reflection as secondary and sporadic. Fundamentally, it is 'precognitive dispositions that orient [our] … being-in-the-world'.[36] These dispositions towards a particular good become embedded in two ways. First, that particular vision of the good is pictured in concrete ways which exceed simple cognitive processes: images, narratives, icons and myths frame the human imagination, offering patterns of meaning by which the world might make sense. Second, habits are embedded through embodied practices. Just as there is a way of knowing which is affective and embodied before it is cognitive, one which can train the body to engage in certain responses that do not require involvement of the conscious mind in acts of cognition, so also it is with training the desire. Because practices are not value-free but carry within them a particular telos or vision of the good, their embodiment as habits will, over time, direct a practitioner into deepened participation in the good they symbolize.[37]

One example of such a practice comes from the Carmelite tradition. Teresa of Avila advocates a practice of prayer called active recollection, involving a habit of exterior silence in which a person withdraws his or her awareness of the external world for a period in order to become present to Christ, who is within the person by the Holy Spirit.[38] This prayer

34 James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 50.

35 Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 52–55.

36 Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 56–57 and note 34.

37 Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom,* 57–68.

38 Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection,* trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 2000), 4.9; 28.6; 29.5. In adding the descriptor 'active' to 'recollection', I am differentiating the material in *Way* from that in Teresa's

practice does not necessarily involve reading texts or even speaking any words of prayer, though such tools can be useful as a preliminary to aid in turning one's heart towards the intended awareness of Christ.[39] Instead, the practice of recollection consists in the representation of Christ to one's own heart, whether through an internal image of him or in a non-visual way (i.e. through faith); it is not about thinking much but about loving much.[40]

Over time, Teresa insists, this practice directs its practitioners into a habitual capacity for awareness of Christ.[41] My own experience of practising active recollection has confirmed this: over the last year or so, a daily habit of twenty minutes of waiting upon God in silence has, in conjunction with other devotional practices more typical of an evangelical spirituality, served progressively to deepen my awareness of Christ and my responsiveness to him in the rest of my daily life.

What we practise not only predisposes us to the end which those practices carry within them; it also leads us to desire that same end at a cognitive level. Admittedly, life is rarely as simple as being captured by one overarching vision of the good. Smith notes that very often we hear instead a number of 'competing stories' and can find ourselves 'quite taken with stories that cognitively we might criticize'.[42] However, for our purposes, his basic point holds: when we are distracted from the good that is friendship with God, an engagement in practices which carry this vision of humanity's good can be pursued as the route back from sorrow towards joy. Furthermore, because practices are always communal,[43] to commit (or remain committed) to those communities or institutions which pursue that same good will strengthen the acedic person's own efforts to redirect his or her desire. Accordingly, the reordering of love towards the telos of friendship with God requires participation in the community of his friends.

Practices and the narratives which frame them, then, are fundamental in combatting acedia. Yet, first, the person must own—i.e. recognize and take responsibility for—the sorrow of acedia as sin. Though sorrowing over the incomplete nature of one's friendship with God might sound like a godly sorrow, its sin consists in the underlying perception that what God has given is too little. Until this sorrow is recognized as sin, repen-

The Interior Castle, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (New York: Paulist, 1979). The former text presents recollection as a practice we can initiate (hence 'active'), whereas the latter emphasizes the supernatural aspect of recollection, in which the Spirit infuses our prayer such that God is the one initiating the 'gentle drawing inward' when he chooses (*Interior Castle*, 4.3). Whilst recollection in the latter sense is a divine gift, there is a sense in which practising recollection in the former sense predisposes a person towards an active receptivity to the infused recollection that God initiates. That is, practice directs the practitioner into deepened participation in the good symbolized by this form of silent prayer.

39 Teresa, *Way,* 26.9–10.

40 Teresa, *Way,* 26.1–3; 28.4; *Interior Castle,* 4.1.7.

41 Teresa, *Way,* 29.8.

42 Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 55 note 30.

43 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007), 218.

tance, which is the only way to restoration, cannot occur. It is perhaps for this reason that the Eastern tradition perceives tears as one of the key remedies for acedia. Evagrius claims, 'Sadness is burdensome and acedia is irresistible, but tears shed before God are stronger than both.'[44] Thomas also recognizes the role of tears in the assuaging of sorrow, calling them a way of dispersing one's focus from the sorrow and thereby releasing and lessening it.[45]

Accordingly, before the will can be turned back to joy, those with acedia must repent of the sorrow as a sinful disordering of their desire that has caused them to cease to pursue friendship with God. In connection with this repentance, there is (provided that hope remains) likely to be some motivation to throw off the sadness concerning one's participation in the good. This motivation will drive active engagement in the practices by which the community of God's friends directs their hearts towards deepened friendship with him.

Therefore, in one's wrestling to practise delight in God, what matters initially is the cultivation of hope. For hope alone counters the despair born of acedia. It strengthens the soul to gaze again upon Jesus and to practise joy in his friendship. Such hope is, in Paul Wadell's view, 'a shared virtue; one connected to friendship and community and … impossible without them'.[46] The gathered church is the community that remembers for us the things we have forgotten and believes with us the things we can barely believe. Hope is found centrally amongst friends of the Friend, those who can recast for us the images and narratives by which we know our future good and the goodness of our present share in it. These friends are the ones who, through their own practices of hope, both tether us to that confident expectation of God's goodness that we are struggling to hold on to and also hope us into hopefulness.

I have seen this process first-hand. During seasons of my own acedia, a dear Christian lady has, by making time to meet with me monthly, repeatedly held me to the encounter with Jesus from which I would rather have run. In holding that space for me, and in sitting with me in the silences of a soul that could not remember how to continue in friendship with God, she has remembered for me the things I had forgotten and believed for me the things I could barely believe. Quite simply, in the consistency of her friendship with God and with me, she has hoped me into hopefulness until I have again been able to remember, believe and rejoice.

Hope is costly, however, for it constitutes a willingness to wait, a willingness not to give up on the divine good despite the difficulty of living in the tension between what is and what is not yet. It means not becoming 'overwhelmed by the … waiting', not coming 'to abhor … [the good] on account of the apparent slowness of its coming'.[47] Yet costly though it is, such

44 Evagrius of Pontus, *Exhortation to a Virgin*, 39, in Robert E. Sinkewicz (ed.), *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 134.

45 Thomas, *Summa*, I-II 38.2.

46 Paul Wadell, *Becoming Friends: Worship, Justice, and the Practice of Christian Friendship* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002), 136.

47 Jeffrey A. Vogel, 'The Speed of Sloth: Reconsidering the Sin of *Acedia*', *Pro Eccle-*

waiting in hope gives God the space to be God. For friendship presumes the freedom of agency, that each party may act or not act without being subsumed by the will of the other. An unwillingness to wait for God, allowing him to fulfil his promise in his way and his time, would constitute an attempt to collapse our relationship with him in such a way that God becomes simply an extension of our own selves.[48] This would be an act of true God-lessness, for it makes us the centre of our own reality and treats the reality of God as existing only in relation to us.

Hope, then, must wait, 'expos[ing] … itself to the action of the beloved'[49] and trusting that the eschatological tension exerted upon the present experience of friendship with God will, one day, be resolved. There is no passivity in this kind of contemplative waiting, though. For, as we have seen, the assault against acedia's sorrow means actively directing our hearts to the good in the ways that Smith has indicated for us. First, there must be a deliberate and oft-repeated return to the images and narratives by which we can retell to ourselves the story of the God who offers us friendship in his Son. We must intentionally cultivate joy over a consistent period of time, searching for the wonder that precipitates delight. For where doubt and despair have prevailed, what matters is that the imagination becomes captivated again—that wonder and delight are cultivated as both the hermeneutic by which people suffering from acedia experience life[50] and the necessary epistemological dislocation[51] by which they may be jolted from despair to hope.

The picturing of the good by which we might finally see enough to shock us from acedia's sadness must ultimately occur in the context of worship as an *image*-ining of the narratives of the gospel along the lines already suggested. As we repeatedly engage the imagination with the narratives of the gospel offer of friendship with God, we make room for wonder to take root and for delight to be rekindled. Our preachers unpack the biblical text, enunciating again the invitation by a God who first loves us. We are reminded that this love's beginning never depended on us

sia 18, no. 1 (2009): 66. Stanford M. Lyman notes that acedia involves a suffering of 'the inconveniences of time', the question of '[w]hat to do while the chain of being is still becoming'. Lyman, *The Seven Deadly Sins: Society and Evil*, rev. ed. (Lanham: General Hall, 1989), 10. Once again, the challenge is to wait.

48 Often it may be 'one's neediness, possessiveness or desire to control [that] influences a friend to collapse the distance comprised in … difference'. Chloe Lynch, *Ecclesial Leadership as Friendship* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019), 166. Neediness and desire to control God have certainly been prevalent in my own experiences of acedia.

49 Vogel, 'Speed of Sloth', 68.

50 Darin H. Davis and Paul J. Wadell, 'Educating Lives for Christian Wisdom', *International Journal of Christianity and Education* 20, no. 2 (2016): 98–99.

51 The capacity for wonder is, Josef Pieper declares, 'among man's greatest gifts' because it 'acts upon man like a shock', bringing epistemological dislocation. 'It does not end in doubt', though it brings an awareness that one does 'not … know fully, [and does] not … conceive absolutely', because this not-knowing is framed by the search to know more deeply rather than by resignation. Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998), 101–8.

and are encouraged to trust that the God who gives it says also that what we have received is very good. At the Lord's Table, similarly, as the minister holds bread and cup high and prays that they might be to us the body and blood of Jesus, we see narratives of divine friendship made concrete in the tangible stuff of grain and grape. As we hold out our hands, empty and with nothing to give, we see powerfully the grace of this story, a grace by which another fills our emptiness with bread and cup in an echo of all that Jesus gave and gives.

In worship, we experience the narratives of divine friendship made concrete in the friends of God alongside whom we worship. For in them in whom the Spirit dwells, we encounter the living Christ who is made present to us in a special way in the midst of the church. Our worship shapes our desire in accordance with the first of Smith's factors mentioned above, the reframing of our imagination by narratives and images. But it does more than that. Smith's second factor—the power of habitual practices to direct us towards the good—is also in play. For worship involves not only the one who reveals his own worth but, importantly, the one who delights in that worth in wonder-filled response. The practices of this wonder-filled delighting are equally foundational to the church's life of worship. Specifically, worship is not only about the gospel as given to us but also about the gospel received by us, a receiving expressed in the practices of response.

In discussing liturgy as ecclesial practice, Simon Chan warns against misunderstanding the effect of our active participation in worship. Whilst we must engage intentionally in the church's liturgical practice, we must not think that our formation towards the good is '*because* of our active participation'. Rather, worship is 'something we do "pathically"… [and] we do not grasp the mystery but are grasped by it.'[52] This is exactly the point I am making here. Our practices of worship are always responsive in the context of a graced receiving, and their part in forming us to the good of the gospel operates dialectically with divine grace, by the enabling power of the Spirit.

Not all evangelicals warmly embrace the practice of liturgy. Yet its formative gift is to guide the articulation of our prayers and to offer a defined space for divine encounter in the context of its symbols and rituals. It also draws our attention to the *ek-static* nature of life in God—that we are called to relate in love towards others in the church and in the world.[53] In its enactment of the gospel, the liturgy thus draws us into the mystery of God (liturgy's objective pole) while, in its invitation to a particular set of responses, it draws us into a personal appropriation of participation in the divine life (liturgy's subjective pole).[54]

Together with God's friends, then, in worship we respond to him in acts of prayer and song. When they are offered, we eat the bread and drink the cup, receiving these gifts into ourselves. When we hear the Word preached, worship means responding

52 Simon Chan, *Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006), 97.

53 Susan J. White, *The Spirit of Worship: The Liturgical Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1999), 21–28.

54 Chan, *Liturgical,* 149.

in a communal wrestling to see our lives reoriented around truth. As we gather, our Spirit-enabled practices of sacrament and song, of prayer and teaching, re-enact Jesus' life and ministry[55] and form our desire towards him. Particularly, as we practise love towards one another in that place, we thereby offer the response which constitutes the return of God's friendship.[56] In this way, we are drawn deeper into our participation in his life and directed towards a wondering delight in the face of the God who offers the ultimate happiness of friendship with him.

By these practices, we willingly habituate ourselves towards finding our happiness in God. Even though delight and joy may feel like distant memories, we engage in the practices of delight *as if* we delighted, and we trust that, though we cannot know how or when, the 'as if' will make room for the birth in us, again, of the wonder by which desire may be reordered to the good.

The ancient monastics knew the power of such practices of worship. They knew, too, that the key was perseverance in the 'as if', a daily return to the practices that lead to joy and a commitment to continue in the friendship of the community of joy. Those who suffered from acedia were instructed to stay in their cells to pray and meditate on Scripture in silence, rather than running to other monasteries for distraction.[57] Work, also, had its place,[58] countering the extreme diligence in prayer which could prove, in some cases, to be not acedia's remedy but a manifestation of restlessness or hyperactivity, one of its daughters. Such disciplines of stability were seen as significant,[59] because the perseverance necessary in the battle against acedia was viewed as grounded in 'the mundane routine of the daily office, fulfilling the quotidian tasks of everyday existence … returning day after day to the same place … and community'.[60] For the challenge of those who would resist acedia is to wait and then to wait

55 Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 183.

56 'God's friendship is only properly returned when returned for God's sake. However, charity as the return of this friendship implicates the neighbour.' Hans S. Reinders, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship: Profound Disability, Theological Anthropology, and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 321–22. For my own fuller discussion of this point in Thomas Aquinas, see Lynch, *Ecclesial Leadership*.

57 Cassian did not discourage those suffering from acedia from interacting with the community. Rather, the instruction to stay in one's cell was to combat the tendency to succumb to flight and, specifically, the monk's fear that 'he will never be well while he stays in that place, unless he leaves his cell (in which he is sure to die if he stops in it any longer)'! John Cassian, *The Institutes,* ed. Kevin Knight, www.newadvent.org/fathers/3507.htm, 10:3. For further discussion of other early treatments of acedia, see Andrew Crislip, 'The Sin of Sloth or the Illness of the Demons? The Demon of Acedia in Early Christian Monasticism', *Harvard Theological Review* 98, no. 2 (2005): 155–57.

58 Nault, *Noonday Devil,* 40.

59 Evagrius of Pontus, *Praktikos*, 8, in Sinkewicz, *Evagrius*, 102; Evagrius of Pontus, *On the Eight Thoughts*, 6:5, 6:17–18 in Sinkewicz, *Evagrius*, 84.

60 Dennis Okholm, *Dangerous Passions, Deadly Sins: Learning from the Psychology of Ancient Monks* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2014), 152.

some more, even as they faithfully engage in worship practices by which they hope again to provoke their soul to the wonder which will shock them from sadness to joy and remove the interruption of their contemplation of God.

In the context of a life of worship which, offered in the privacy of one's cell and in the community of believers, perseveres and waits in the times and places which have been given, those with acedia thus seek to open their heart to becoming directed towards God. Though ultimately it is God who initiates this movement, yet we must acquiesce in order to participate in the happiness of God. For this acquiescence to take form, however, there must remain, as we have said, a spark of hope that this is still an end worth rejoicing over. Without that spark, these practices of worship will not represent an *intentional* attempt to cultivate joy through the provoking of one's soul to wonder; and without such an intention, there can be no possibility of acedia's cycle being broken.

For hope, as Evagrius observes, is what enables the soul actively to overcome its own resistance. He suggests that just as in Psalm 42, where the soul enters into a dialogue with itself, so also people suffering from acedia can imagine their soul as divided in two. Along with the part that is experiencing sadness, Evagrius imagines a second part of the soul which stands alongside the first part and, in speaking encouragement, can draw the first part of the soul into the dialogue of wrestling before God, which is itself prayer.[61] Though one part of the soul may tell of the sadness, the other part tells of the joy and doggedly works to provoke the wonder which, though it is a divine gift, must nevertheless be actively received. In this wrestling, those with acedia can habituate themselves towards the good that is God and practise the hard work of calling the soul back to the discipline of delight.

IV. Hopeful Perseverance amongst Friends

The remedy for acedia is, when seen from one perspective, a circular one. For it demands that the acedic do what the acedic cannot do: delight in his or her inclusion and friendship with God. Whereas in giving pastoral counsel I might once have glossed over this complication, my own experience of acedia means that I now cannot. For I realize that although joy may be acedia's true remedy, neither hollow warnings about trying harder not to surrender to listlessness or restlessness nor exhortations to delight instead of sorrow will have any long-lasting effect. Whether such well-intended instructions are embraced for a time only or perhaps rejected out of hand, words by themselves, flung at the suffering person from a safe distance, will not suffice.

Instead, those with acedia need pastoral support from others who can, through genuine friendship, represent to them the love of the Friend and strengthen them for the difficult work of friendship with that Friend. For the practices directed towards delight are overwhelmingly difficult for a soul that struggles to practise

61 Evagrius, *Praktikos,* 27, in Sinkewicz, *Evagrius*, 102.

them 'as if'. To return one's gaze in worship again and again upon Christ, in pursuit of the continuity of contemplation that Thomas prescribes in the reclaiming of friendship's joy, is no simple task in the face of near-constant failures to abide and enticing temptations to distraction by other, easier ends. It takes perseverance and it takes whole communities of friends who will hold up for us the vision of our future good and our present share in it, inviting us again and again to its practice.

Yet, notwithstanding the difficulty or the cost, there is, as long as hope remains susceptible to being stirred up, the possibility of a soul's return. For hope sparks the potential for the soul to stand actively against its own resistance. It enables willingness, however minimal, to wait actively for God, permitting him the freedom intrinsic to friendship, a freedom in which he is neither contained nor directed by us and our frustrations. Hope waits even when the fig tree does not blossom and the fruit is not on the vines. Stirring up the soul one last time, it prods towards the disciplines of delight, trusting that one day practices will become dispositions and desire will be directed again to its proper end. Hope keeps the acedic person amongst the friends of Christ, knowing that the call to respond with joy to God is one undergirded and made possible in the community where God and humanity meet. And, though it be flickering and fragile, hope brings the suffering person to gaze upon Christ just one more time, in the expectation that the soul will eventually respond wholeheartedly and in joy to the offer of friendship which God faithfully holds out in Christ. Hope perseveres because, cast down and in turmoil as the soul may be, Psalm 42 is right: 'I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.'

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On Becoming a Fellow Traveller in Mission

Hans Christoph Baer

I. Moving from Outsiders to Fellow Travellers

New missionaries may have preconceived ideas of how they want to be viewed by people in the target culture. They may even have strategies to achieve the roles they would like to play: development worker, nurse or doctor, teacher at a Bible seminary, English teacher, student worker, pioneer, church planter, disciple maker, trainer of pastors and leaders, or manager of a missional business. They may have many years of training, but when they land in a foreign country and another culture, how they introduce themselves to that culture is crucial.

'When a newcomer arrives on a tribal scene he must somehow be related to the existing social structure so that people will know how to act toward him and how to expect him to act toward them.'[1] This may seem obvious, but as Judith and Sherwood Lingenfelter point out, 'Most American Christians have three significant spheres of relationship: family, workplace, and church. After many years of consulting mission field settings, we have found that missionaries tend to turn their mission community into all three. This is disastrous for those who envision a ministry that touches the lives of people in the local community and culture.'[2]

Nowadays, the availability of social media aggravates this problem by making it harder to leave home. Missionaries may remain so connected to their home country that they do not connect deeply with locals. But to enter something new, you have to leave the old.

As we live among a new people group, we may have an idea as to what roles we would like to play, and the people may have their own expectations and ideas. The two can be very different. We may just want to be encouragers and fellow travellers, but the people amongst whom we live may want us to be patrons and a source of financial resources. Such conflicts can put us at risk of failing

1 Jacob A. Loewen, *Culture and Human Values. Christian Intervention in Anthropological Perspective* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1975), 435.

2 Judith E. and Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Teaching Cross-Culturally. An Incarnational Model for Learning and Teaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 117.

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from the start, despite our best intentions.

Or we may think we could help with money to improve our host people's living conditions. In their sight, this makes us a patron. But do we know what that means? The role may soon turn into expectations which we cannot fulfil, and then what?

The most important thing in becoming a fellow traveller is to learn the people's language and culture so that we can communicate and interact sensibly with each other. Shortcuts are available, of course. For example, we could use translators or interact only with people who speak our language. But if we want to show interest and respect towards a people group, we show it best if we learn their way of life and use their language.

Language learning gives us the opportunity to ask for help. *We* are the ones who need *their* help. We are not the ones who know everything; rather, we depend on other people from the start. Only through interaction with them can we learn their language and culture and come near to them. Jesus similarly taught the seventy-two whom he sent out to depend on the people to whom they went. They should not go with money but with the gospel (Lk 10:4, 7).

In my personal experience, language learning time had its ups and downs. After having learned Thai for nearly two years, my wife and I were sent into a remote Karen village where only a few people could speak Thai and nobody understood English. It was a tedious task to learn a language in a village where there was no running water nor electricity available, besides looking after three small children. Tom and Elizabeth Brewster's LAMP method[3] was a help. Still, I found it hard as I did not progress as quickly as I would have liked. I said to my wife, 'What are we doing here? Is this all?' I had my ambitions. I saw things which needed change (in my opinion). I had prepared myself for missionary service for many years. I thought I knew how a church should function. But here I was sitting on the porch as an old lady from another village came to our house and talked to us louder and louder but we did not understand. She pointed to her ears. We knew she thought we were deaf.

Those years in the village, just being a learner and starting in baby shoes, frustrated me at times, but they taught me many invaluable lessons too. Looking back, I think, it was good that I could not speak up much during my first years. During this time we became friends with people in the village. We started to host a Bible study group during the week. Once a month I joined Karen Christians in walking to other villages on weekends to spread the gospel, so I got to know more and more villages around us. In Sop Lahn village, we participated in selling a few essentials at the same price as in the city, which was much cheaper than the nearby merchants' prices. My wife, a nurse, could help many people by selling basic medicines. That opened doors for us to visit the sick and we could pray for them together with Karen Christians.

This was the time when we grew into the role of fellow travellers. Ivan Illich expressed it accurately: 'Lan-

3 Tom and Elizabeth Brewster, *Language Acquisition Made Practical* (Colorado Springs, CO: Lingua House, 1976).

guage learning is one of the few opportunities an adult can have to know the deep experience of poverty, weakness and being dependent on the benevolence of other people. It needs adequate patience, good observation, the courage to make mistakes and the ability to laugh at yourself.'[4]

Fred Lewis writes, 'To learn the worldview of another people, *and* live according to their foreign-to-you worldview, leads to living uncomfortably just about all the time. ... The practice of vulnerable mission just about requires a missionary to live in weakness.'[5] While this is true, we have to ask how many missionaries are able to do this without breaking or leaving.

I would suggest that becoming a fellow traveller is a long process. Besides the ideal of living 'according to their foreign-to-you worldview', we have to consider how much a single person, couple or family can handle of this. One of our co-worker families was able to adjust deeper and another less so. We had to find our own way to survive and then to grow into a fruitful ministry. Actually, a long-term mission perspective helps, because you have the time to adjust accordingly.

Jesus' coming into this world was a long-term mission, and very radical besides. He became a baby and entrusted himself to the hands of sinful humans. After adjusting to this earthly life for thirty years, becoming a fellow traveller to the Jewish people, he started his ministry. Jesus knew his host culture so well that he frequently used stories (parables) to teach his fellow travellers very effectively. Then he gave himself over completely to fulfilling the plan of God the Father. Although his time of ministry seemed short, he accomplished it to the point that he could call out, 'It is finished' (Jn 19:38). 'He humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross' (Phil 2:8).

More important than anything else is an attitude of humility and the desire to adjust one's life to the new culture, which also means looking for the good traits in that culture.

If we want to become fellow travellers, we have to find common ground to talk and fellowship together. When Karen people from different villages meet each other, they usually talk about their common connections, their family, relatives and friends and what they do to earn their livelihood. I often felt like an outsider because I would have explained my family very quickly. A few years ago, I discovered a theme I had overlooked even though many Karen talk about it: their dreams, which influence many Karen quite strongly.[6] Here I can join in. I have discovered many new traits about their culture and this is a theme I can talk about to anyone, whether the listener is a devout Christian or a spirit priest. It opens up opportunities to share the gospel and it has challenged me to give more attention to my own dreams.

My wife, on the other hand, has

4 Ivan Illich, *In den Flüssen nördlich der Zukunft. Letzte Gespräche über Religion und Gesellschaft mit David Cayley* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2006), 24; my translation.

5 Fred Lewis, 'Worldview: A Vulnerable Mission Ingredient', *Global Missiology*, www.globalmissiology.org, April 2018.

6 See Hans Christoph Baer, *Dreams in the Omkoi Karen Christian Context: An Anthropological Research Combined with a Theological Study on Dreams* (Nuremberg: VTR Publications, 2018).

learned a lot about natural medicine from the Karen, and she has also translated a booklet about natural medicines in the tropics into the Karen language. Again, this has given us opportunities to appreciate what the Karen already know and to learn from them as well as to pass on some practical knowledge, such as how the papaya in their garden can be used for medicine in different ways. My wife gave a seminar in a Karen village, which the ladies enjoyed very much. They produced medicine with plants that are locally available.

As already noted, Jesus knew his Jewish culture so well that he used stories from that culture in his teaching. The Karen culture is full of stories, some of which are very similar to those in the Bible. For example, they have a tale analogous to the biblical story of the Fall. Mr. Dipae, one of the early believers, was very gifted in comparing Karen stories and sayings with biblical truth. He always used these comparisons in a positive way, showing people the Bible was teaching things that the ancestors had been teaching already. I challenged Mr. Dipae once to tell a traditional saying or a story that contradicted the biblical truth. He stopped for a moment and then answered, 'I can't do that; you can.' This answers is not surprising if you know that one of the highest values among the Karen is harmony—a value that we can link to the wonderful Good News of reconciliation instead of taking revenge. 'Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you' (Eph 4:31–32).

What has also helped us to establish ourselves as fellow travellers has been the traditional view some Karen have of the white man. In their mythology, the white man is called their youngest brother. Many Karen Christians have started to call us their youngest brother (*pügöda*) instead of foreigners (*golawa*). This has been a great asset. We belong to their family. As such, we are allowed to share our thoughts but we are not telling people what to do. I always thought this was a very good position to be in as a missionary. It sounds good, but I have to admit that I often got my own fingers into things, desiring to tell them what a good solution should look like.

The Karen's traditional poems, called *hta*,[7] are another indigenous resource that can be used to tell the gospel. A friend and long-time missionary, Keith Hale, has produced an evangelistic booklet which explains the way to salvation through those *hta*. This tool is well-liked among the older people.

It is a joy to discover resources in the culture that can be talked and shared about, learning from each other. It is hard work, but it is also enriching to find out about the people's hopes and with what they can identify in their lives. It is a privilege when we start to belong to them in one capacity or another. But we also need humility when we feel misjudged, ignored or even scolded because we do not fulfil their expectations. We have been blessed that more than once we could reconcile with people after relationships had turned sour. I have appreciated it a lot that the Karen have given

7 These poems are chanted at traditional funerals or weddings, or they may be used to put a baby to sleep. Some of the *hta* tell about God. New *hta* can also be made up.

us another chance after I had acted inappropriately in their eyes.

We have never established a mission station, but rather just lived in a Karen village or among the Thai and Karen in a marketplace. Over the years, usually just one foreign family has lived with the Karen in the Omkoi district of Chiang Mai province. Since the work grew so quickly, the Karen themselves had to take responsibility for the groups of Christians among them. With our presence we have been an encouragement to the Karen, but also a temptation to depend on us. The Karen appreciate that we have learned their language and culture, and that we eat what they eat and sleep where they sleep. We try to use tools for teaching the Bible that are reproducible for them. They have become aware that in Christ they have received the same power that we missionaries have.

One Sunday after church, we were called to a neighbour's house because a young man had suddenly fallen unconscious despite having no sign of illness. So we started to pray. I prayed and the lad started to swing at me. Then an elder prayed, and at that point the young man sat up and asked what has happened. God had made it very clear that he listens to the prayers of the new Karen believers. This was an encouragement to them.

II. Handling Expectations of Money

The temptation for the Karen has been that some thought we would bring money with us to help them. At times, some of the Karen wanted us to move out because they felt that we were standing in the way of other groups who came in later and were giving more financial help.

When we were new in the village, one cold morning a Karen mother with her almost-naked baby came to our house, begging for clothes. But we had to say that we were not distributing clothes, and to please go to the church elders. She was not very happy and we asked ourselves whether we had done the right thing. Later on, when we got to know people, we discovered that this mother belonged to one of the richest families in the village.

Another time, one of the educated church workers was unhappy with us because we did not pay salaries. He told me that we could afford to send our children to school in the city (which was a heartache to us) but we would not help the Karen. He said he would not work with Western missionaries anymore. So he moved out and went to work with another group that paid him a monthly salary. After six months, he was back in our village. He did not like how that group was directing him. The village church he came back to disciplined him for three months, not giving him any role in the church during that time.

Then the Karen leaders thought it would be a good idea to help evangelists who go out regularly with some reimbursement. They asked us whether we would help with half of that money. We agreed. But after one or two years, we realized that most of the evangelists got only what we paid, and not much if anything of what the churches had promised. A new start was necessary. Nowadays, we still help a little, but most of the support comes from the different village churches.

Then the pressure came to help with building churches. When I was

walking with Karen Christians to spread the gospel, one leader asked, 'Why is it that you do not help? Look at the other village where another mission has built a nice church and we have only a bamboo hut to meet in.' I responded, 'The church in the other village tells a lot about that mission and their faith, and your church tells a lot about your faith.' Even though similar questions have been raised at times, none of the churches we have worked with have joined hands with that group. One reason has been that we had been living with the people and had become friends with them.

At times, however, we did compromise under pressure. For example, we agreed with the churches that our organization would pay for tiles for the roofs of new churches. We have done this over many years and it has worked out well. We remain part of the work, helping in some measure as the Karen do as well.

Not too long ago I met a very dedicated missionary from the organization that helped to construct the nice church building, and he asked me why the Karen do not take up responsibility for their own work. I looked at him a bit puzzled, because I felt the Karen were taking responsibility quite well in the work in which we were involved. After a moment of silence, he said, 'We will start to work more in the way you do now. We will give out less money.'

We praise the Lord that we have had friends and relationships with Karen people who have appreciated our presence without expecting money. That has helped us navigate this minefield of finances. In emergency situations, we were willing to drive people to a hospital, but we declined to be the Landrover taxi to the district town, thirty kilometres away or a three-hour drive when we first lived there. (Road improvements have cut the travel time roughly in half since then.)

Establishing personal relationships that are based on respect and equality is key. With those who see us only as givers of resources, this is a difficult goal to reach. Once a Karen called us stingy in an open meeting, because we would sell paracetamol tablets instead of giving them away free. It hurt. And yet we know that by selling things, we give the other person the feeling of partnership instead of dealing with him or her as a beggar.

We have also set an example that it is okay for Christians to sell things. Some of the second-generation Karen Christians have started businesses and we are friends with them. Nowadays, some of them even help us from time to time. The first time this happened, I did not find it easy to accept but now we praise the Lord for that! As Paul wrote to the Philippians, 'Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. … They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God' (Phil 4:17–18).

It is hard not to fulfil people's expectations. Who likes to disappoint others? Yet when we look at Jesus' ministry, we see that he did not fulfil all the people's expectations. On one occasion he went to another village even though many wanted to be healed by him (Mk 1:35–39). To the rich young man he gave the freedom to choose whether he would sell all and follow him (Mk 10:17–31). Jesus loved him and yet he let him go. Many left Jesus when he taught God's word in a straightforward manner. And then he asked his disciples, 'You

do not want to leave, do you?' (Jn 6:66–67). As missionaries, we are not called to fulfil the wishes of the people but to do the will of the Father in heaven.

III. Missionary Visions and Local Cultures

Going on mission with a broad vision is a good thing. Often people are motivated for mission by a vision of providing better healthcare or a burden for the victims of sex trafficking. But when the vision and strategy are spelled out in concrete forms and plans before one has had long-term exposure to the target people group, serious problems can arise. Here are a few vivid examples.

A foreign medical mission built a hospital near Omkoi, because the Karen told them that they would like to have one. But it has never functioned as a hospital, because foreign doctors need to take an examination in the Thai language first before they can be approved to practise, and no doctor who has passed this exam is available.

Two groups have recently arrived who work against human trafficking. One is supporting an orphanage (which actually is a hostel with only a few orphans) and the other is sponsoring children with the vision of helping them through their studies. In actual fact, we have not had a problem with human trafficking in the area because the Karen highly value marriage and family. And it is even less of a problem in the traditional setting of mountain villages, where extended family members care for each other. To me, it seems to be lacking in integrity to depict Karen kids as though they are in danger of human trafficking or being orphans when in fact they are not. But it is easier to find sponsors for orphans and children in danger of human trafficking then just straightforward for studies.

Recently many foreign workers have been thrown out of China. How do the abandoned Chinese feel? Many feel left behind, alone, sad and angry. Another one expressed it in this way: 'As I look back, I sometimes feel used. Maybe I was just the tool that made it possible for the foreigners to see their dream come true. I don't want to feel that way, but sometimes I wonder. I realize now that I wasn't really part of making decisions. I was the one who ran all the errands and did what I was told to. But maybe it isn't so easy when you don't understand the culture.'[8] No missionary would like to be the one this person describes, but it should cause us to reflect on how we undertake our work.

In contrast, consider how Paul taught the new Christians. He encouraged them to help the churches in Jerusalem and in Judea. He encouraged the use of local resources to help others. We never hear Paul asking the sending church in Antioch to help him or the newly established churches; instead, he gave the new Christians the opportunity to express their gratitude towards God and to the Christians in the place where the gospel originated.

Sometimes God gives us a vision to set us on our way, but the missionary must be open to adjusting, changing or even abandoning the vision to keep in step with God. Paul and his team were going to preach the gos-

8 'So, How Are They Now? A Follow-Up on Chinese Christians after Their Expat Colleagues Had to Leave', 5 July 2019, https://www.chinasource.org/resource-library/chinasource-blog-posts/so-how-are-they-now..

pel in Bithynia, 'but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to' (Acts 16:7). Then he had a vision of a man of Macedonia begging him to come over to Macedonia (Acts 16:9). Paul and his team decided that this was God's call and went off to preach the gospel in Europe.

In the same way, we have to stay flexible to keep in step with God's calling. Only when we become fellow travellers with the people we want to serve we will start to see things as they see them, and that will help us to adjust our vision so as to be in step with them and with local circumstances. We need to think about how we can integrate our vision with their vision, or God may ask us to abandon our vision to become part of a greater vision with the people we want to serve.

One senior missionary advised me, 'If you really think you have a good idea how things should change or could be done better, you can talk about it with the Karen—but then you have to wait. If the idea is good in the sight of the Karen, sometime later one of the leaders will air a similar or the same idea, and then the time has come to act and support his idea.' I have seen that happen several times. About two years ago, I aired the idea that they should research the land rights of the place where a hostel and Bible training centre are located. Just recently, they came up with suggestions of how to make sure that the unregistered land will not be taken over by someone. Had I done it all by myself, they would have thought it is my responsibility, but now they have taken it on as their responsibility.

It is good to have a vision or burden to go to the mission field. Without it, we would probably stay at home. But it is essential to go with a servant attitude and to spend the first years becoming fellow travellers who know the culture and language of the people group we are now part of.

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A Foundation for African Theology That Bypasses the West: The Writings of René Girard

Jim Harries

'He spurned her. That's why she killed him', I was told at the funeral of a man in his fifties. But 'she' lived many miles away. The dead man had been living with his other wife. How the ex-wife might have killed him didn't come into question. She had good reason for despising him; he had died; she must have killed him.

The vast majority of publicly available scholarly material on Africa is rooted in Western thinking. That includes publishing by African scholars, who to achieve accreditation are required to legitimize their academic writing by building on Western education.

The writing of the late French scholar René Girard was different. As far as I know, Girard never visited Africa. Yet his work can greatly elucidate our understanding of African people. In contrast, the West views Girard as fitting into no recognized category in contemporary academia.[1]

Girard (1923–2015) was a French-born scholar who spent nearly all of his academic life in the USA. He was a distinguished professor at Stanford University until his retirement in 1996 and a member of the elite *L'Académie Française*. In his vast work, Girard, a practising Roman Catholic, presents 'a theory of astonishing power and scope, [that helps one] to see … Christianity … in an entirely new light: no longer as a more or less doubtful body of "beliefs" but instead as a breakthrough in understanding'.[2]

Girard, in my view, stepped outside of today's dominant Western worldview. He achieved that feat through close analysis and comparison between literatures, many of which predated contemporary modernism.

1 'Girard's body of work—both in its methods and in its conclusions—is largely out of step with current theoretical trends in the humanities and social sciences, and yet in itself it is hard to see this as a disrecommendation', writes Chris Fleming, 'Mimesis, Violence, and the Sacred: An Overview of the Thought of René Girard', in Scott Cowdell, Chris Fleming and Joel Hodge (eds.), *Violence, Desire, and the Sacred*, vol. 2 (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 10.

2 Paul Kennedy, 'On Violence and Religion: Part One', podcast, 14 March 2015, https://www.davidcayley.com/podcasts?category=Ren%C3%A9+Girard.

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Whereas real-life histories tend to conceal what is nasty and cruel, writers of literature for whom attracting and holding an enthralled readership is more important than being politically correct can revel in it.

Girard commonly uses the term 'scapegoat', whereas a victim of public disapproval is widely known in Africa as a witch. In this article I use the latter term.

Contemporary scholarly writing on Africa often ignores the prominence of the Christian gospel on the continent. Even those scholars who recognize it struggle to express why Christianity, a phenomenon long considered by Western academia to be past its sell-by date, has been and continues to be so enthusiastically adopted by African people. Girard's writings give a very clear and highly pertinent explanation as to why this is happening.

In this essay, I highlight Girard's amazing relevance to a proper understanding of Africa by identifying important ways in which Girard and Africa align. In each section, I demonstrate a key observation on human behaviour made by Girard; then I make a connection to African life.

Although for purposes of clarity I begin with Girard, my own journey of discovery was the other way around. I noticed interesting things about African life and only much later (in 2018) discovered how pertinently Girard speaks into those contexts. His insights have sharpened and helped me to more effectively articulate my prior understanding.

I. The Identity of Satan

While denying him a real existence parallel to that of God,[3] Girard considers Satan to be strongly oriented to encouraging people to satisfy their desire. Satan loves to convince people that 'greed for whatever they desire' will enable them to thrive and live contented happy lives.[4]

If people actually followed Satan's guidance that involves satisfying as many of one's desires as possible, human society would break down. Yet Satan, according to Girard, has come up with a mechanism to keep people convinced that satisfying their carnal desires is the best way forward. Drawing on Matthew 12:26, Girard describes this mechanism as 'Satan drives out Satan.'

Realizing our tendency to blame others for our troubles and then to rejoice if someone whom we hold responsible for our misfortune suffers, Girard explains how the demise of a witch (i.e. scapegoat) brings a false, deceptive, yet convincing conviction to people that they are on the right track. After all, it is logical to think that if so-and-so is causing my problem, and if so-and-so is killed, then my problem will end. The four gospels describe Jesus' death for the people in this way. In each account, he is murdered by a mob. Luke 23:13 tells us that the enmity between Herod and Pilate was dissipated as a result of the death of Jesus. His death helped, even before his disciples had any wind of his resurrection, to restore a false sense of peace and unity to these two men.

A false sense of peace, achievable by the death of a witch, is used by

3 René Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning* (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 2001), 45.

4 Girard, *I See*, 40.

Satan to lead people to follow him rather than God. Jesus blew this cover by rising from the dead. For Girard, the deception that someone's death brings lasting peace and unity 'cannot be revealed without Christ'.[5] Once the deception is revealed, then true peace can come only through Christ.

Satan often has a high profile in African Christianity, unlike in many forms of Western Christianity. Hence, it can be hard for African people to understand how the West can get by without witchcraft. They know that keeping peace and unity in traditional African communities requires the periodic identification of and chasing or even slaughtering of a witch. They realize, however, that the peace and unity thus achieved are transient. They also realize the terror of this system—the danger that at any time a community can turn against and proclaim the death sentence on one of its members. Kroesbergen, writing about Zambia, shared this account:

> Once I asked a student to give an example of the great care for community in Africa, and she told about a shopkeeper who was suddenly accused of being a witch. Everybody in the village, even people who never had had anything to do with this shopkeeper, joined together and, as one community, they lynched this supposed witch. Does this show a sense of community? It is a very particular sense of community. To me, it does not feel like a rosy kind of community. Should they not have included the shopkeeper in the community as well? Yet one may argue that the community in the story is more inclusive and harmonious than other kinds of community.[6]

The fear of being lynched underlies *Ubuntu*, or the sense of shared community. It makes people 'inclusive and harmonious'. The gospel is loved in Africa because it gives a way out of this prison of fear into a potentially durable peace and unity, in which grace and forgiveness are made foundational to life and God's laws replace dread of the mob. Satan is widely known as the proponent of the old system, and God through Christ, who willingly submitted to being murdered to save others from their sins, is seen as providing a way out from it.

II. How Satan Is against Satan

In human community, it is easy to become suspicious that many different people are 'against you'. Resolving one's misfortune would then require a kind of war of all against all.[7] Part of the secret of Satan's defence of his kingdom is that he manages to get people to aggregate their suspicions against a singular victim or group.[8] This happened at Jesus' crucifixion. Many of those approving of his crucifixion, which was basically everybody,[9] came to that position only in the heat of the moment. Although they might have had their suspicions about all sorts of people, the mob's

5 René Girard, *The One by Whom Scandal Comes*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014), 60.

6 Hermen Kroesbergen, *The Language of Faith in Southern Africa: Spirit World, Power, Community, Holism* (Cape Town: AOSIS, 2019), 176.

7 Girard, *I See,* 8.

8 Girard, *I See,* 36.

9 Girard, *I See*, 24–25.

reaction to Jesus drew them into its throes. Then, after the death of Christ, they would have been more at peace with others of whom they had been suspicious. In this way, by offering a communal victim, Satan protects his domain from the very violence that he himself creates.[10]

Girard explains that Satan was duped by the cross.[11] Satan expected the murder of Jesus to have the outcome of every other witch hunt: people would conclude that the peace and unity that arose after Jesus' death proved that he really was guilty. When Jesus was found to be the sinless Son of God who rose from the dead, that blew Satan's cover. From that point on, anyone familiar with what happened to Jesus, and who believes that he was resurrected and offers eternal life, would realize the deception underlying Satan's trick of making people think that killing a witch is the way to peace. Christians derive a peace other than what the world gives (Jn 14:27) from the death and resurrection of Christ, which has exposed the mechanism that Satan had been using up to that time.

A Kenyan colleague recently told of being asked to plough a friend's field. Because oxen plough well when it is cool, my colleague sent his sons with cattle to the field at 4:00 am on a moonlit night. His sons were attacked and almost killed by people who suspected them of being cattle rustlers. It seems that African people, when they come across what they believe to be a clear case of theft, unleash anger that has arisen from the building up of diverse suspicions of misdemeanours by a wide variety of people. The satisfaction derived from getting a victim, someone (evidently) unambiguously opposed to the community, can assuage their anger and subsequently restore relationships with others who may have been suspects. Once a lynching of this sort has begun, others may quickly join in as a means of expressing their anger; they know that acting as part of a large mob will make them immune from subsequent conviction.

III. Identification with the Victim

Despite being encouraged to explore what is unique about different samples of classic literature, Girard decided to explore what they had in common.[12] He found the same theme throughout: people feeling justified that someone who had been victimized on the basis of a very poorly grounded foundation of evidence was actually guilty. 'Girard's most recurrent example of myths is that of Oedipus.'[13] Another example is the 'horrible miracle of Apollonius of Tyana', in which the human victim, after death, took the form of a Molosian dog.[14]

Having been raised as a Christian, Girard felt that he knew a better way.

10 Girard, *I See*, 35.

11 Girard, *I See*, 150.

12 René Girard, *Things Hidden since the Foundation of the World* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 38.

13 Gabriel Andrede, 'René Girard (1923–2015)', *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: a Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource*, https://www.iep.utm.edu/girard/#SH3d.

14 Girard, *I See,* 50. The fact that the victim turned into an animal presumably demonstrated his having been other than a normal human and thus clearly guilty.

Later he realized that one aspect of the absolute uniqueness of the Bible, in relation to all non-biblical texts, arises from its identifying with the victim. Time and time again, the world's myths and stories acquiesce to the slaughtering of victims, considering the outcome of such slaughter to be beneficial—except in the Bible.

After the 2007 Kenyan election, different tribes blamed one another for their ills. The old spirit of killing to solve your problems returned. 'Two months of bloodshed left over 1,000 dead and up to 500,000 internally displaced persons in a country viewed as a bastion of economic and political stability in a volatile region.'[15] Many—accurately, I believe—read this tragedy as an embarrassing lapse in faith by Christians in Kenya.

Shamala, speaking of African communities in Western Kenya, stated that 'when an individual is absent from a communal ceremony he or she … runs the risk of being suspected of wanting to destroy it'[16] (i.e. being considered a witch), which makes the person liable to lynching or exclusion. Many Westerners, including even Western Christians, are amazed at the spread of the gospel in Africa, but they have an inadequate grasp of the penetrating nature of the pro-victim theme that is found throughout the Bible. I believe this is one of the mind-blowing themes that keep African people attentive to Bible teaching and preaching. It is amazing to them that God has given a way out of the spiral of revenge, witch hunts and destruction under which they previously laboured. They constantly re-emphasize this theme to maintain their stand against the alternative of hateful exclusion and killing.

IV. The Role of Rituals

Rituals, for Girard, are re-enactments of the killing of a witch and are intended to recycle beneficial effects (i.e. bringing peace and unity) that the killing originally induced.[17] People attend rituals to acquire relief from the rivalries caused by inappropriate levels of mimetic desire[18] or envy, sometimes called 'sin'.[19] Should

15 Ben Rawlence and Chris Albin-Lackey, 'Ballots to Bullets: Organised Political Violence and Kenya's Crisis of Governance' (2008), https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/03/16/ballots-bullets/organized-political-violence-and-kenyas-crisis-governance. I was in Kenya at the time and observed the process.

16 Lucas Shamala, *The Practice of Obuntu Among the Abaluyia of Western Kenya: A Paradigm for Community Building* (Saabruecken, Germany: VDM Verlag, 2008), 135.

17 'Rituals reproduce the mimetic crisis' (Girard, *Things,* 19). Girard seems to be referring to all rituals.

18 Girard uses the term 'mimetic desire' to indicate that the desire to which he refers is a desire to imitate another. See James G. Williams, 'Foreword', in Girard, *I See*, x–xi. Newell says this even more strongly: mimetic desire is 'the surrender of one's power to choose the objects of one's desire'. William Lloyd Newell, *Desire in René Girard and Jesus* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 7. I believe that the failure to identify desire as mimetic, identified by Girard as characteristic of the contemporary West, does not extend to African people, who are much more aware of how people desire possessions, capabilities, and even the desires of others.

19 Such rituals are at the basis of what Girard calls 'religion', which is a means to prevent people from killing each other completely. Christianity has clothed itself as a religion so that, like a Trojan horse, it can

rituals not work, then the problem is not incorrect performance of the ritual, but the failure of people attending the ritual to have sufficiently cleansed themselves.

I am constantly amazed, in my day-to-day life in Africa, by people's love for preachers. Once I was in a café where a news broadcast was on the television and no one seemed to notice it. When the programme changed to preaching, suddenly everyone was glued to the TV.

Amongst the rituals that remind us of and recycle the shed blood of sacrifice are the messages of preachers. Christian preachers have a different role from teachers. The latter seek to impart knowledge; preachers seek to impart cleansing. In classic Pentecostal preaching, they do this by enabling the congregation to enter emotionally into the Christ-event as guilty sinners, thus encouraging repentance through their renewed acceptance of his death on our behalf. His having been crucified reduces the risk of their becoming the next witch to be lynched. (Constant fear that non-compliance with a community would result in one's being lynched was sufficiently debilitating to community functioning that its absence has come to be associated with 'prosperity'; hence a foundational underlying reason for the prosperity gospel's prevalence in Africa.)[20]

In the Luo tradition, if a woman should walk out on her husband and then come back, a ritual including the slaughter of a sheep must be performed before she regains her normal status as a wife. The killing of that sheep substitutes for her own blood. In contrast, Jesus' death on the cross both saves her from her own death and enables her to be forgiven without the sacrificial ritual.

The faith in Christ that does away with the dark tradition of fearful witch hunts also brings responsibility in its wake. Concluding that a witch is not responsible for someone's predicament forces one to search for an alternative cause, what is in the West known as 'truth'. Such a notion of truth was not present in traditional Africa.[21] This is one reason why Christianity is so closely associated with education in Africa: people are seeking wisdom on how to live together in peace within the newfound freedom given by God's grace.

V. The Concealing of 'Traditional' Violence

Myths explored by Girard often seem, on the surface, to outline a straightforward overcoming of evil by good. The good is exaggerated, and what is contrary is underplayed. According to Girard, a careful reading reveals that this is a result of the universal practice of concealing violence that actually occurred.[22] Healing, Girard sus-

penetrate and demystify violence in other 'religions'. See Gianni Vattimo and René Girard, *Christianity, Truth, and Weakening Faith. A Dialogue*, ed. PierPaolo Antonello, trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

20 'Certain people fall into poverty as a result of the oppressive forces of witchcraft', states Frederick Kakwata, in what to me is rather an understatement. Kakwata, 'Witchcraft and Poverty in Africa: A Pastoral Perspective', *Black Theology: An International Journal* 16, no. 1 (2018), 22.

21 Shamala, *The Practice of Obuntu,* 104.

22 Girard, *The One*, 31; Girard, *I See*, 68–69.

pects, is traditionally always rooted in an original sacrifice, i.e. the killing or chasing of a witch.

Similarly, I have long been struck by the difference between how my African colleagues explain a series of events and how I would explain them. For example, healing can be declared to have happened before it is even symptomatic, presumably as a way of trying to avert a death that would otherwise occur as a prerequisite for the healing. (Denying that Christian prayer has resulted in healing can be tantamount to condemning a witch for bringing your malady. Hence, Christians must acknowledge healing by faith.) 'Say you are healed by faith, even if you don't feel better' is a common instruction to someone being prayed for. The healing referred to here, however, is not so much biological healing, but a release from inter-human tensions (which may well include the dead and those not yet born).[23]

Cases in which bloodshed was considered necessary for healing may not be described as such; the implicit action of killing is not made overt. For example, I recall an occasion when a boy born out of wedlock was sick. I accompanied my African colleagues to pray for him, but I was surprised when all attention and prayers were focused on the mother. After drinking tea together, we left. Later, I was told the baby was healed. Another day later, the baby had died. The fact that our prayers were focused on the mother made it clear that in my colleagues' understanding, her sin was making the baby sick. Had God forgiven her, the baby might have survived. That the baby had to die to pay for the mother's sin was implicit but never mentioned.

Ways in which African people can conceal the violence that underlies their traditional ways of life became evident to me in 1992. During my time amongst the Kaonde people of Zambia between 1988 and 1991, I became increasingly mystified as to how tensions in the local community were being resolved. Although I perceived that fear of witchcraft was underlying these tensions, only when I read an account of Kaonde beliefs written by an outsider, Melland, did I grasp some details.[24] In a subsequent visit to Kaondeland, when I cautiously probed these issues using the indigenous terms from the Kaonde language that Melland had captured, I regularly found people familiar with them, and they always appeared a little embarrassed that such practices in their community might be known by outsiders.

VI. The Origin of Gods in Lynchings

Girard claims to explain the origins of gods in popular mythology. For example, drawing on the myth of Tiamat,[25] he suggests that the gods whom peo-

23 I acknowledge that I am here fusing the categories of emotional and physical healing, which are usually treated separately by Westerners but not by Africans.

24 F. H. Melland, *In Witch Bound Africa: An Account of the Primitive Kaonde Tribe and Their Beliefs* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1923).

25 According to this myth, Marduk kills Tiamat and then uses her body to form the heavens and complete the creation of the earth. Joshua J. Mark, 'Marduk', *Ancient History Encyclopedia* (2016), https://www.ancient.eu/Marduk/.

ple draw on to sustain their lives represent the ongoing presence of witches who were at one time lynched. Those killed are accused of evil, yet the impact of their death is the bringing of prosperity. As the community members who had been responsible for the lynching perceive benefits following the act, they wonder whether such benefits could really have resulted if the one who died had been a mere normal human. They begin to suspect that, to have that effect, the deceased must have been an exceptional kind of human. This process leads to the acknowledgement, after a lynching, that the departed has the status of a god, to whom people pray and who is named in future rituals so as to ensure their effectiveness.[26]

The fact that the Swahili term *miungu* can be used for 'the people who have died in a person's clan', i.e. deceased ancestors, is pertinent here.[27] *Miungu* would normally be translated into English as 'gods'. Because the singular, *mungu*, implies an ancestor, a translation of the Bible into Swahili distinguishes between 'god' and 'God' by terming the latter as *Mwenyezi Mungu*.[28] Gods (ancestors) are often considered malevolent in Africa, even if the person who has been transformed into a god (the ancestor) was seen as good.

On this basis, I surmise, it would also be possible for a person lynched as a witch to become viewed as a helpful 'god' after his or her death. Because these gods are born out of the system of killing witches, faith in 'gods' (*miungu*) is of a totally different order from the more recently introduced alternative of faith in the Christian God (*Mwenyezi Mungu*), who by allowing himself to be killed as a witch exposed the wiles of Satan, thus enabling true peace and unity.[29]

VII. Violence Ubiquitous in Traditional Societies

The widespread practice of child sacrifice in archaic cultures[30] runs in the face of contemporary romantic understanding that they were inherently peaceful and that violence has been a product of modern times. The 'noble savage' is now 'mainstream' in anthropology,[31] Girard suggests. However, Girard cannot accept the European romantic tradition.[32] This is itself a deep challenge to Western scholarship, which likes to see violence as 'accidental and … unforeseeable' aberrations in human commu-

26 This is in contrast to the divine in the Bible, which comes from God; Girard, *The One*, 59.

27 Joseph G. Healey, *A Fifth Gospel: The Experience of Black Christian Values* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981), 146.

28 Vyama vya Biblia, *Biblia: Habari Njema Kwa Watu Wote* (Nairobi: Vyama vya Biblia Tanzania na Kenya, 1995).

29 Girard, *The One*, 55. Using the term as it applies to Africa, I believe it is correct to say that Jesus was accused of, and killed for, being a witch (Girard, *The One*, 62).

30 Sandra Newman, 'Infanticide', *Aeon,* 2017, https://aeon.co/essays/the-roots-of-infanticide-run-deep-and-begin-with-poverty.

31 Girard, *The One*, 28. For Girard, anti-ethnocentrism which refuses to use the label of primitive 'is the most specific feature of the modern age'. René Girard, 'Ethnocentrism' (1992), address delivered at the Colloquium on Violence and Religion, Stanford University, cornerstone-forum.org/?page_id=915..

32 Girard, *Things*, 279, 303.

nal living.[33] For Girard, 'non-violence is [always] Christian.'[34]

This issue is still alive in Africa. 'There are many reasons [why many] children are being accused of witchcraft in Nigeria', claims Safechildafrica.[35] Revelations of such accusations have recently caused horror around the world. Underlying the notion that a child may be a witch is the idea that killing or chasing away that child might be a means of solving problems that people think the child is causing. I do perceive a very different understanding of children in Africa from that widely held in the West. Though much loved, children can also be held at arm's length in ways relatively unfamiliar in the West.

Unlike the Western legal notion that someone is innocent unless proven guilty, there is a strong tendency in Africa to treat people as guilty unless they prove their innocence.[36] This underlies a preoccupation with cleansing and the assumption that people are thinking evil things about others—for example, that they are harbouring envy.

VIII. Human Civilizations Are Founded on Murder

For Girard, 'there is no human thought that was not born out of [a] founding murder.'[37] Civilizations, including ancient Rome, were founded in this way.[38] The Bible is, for Girard, replete with examples of founding murders. For example, the first city was founded by Cain after his murder of Abel (Gen 4:17).

'Alfayo Odongo Mango's memory became sanctified and his martyrdom without doubt is the cornerstone of … *dini ya Roho'* (a flourishing Christian denomination, founded in Kenya in 1934).[39] This church spread after the murder of twelve of its founders. I have frequently heard this story recounted in worship services at these churches, reflecting their own commitment to the founding role of murder in human institutions. Given this background, the link between Jesus' crucifixion and believers' salvation in his name is profoundly experienced by African Christians.

IX. Mimetic Desire and Envy

For Girard, human beings are imitating creatures who desire what others have. To distinguish what he means by desire from others' more limited understanding of the term, Girard refers to *mimetic desire*. According to Girard, people do not so much desire things of themselves as they desire experiences, or even the desire itself, that other people have. Something

33 Girard, *I See,* 11.

34 Girard, *The One*, 93.

35 'How many children are accused of witchcraft?' asks Safechildafrica, in 'Defending Rights, Creating Futures' (2009), http://www.safechildafrica.org/childwitches. 'The answer is that no one really knows, because no one is counting.' (I have not come across the identifying of children as witches in parts of Africa known to me.)

36 Kroesbergen, *The Language of Faith*, 215.

37 Girard, *Things*, 113.

38 Brittany Garcia, 'Romulus and Remus', *Ancient History Encyclopedia* (2018), https://www.ancient.eu/Romulus_and_Remus/.

39 Bethwell A. Ogot, 'Reverend Alfayo Odongo Mango 1870–1934', in Ogot, *Re-introducing Man into the African World: Selected Essays 1961–1980* (Kisumu: Anyange Press, 1999), 128.

is desirable if someone else has it or wants it. A man might well find his wife more desirable should he discover that other men are trying to take her from him.[40] Parents often observe young children leaving a pile of toys lying on one side while desiring to play with whatever toy another child is using. If Girard is correct, then the desires that people seek to fulfil in life are constantly formed by their imitation of what others around them are desiring; 'We always borrow [desire] from others', he says.[41]

Many descriptions of African life, including those by Melland, Evans-Pritchard and later Mbiti,[42] find witchcraft to be prominent. Choosing English terms to translate African categories is always difficult. This choice of the term 'witchcraft' has had the effect, as far as Western people are concerned, of 'othering' what is African, into a category which Westerners did away with centuries ago, so that African people should 'stop believing in such superstitious nonsense'. My own experience of Africa has led to the conclusion that the powerhouse behind so-called witchcraft is envy.[43]

40 Girard, *I See*, 10.

41 Girard, *The One,* 7.

42 Melland, *In Witch-Bound Africa*; E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); John S. Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd ed. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1991), 19. Mbiti is at pains to point out that African religion isn't all about magic, although witchcraft is clearly a prominent part of it.

43 Jim Harries, 'Witchcraft, Envy, Development, and Christian Mission in Africa', *Missiology: An International Review* 40, no. 2 (2012), 201. I wrote this long before I came across Girard.

This envy resembles Girard's mimetic desire, and the foundational role of envy in African society reinforces Girard's observation that mimetic desire is at the root of the problems of human living.[44]

'I do not need to be paid, I will do this voluntarily', African people have occasionally assured me regarding their participation in a Bible teaching programme. On every occasion, that turned out to be a strategy to get inside the operations, on the assumption that they would then benefit financially. Subsequently, they mocked me for having thought that they could or would work for nothing! In Africa, it seems that people's propensity for envy prevents true volunteerism.[45]

X. Rivalry Is Greatest between Those Who Are Closest

Girard finds that mimetic desire has a 'levelling' effect on human populations. Contrary to modern perceptions that individuals seek to satisfy their particular longings independently of what others have and do, if the model one imitates is always another person, then that imitation tends towards making one the same as that person. Tensions between Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, and others recounted in the Bible and mythological accounts illustrate frequently how proximity generates division and even violence as a

44 'Mimeticism is … pride, anger … envy, jealousy', Girard concedes (*The One*, 129).

45 David Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters: Observations from Africa* (Dallas: SIL International, 2001), articulates numerous ways in which as a result friendship in Africa is integrally linked to money.

result of rivalry.[46] Girard explains how when people desire the same object, the 'obliteration of difference' that occurs is tragic.[47] For example, brothers both desiring the same woman will, as they seek to satisfy her, become more similar to each other.

The resulting fear of 'sameness' underlies strong taboos in many African communities regarding twins.[48] These rules are intended to avoid setting up twins for violent clashes, as 'primitive societies repress mimetic conflict … by prohibiting everything that might provoke it.'[49]

In this instance, Girard, though he had no personal experience of Africa, drew heavily on his reading of African societies.[50] The presence of twin-related taboos amongst the Luo in Kenya is carefully articulated by Mboya.[51]

XI. The Identity of the 'Powers'

There has been much discussion about identity of the 'powers' described by Paul (Rom 8:38; Col 2:15). For Girard, the powers are rulers who seek to apply the only pre-Christian way of building a civilization: killing or expelling people to maintain peace and unity. As a result, pagan cultures are also a source of abhorrence for Christians, who know of a better way—i.e. peace and unity as an outcome of faith in Christ.

Many African people today seem very much aware of ways in which traditional and pagan communities maintain themselves through marginalizing and killing victims. This belief, which draws on the deep human desire to see someone else suffer so that one can acquire prosperity, requires deep heartfelt faith in God to overcome it. Only such faith in God, an overt allegiance that seems to be declining in the modern West, can counter the evil powerhouse of envy (for Girard, mimetic desire) that easily engulfs human hearts. This is the basis for much prayer in Africa, as believers battle in what might be termed the ephemeral realm.

XII. Knowledge of Pagan Myths Is Not Damaging to Faith in Christ

Anthropologist James George Frazer, in his 1890 work *The Golden Bough*,[52] suggested that because other myths have stories of a 'dying God' that parallel Christ's death on the cross, biblical stories are no different from other myths. Girard radically counters this claim, contending that Frazer's motivation for condemning the archaic practice of accusing witches who were then resurrected was to also condemn, by implication, Christianity

46 Girard, *Things,* 25. Rivalry, for Girard, is the main source of human conflict; see René Girard, 'Victims, Violence and Christianity' (edited version of the Martin D'Arcy Lecture, Oxford, November 1997), *The Month* (April 1998): 132.

47 Girard, *The One*, 15; Girard, *Things*, 199.

48 Girard, *I See*, 12.

49 Girard, *Things*, 16.

50 Girard, *I See,* 12.

51 Paul Mboya, *Luo Kitgi gi Timbegi* np (1938; Nairobi: East African Standard Ltd. 1984; Kisumu: Anyange Press, 1997), 112–19.

52 James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, abridged from the 2nd and 3rd editions, ed. Robert Fraser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

as no different.[53] For Girard, knowledge of myths will not threaten Christians' faith, if they recognize foundational differences in the Gospel, such as its orientation to favouring victims.

The parallel in Africa today is that African people's close knowledge of their traditions is more likely to act as an encouragement than a discouragement to their becoming Christian.

XIII. The 'Rationality' of the Cross

Girard explains with remarkable clarity how Jesus' death on the cross, by which he avoided 'participating in the system of [witches]',[54] can save men from their sins—without, in his terms, reference to the need for supernatural intervention.[55] Only at the end of his perhaps most readable text, *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, does Girard concede that the reality he has met with is beyond human understanding.[56] Girard considers the redemptive value of the shed blood of Christ as very understandable yet at odds with much modern thinking, which has set aside any redemptive role for shed blood.[57] For Girard, Christ's death on the cross duped Satan, exposing his machinations and enabling people who were previously deceived to overcome them.[58]

African people's implicit appreciation of death as a means of healing gives them a deep perception of the phenomenal difference that Christ's sacrifice made. Time and time again, both inside and outside church services, African Christian believers testify to me that they are committed to not going the route of the *waganga* (a term often translated into English as 'witch doctor'.) *Waganga* seek to manipulate the power arising from deaths of animals and people in favour of their clients. Such profuse denial of a route that many seem to still be following (seeking advice from *waganga*) speaks volumes about the ongoing attractiveness of witchcraft to those not convinced by the Gospel. That the work of witch doctors entails using the power released from killing to bring healing is further demonstrated by the frequency with which they demand animals to kill so as to perform their craft. In addition, the maiming, chasing or killing of assumed protagonists of someone's misfortune is almost constantly their aim.

XIV. The Reality of the Resurrection

Girard considers the resurrection of Jesus to be 'real'.[59] Some might say that this is where the scientific nature[60] of his investigation comes to an end. Girard himself sees the resurrection as marking the end of mythology; once one has been exposed to the Gospel, it is impossible to believe the myth that the death of a witch will result in healing.

In the West, the resurrection of the dead is often considered to require a suspension of the rules of nature. Na-

53 Girard, *The One,* 22.

54 Girard, *The One*, 54.

55 Girard, *I See*, 192.

56 Girard, *I See,* 193.

57 'In every instance modern man minimises the role of religion' (Girard, *Things*, 66).

58 Girard, *I See,* 125.

59 Girard, *I See*, 136.

60 Girard, *I See*, 141.

ture, so the logic goes, requires that death be permanent. In non-dualist Africa, nature and super-nature are hardly distinct. The notion of the ongoing existence of a person who no longer enjoys bodily life is relatively easy for African people to accept. Resurrection may be seen as incredible, but not impossible.

Many African people realize that the Gospel has massive implications for their traditional beliefs in witchcraft. They are endeavouring to respond to that truth in a myriad of ways. The frequency with which even small private schools in my home area of Kenya are labelled 'Christian' demonstrates an awareness that events central to the Gospel are responsible for today's value of truth and knowledge.

XV. Conclusion: Girard's Challenge to Contemporary Scholarship

The comprehensiveness of Girard's thought has challenged contemporary scholarship,[61] and he received much opposition from people who support the status quo. Girard's thinking challenges the cohesiveness of many modern disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, psychiatry, and certain branches of contemporary theology: 'If the social sciences were to be Christianised, they would no longer be social sciences. They would lead to an impossibility. There is no way out from sacrifice. There is no purely objective knowledge.'[62] It also has many healthy implications for the whole life of African people, including their theology, ecclesiology and church practice.

I am reminded of the graduation speech I once heard at the Kima International School of Theology in Kenya. The African speaker denounced the 'gy's' (i.e. sociology, psychology, anthropology) on behalf of the local context. He seemed to have anticipated my subsequent discovery of Girard.

Girard's critique of modernism, coming as it does from outside the Western worldview, could help Westerners understand how they are perceived by non-modern people such as those in Africa. Although some of Girard's thinking was new, I think that to a large extent he was taking us back to what was before. He represents the school of comparative theology that was very active—and very strongly supportive of Christianity—until, as Tomoko Masuzawa explains, it was without good reason discredited in the West:

> It seems to us today rather remarkable that so many nineteenth-century authors of varying attitudes toward non-Christian religions claimed—or, for the most part assumed—that their enterprise of comparing religions without bias was not only compatible with but in fact perfectly complementary to their own proudly unshakable con-

61 'All modes of contemporary thought will collapse whenever what we have said concerning the king and the god is finally understood' (Girard, *Things,* 54).

62 Girard, *The One*, 72. He also stated, 'Humanity results from sacrifice.' René Girard, *Battling to the End: Conversation with Benoît Chantre*, trans. Mary Baker (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010), Kindle edition.

> viction in the supremacy of Christianity. Nowadays we generally discredit this claim as naive at best, disingenuous at worst. We hold in disbelief the seriousness with which some of those comparativists with strong dogmatic views pronounced that their surveys of other religions were—not just in principle but in actuality—'fair', 'sympathetic', and 'impartial'. And since we find ourselves incapable of taking these pronouncements seriously, there is little incentive today to reexamine the nineteenth-century reasoning that might have made it feasible for those authors to advance such an argument in earnest. But this may be our loss. Surely our thorough lack of interest in their logic is ultimately to the detriment of our own historical understanding.[63]

I am not insisting that we need to agree with everything Girard says. But by stepping outside recently dominant Western philosophical presuppositions, Girard gives us insights that could be extremely helpful to our understanding of Africa, and thus to our relating to African people inside and outside the church. It is rare to find a contemporary Western scholar who can operate outside dualistic foundations (i.e. denying the sacred-secular distinction), yet be truly biblical and truly logical. This is where I believe Girard's scholarship has great potential value.

African self-understanding, since the beginning of the colonial era, has come increasingly under attack. The dominance of European languages on the continent has made it very difficult for African people to express themselves clearly in formal contexts. Taboos on racism in the West have added to this difficulty, effectively making it impossible to express oneself honestly about the nature and distinctiveness of contemporary African cultures. As a result, from the perspective of the West, African ways of life remain shrouded in mystery. Africans who have benefitted financially and in other ways from a close relationship with the West (which is almost all prominent African people) have had to deny their own identities and histories. Given his long devotion to extensive research that led him to advocate for radically unconventional paradigms, Girard's legitimizing in Western thought of something that is far from Western[64] offers a possible way out of this impasse.

The future development of African societies and of the competence of African people will be hindered by a continuing dependence on Western aid. Girard's thinking offers a possible foundation for scholarship, theology and Christian understanding that can be understood indigenously without

63 Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 103–4.

64 Many African people's lack of depth in understanding the West makes it very difficult for them to express themselves in a way that is critical of but that also makes sense to contemporary academia. Girard's deep roots in Europe enabled him to maintain academic prominence despite his detractors. The fact that thinking comes from a Westerner, in today's world, legitimizes it. Murphy Halliburton, 'Gandhi or Gramsci? The Use of Authoritative Sources in Anthropology', *Anthropological Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (2004): 794.

Western domination. At the moment, the only globally visible 'way forward' seems to be that everyone must become modern, Western and liberal. Girard's thinking opens another door of possibility, to a unifying, comprehensive, intercultural union based on the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

If you have been enticed to learn more about Girard, one good place to start would be his 2001 publication with the English title *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning.* If you prefer listening over reading, five broadcasts by Paul Kennedy (referenced in note 2 above) are highly useful.

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The Ethics of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the Problem of Corruption in Malawi

Godwins Lwinga

Corruption in Malawi, in various forms, has become a curse, plague, 'cancer' and the 'AIDS of democracy'.[1] It is a scourge that 'pervert[s] integrity'.[2] To many, this situation stands in stark contrast to the one-party state era before Malawi became a multi-party democracy in 1994. For example, Malawian commentator Rudo Tariro has stated that the one-party state did not tolerate nonsense but encouraged hard work and responsibility. Today, corruption is high because there are no strict tools to regulate people's morality. Malawians seem to have lost a sense of personal responsibility.[3]

The prevailing form of corruption in contemporary Malawi is financial in nature. Many scholars have argued that the one-party system in Malawi was corrupt as well, because those in power committed atrocities. I do not mean to exonerate Malawi's one-party regime while vilifying the era of multi-party, democratic governance. Nor do I deny that corruption can become 'an integrated part of the totalitarian domination'.[4] However, there is no evidence that the prior regime was also corrupt financially. The cur-

1 Kempe Ronald Hope, 'Corruption and Development in Africa', in Kempe Ronald Hope and B. C. Chikulo (eds.), *Corruption and Development in Africa* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 17.

2 Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Nairobi: Hippo Books, 2008), 165. I define 'corruption' broadly as 'abuse of vocation'. This is a wider usage than the common definition as 'abuse of public office or power for private gain' generally applied by such organizations as Transparency International, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Their definition seems to target only those who have been officially appointed to public office, whereas corruption also occurs amongst people who do not hold government employment.

3 Rudo Tariro, 'Dzuka Malawi: We Need Kamuzuism, a Bit of Magufulification and Binguism to Save the Nation', *Nyasa Times*, 8 February 2016, https://www.nyasatimes.com/dzuka-malawi-we-need-kamuzuism-abit-of-magufuli-and-binguism-to-save-nation/.

4 Jacob Dahl Rendtorff, 'The Concept of Corruption: Moral and Political Perspectives', *Organization and Management* 139, no. 1 (2010): 125.

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rent anti-corruption initiatives fail because they are mostly reactive and prosecutorial.

This article suggests proactive approaches to corruption, and it calls on the church to develop a robust conception of responsibility for its members. Although addressing corruption should be a matter of concern for Christians anywhere, it should especially be an ecclesiastical priority in Malawi, given the influence of the church in Malawian society. Bonhoeffer's ethics of *Stellvertretung* (or vicarious, responsible action) can equip Christians in Malawi and elsewhere to address public corruption.

I. A Contrast between Two Political Eras

Our world is a complex one with various challenges, which are often described by means of the anagram VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous).[5] In this VUCA world, corruption is a prominent vice, complex in nature and difficult to deal with.[6] Modern Malawi's chronic corruption fits the VUCA description.[7]

At the end of the British colonialist era in the late 1950s, Malawi became a multi-party, democratic state. However, in 1964 the country reverted to one-party status and was ruled for the next thirty years by President Hastings Kamuzu Banda, an American- and Scottish-trained surgeon. Banda emphasized 'four cornerstones' as values for Malawi: unity, loyalty, obedience and discipline.[8]

After Banda's rule ended, many relics of Kamuzuism (the popular term for Banda's ideology), including the 'four cornerstones', were removed from the public sphere.[9] Some groups have been less than enthusiastic about the transition. The Episcopal Conference of Malawi, composed of Roman Catholic bishops, has described Malawi's democratization project (from

5 See Jacobus (Kobus) Kok and Barney Jordaan, 'The Metanarraphors We Lead and Mediate By: Insight from Cognitive Metaphor Theory in the Context of Mediation in a VUCA World', in Jacobus (Kobus) Kok and Steven C. van den Heuvel, *Leading in a VUCA World: Integrating Leadership, Discernment and Spirituality* (Cham: Springer, 2019), 1.

6 Reyes C. Cuadrado and Jose L. A. Arce, 'The Complexity of Corruption: Nature and Ethical Suggestions', Working Paper 05/06, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Empresariales, Universidad de Navarra, 2014, 2.

7 Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), *Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Agencies in Southern Africa: A Review* (Johannesburg: OSISA, 2017), 132. See also Thomas Schirrmacher and David Schirrmacher, *Corruption: When Self-Interest Comes Before the Common Good,* ed. and rev. Thomas K. Johnson, trans. Richard McClary (Bonn: Culture and Science Publishing, 2019), 22, 23; Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 164–73.

8 Gwanda Chakuamba, 'A Memoir of My Political Life: Malignant Loyalty—But No Regrets!' ed. Felix Lombe (Lilongwe: Babeya Publishers, 2016), 14–15.

9 'Kamuzuism' described Banda as president for life, father and founder of the Malawi nation, and the fount of unparalleled knowledge and wisdom for all people in Malawi. See Reuben Chirambo, 'Operation Bwezani': The Army, Political Change, and Dr. Banda's Hegemony in Malawi', *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 13, no. 2 (2004): 148. Whether these claims are interpreted seriously or not, the ideology of Kamuzuism does not fit into Christian ethics, which holds that mortals do not have unparalleled knowledge. Being 'all-knowing' is an attribute of God alone, but he desires that mortals should have the wisdom to know him.

the early 1990s to the present) as 'a change without transformation and a democracy without democrats'.[10] This view characterizes the apparent shallowness of the democratic reforms, as evidenced by the failure of Malawi's leaders to be accountable and transparent.

Harri Englund, a research fellow at the Institute for Asian and African Studies in Helsinki, Finland, argues that in dispensing with the public values articulated by the Banda regime, Malawi made room for a lawless society. In direct opposition to the 'four cornerstones', cases of disunity, disloyalty, disobedience and indiscipline (reflected in corrupt practices) became the order of the day.[11] The dominant narrative of the multi-party, democratic era emphasizes the political atrocities that the one-party state committed, but even critics acknowledge that new problems have arisen since 1994. For example, Qeko Jere (a Malawian pastor, systematic theologian, lecturer and currently post-doctoral researcher at North-West University, South Africa) states that 'corruption was amplified … and continued to spread during the multi-party, democratic era'.[12] When he discusses the extent of corruption following 1994, he cites numerous scandals as evidence that corruption has indeed accelerated. Englund agrees with Jere on this point.[13] Furthermore, Patrick Mogha (an Anti-Corruption Bureau official) argues that the implementation of decentralization in Malawi during the multi-party, democratic era 'has opened new windows for corruption opportunities'.[14]

When the one-party state began to govern in 1964, its 'four cornerstones' were put in place primarily to govern Banda's Malawi Congress Party (MCP). Since there was no separation between party and government business—or between church and state—eventually these cornerstones became the foundation for government and the church as well.[15] Until

10 Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM), 'Pastoral Letter' (Lilongwe, 2013), www.ecmmw.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/PASTORAL-LETTER-English-No22.pdf, 7.

11 Englund has stated that the ethical, diligent, obedient and loyal public officer, characterized by a high work ethic, under the one-party state has been replaced by the cunning public officer of the multi-party state, who is more 'business-minded' than anything else. See Harri Englund (ed.), *A Democracy of Chameleons: Politics and Culture in the New Malawi* (Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2001), 19, 46.

12 Qeko Jere, 'Public Role of the Church in Anti-corruption: An Assessment of the CCAP Livingstonia Synod in Malawi from a *Kenosis* Perspective', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39, no. 1 (2018): 2.

13 Englund, *Democracy*, 47 states that the 'incidence of crime increased sharply' in the multi-party era.

14 Patrick Mogha, 'Assessment of the Nexus between Decentralization and Corruption: The Case of Malawi' (Master's thesis, International Anti-Corruption Academy, Laxenburg, Austria, 2009), iv.

15 Malawi Congress Party (MCP), 'The Constitution of the Malawi Congress Party: Rules and Regulations' (Blantyre: Blantyre Print and Packaging, 1971), 27. The church, especially the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), which is the country's largest Presbyterian denomination, aligned itself with the one-party state, putting itself in a difficult position to speak against it. Banda was a CCAP elder. See Kenneth R. Ross, 'The Transition of Power in Malawi 1992–1994: The Role of the Christian Churches', in *God,*

1994, the cornerstones effectively influenced all sectors of society, since by default, every adult Malawian was a member of the party.[16] Public officers were expected to operate within the framework of the 'four cornerstones' and crime, especially in forms related to corruption, was unknown.[17] Government 'exercised strict control over the civil service'.[18] For this reason, government service delivery was efficient and effective, since civil servants exhibited a work ethic characterized by discipline and allegiance to their vocation.[19]

II. The Failure of Anti-Corruption Initiatives

Gerhard Anders mentions that in his research on Malawi, nearly no one he interviewed indicated any awareness of corruption before 1994.[20] In contrast, many sectors today, especially the civil service, are riddled with 'high levels of corruption',[21] despite the country's ratification of a number of international anti-corruption protocols[22] and the enactment of national anti-corruption frameworks such as the Corrupt Practices Act (CPA, 1995), Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), and National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS). In 2018, the country ranked thirty-second globally on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, indicating a high degree of corruption.[23] Why should corruption have proliferated in Malawi's multiparty, democratic era amidst a number of anti-corruption laws and initiatives? Several responses can be given.

First, in 1994, as the country was returning to multi-party governance, the process lacked clear ethical structures upon which to build a democratic state. The new leaders' main agenda was to abolish anything that reflected the one-party state's philosophy of governance. Accordingly, as soon as the past—including Banda's 'four cornerstones'—was removed from the public domain, evidence of bad governance and irresponsibility emerged.[24]

People and Power in Malawi: Democratization in Theological Perspective (Mzuzu: Luviri Prints, 2018), 19–20.

16 MCP, 'Constitution', 7. A mandatory party card system was used for identification and considered fundamental to national development and security.

17 Englund, *Democracy,* 12, 47.

18 Englund, *Democracy*, 45.

19 Donal Brody, *Conversations with Kamuzu: The Life and Times of Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda*, part 1-11 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Libraries, 2000), https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/4384086, 31; Englund, *Democracy*, 47.

20 Gerhard Anders, 'Like Chameleons: Civil Servants and Corruption in Malawi', *Bulletin de l'APAD* 23, no. 24 (2002): 5. On this point, I am aware of the psychological mechanism of 'nostalgia': people tend to remember and adore the past especially if the present fails to fulfil their high expectations. During the one-party state, the only known anti-corruption tool was the Forfeiture Act (1966). It was seriously enforced to deter people from wanton accumulation of wealth.

21 Englund, *Democracy*, 47.

22 These protocols include the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the African Union Convention on Preventing Corruption and the Southern African Development Community Protocol against Corruption.

23 Transparency International, *Corruption Perception Index 2018* (Berlin: Transparency International, 2019), www.transparency.org/cpi, 6.

24 Englund, *Democracy*, 19, 26, 46, 47; John

In this ethical vacuum, weaknesses in the government's service delivery system became evident. The Episcopal Conference of Malawi refers to 'continued and systematic abuse and looting of public resources for selfish party and personal benefit to the detriment of national good'.[25] The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) describes the emergence of 'new corrupt elites that undermined democratic accountability and the fight against corruption'.[26]

Second, Martin Ott, Kings Phiri and Nandini Patel suggest that the anti-corruption initiatives are failing because of the ACB's lack of empowerment to deal with corruption as a way of life.[27] Their observation is significant here, in the sense that when corruption becomes intricately embedded in the cultural systems of the people, it may not be easily overcome by textbook-based legal systems. Furthermore, the law that the ACB is empowered to apply has failed to function effectively, due to the government's vetoes of some prosecutorial decisions in government-related corruption cases.[28]

Third, the considerable rhetoric expressed from political podiums regarding corruption may actually be counter-productive.[29] Most of the anti-corruption initiatives have been heavily publicized by politicians. Since they are state-driven and state-controlled, they are widely seen as only tools for the political witch-hunting of opponents. The anti-corruption initiatives have focused much on meting out sanctions and not on the source of corruption. Similarly, the ACB tends to treat the wound rather than the cause of the wound; meanwhile, Malawian government officials frequently act with impunity due to a lack of commitment at the highest political level to punish ethical violations.[30] This trend renders anti-corruption initiatives incidental and causes them to stagnate.[31]

Fourth, the ACB has failed to educate Malawi's people on all matters of corruption, so people are generally unaware of the anti-corruption laws and of public responsibilities under these laws. On paper, the laws are clear, but we are dealing with a society where the literacy rate is still high

Lwanda, *Politics, Culture and Medicine in Malawi: Historical Continuities and Ruptures with Special Reference to HIV/AIDS* (Zomba: Kachere, 2005), 138–40; Z. Allan Ntata, *License to Loot: A Report on the Cashgate Corruption Scandal in Malawi* (London: Middle Temple, 2013), 1–67.

25 ECM, 'Pastoral Letter', 8.

26 Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, *Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Agencies in Southern Africa: A Review* (Johannesburg: OSISA, 2017), 3.

27 Martin Ott, Kings M. Phiri and Nandi Patel (eds.), *Malawi's Second Democratic Elections: Process, Problems and Prospects* (Zomba: Kachere, 2000), 17.

28 OSISA, *Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption*, 3; Englund, *Democracy*, 46–47; Roberto Martinez B. Kukutschka, *Overview of Corruption in Malawi: Country Report—Malawi 2014* (Berlin: Transparency International, 2014), 3.

29 Lewis B. Dzimbiri, 'Cultural Change, the Hybrid Administrative System and Public Sector Reforms in Africa: The Case of Anti-corruption Measures in Malawi', *African Anthropologist* 16, nos. 1 & 2 (2009): 56.

30 Dzimbiri, 'Cultural Change', 60.

31 Englund, *Democracy*, 46; Jere, 'Public Role of the Church', 2.

and media coverage of government activities is relatively limited. This defeats NACS theory that public involvement is the bedrock for supporting anti-corruption drives.[32]

Effective public involvement requires citizens' willingness to report (through whistle-blowing) cases of corruption that they experience or witness. However, for this process to work, two conditions are necessary: an environment in which people feel it is safe for them to report corruption, and general knowledge of anti-corruption laws. At the moment, neither of these two conditions is fulfilled in Malawi. Many people are afraid to 'blow the whistle' due to concerns for retaliation or other severe repercussions.

Fifth, there is no systematic, detailed theological discourse on corruption. Kenneth Ross observes that the church actually distanced itself from the political process after the 1993 referendum in which Malawians approved the re-introduction of multiparty democracy.[33] As a member of the Presbyterian Church, I have never heard a sermon on corruption. Yet the church has one of the most precious resources available to address corruption: a large and faithful following.[34] Historically, the church has been better placed than any other institution to develop and promote proactive approaches that inculcate fundamental moral responsibility.[35] The church can use its resources to equip people to function as salt and light in our VUCA world. The ethic of responsibility advanced by Christianity should promote virtuous character and moral goodness among the people.

III. Applying Bonhoeffer's Stellvertretung to Corruption

The aim of any anti-corruption initiative should be to transform people's minds and hearts. From an ethical perspective, committing a crime is inherently dependent on the condition of the mind and heart, and it is from the mind that the heart's desires flow.[36] Jacob Dahl Rendtorff writes, 'Any society that has a background mentality and morality of individuals based on a healthy skepticism towards bribery and a sense of justice … as well as proud refusal of being bought for social services, will have the foundations for avoidance of

32 Joseph J. Chunga and Jacob Mazalale, "Is Malawi Losing the Battle against 'Cashgate'?" *Afro Barometer Dispatch* 149 (2017): 5.

33 Ross, 'Transition of Power', 39. On 14 June 1993, Malawian approved multi-party democracy in a referendum. The first democratically elected president took office in 1994.

34 Malawi is approximately 68 percent Christian, 25 percent Muslim, and 7 percent other faiths. See 'Malawi Population 2019', http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/malawi-population/.

35 Rendtorff, 'The Concept of Corruption', 128.

36 Here I borrow Patrick Nullens' terminology, according to which 'heart' refers to 'the center of the person, the mind, will, emotion, conscience; the seat of all our emotional and intellectual life'. See Patrick Nullens, 'The Sentiments of the Heart and Protestant Ethics: A Constructive Dialogue between Paul Ramsey and Max Scheler', in Steven C. van den Heuvel, Patrick Nullens and Angela Roothaan, *Theological Ethics and Moral Value Phenomena: The Experience of Values* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2018), 33.

corruption'.[37]

Based on this understanding, we should pursue proactive strategies that aim at changing the condition of the mind and heart before corruption happens. For example, Jere has suggested a *kenotic* approach.[38] Christoph Stuckelberger also proposes a proactive approach to ensure that 'spiritual, ethical and institutional bases are strengthened'.[39] Spiritual and ethical values are fundamental in decision making. A person who has solid values and puts them into practice will behave properly and be able to deal with temptations to act corruptly.[40]

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's ethics of *Stellvertretung* (translated as vicarious, responsible action), which can also be understood as standing in for another person in a place where this person cannot stand[41] and thus calls Christians to a life of 'self-less living', can effectively supplement existing approaches. Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), a German theologian and Lutheran pastor, concretely lived out unselfishness towards others. The life experiences of his time shaped his theology and ethics, which have been widely read and studied on both academic and non-academic levels since his death in a concentration camp shortly before the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II.[42]

Bonhoeffer's great theological and ethical significance makes it appropriate to engage with his work in a conversation on corruption. Bonhoeffer did not deal with financial corruption, but he addressed the blatant corruption of power present in the Nazi regime. He understood that power is God-given and that, as such, leaders must use it to serve the people. He implored Christians to live for the cause of Christ in all their actions. Living in Christ and for Christ alone is abstract if it is not translated into living for others. This is the essence of an ethic of *Stellvertretung*.

The distressing events of the 1930s and 1940s in Germany challenged Bonhoeffer's Christian thought, life and conviction. What is the Christian's role amidst violence against 'the Other'? What does Christianity really mean for us and who is Christ for us today? Bonhoeffer asked these questions in light of the extreme suffering he was witnessing. The answer he found was that true Christianity is about being 'burdened with guilt' (suffering) for the sake of 'the Other' who is suffering.[43] For Bonhoeffer, a

37 Rendtorff, 'Concept of Corruption', 129.

38 Jere, 'Public Role of the Church', 1-10.

39 Christoph Stuckelberger, *Free-Corruption Churches are Possible: Experiences, Values and Solutions* (Geneva: Globethics.net, 2010), 17.

40 Gintare Satiene and Rita Toleikiene, 'A Connection between Corruption and Unethical Behaviour of Public Officials', *Social Research* 10, no. 2 (2007): 155–56.

41 Christopher Holmes, ''The Indivisible Whole of God's Reality': On the Agency of Jesus in Bonhoeffer's Ethics', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12, no. 3 (2010): 293.

42 For an excellent biography of Bonhoeffer, see Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography*, rev. ed., edited by Victoria J. Barnett (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000). Bethge was Dietrich Bonhoeffer's closest friend and correspondent.

43 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics,* vol. 6 of Bonhoeffer's *Works*, ed. Clifford J. Green, trans. Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West and Douglas W. Stott (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 233.

person is required to act on behalf of others.[44] Someone who follows Christ has to be able to bear the claim of the other person upon himself. 'He/she has to take the other person as an obligation, even to allow the other person to place on me the burden of their freedom.'[45] Bonhoeffer came to see true Christianity as a concrete faith based on *praxis* ('doing') and 'self-less living'.

In *Stellvertretung*, praxis is understood as a concrete life of action, centred on Christ and expressing solidarity with those who are suffering. In this understanding, one can bear the suffering of others only through the motivation of Christ. The experience of guilt comes when a person has an interest in the challenges faced by 'the Other'. This guilt indicates that one is living a life of responsibility toward 'the Other', motivated by Jesus who vicariously took the guilt of all human beings upon himself.

Further, in *Stellvertretung*, all life is a call to live for others, to do for others and to suffer for others.[46] *Stellvertretung* is manifested in the principle of having a zeal or motivation to help those who are in need. It is also a call for respecting what belongs to another, and thus for the exercise of justice. For Bonhoeffer, only self-less people truly live.[47] In other words, true living is possible 'only in completely devoting one's own life to another person'.[48] It is the highest of values to serve human beings.[49] As such, there is no self-aggrandizement in *Stellvertretung*.

Bonhoeffer further explores the question of the relationship between free responsibility and obedience in *Stellvertretung*. For him, 'One act of obedience is better than one hundred sermons.'[50] How then do responsibility and obedience play a role in *Stellvertretung*? His answer is that there cannot be 'self-less living' without obedience, for obedience is self-surrender. Therefore, responsibility and obedience are interwoven, so that 'responsibility does not merely begin where obedience ends, but obedience is rendered in responsibility.'[51]

Bonhoeffer's Christocentric ethics of *Stellvertretung* is timeless, rich and specific, making him 'a unique source for understanding of interaction between religion, politics and culture'.[52] Even though his ethics arose out of an extremely turbulent historical situation, geographically and contextually far from modern Africa, it still has relevance for Malawi today. How, then, is *Stellvertretung* applicable in light of corruption? *Stellvertretung* can be displayed in themes such as self-less living for 'the Other', bondage to God, freedom of the individual life and the role of a disciple and citizen in a VUCA world.[53] Each of these concepts is dis-

44 Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 257–58.

45 David F. Ford and Rachael Muers (eds.), *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 49.

46 Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 259.

47 Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 236.

48 Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 259.

49 Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 260.

50 Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 286.

51 Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 288.

52 Clifford J. Green, editor's note in Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, vii.

53 In Bonhoeffer's ethics, the penultimate (worldly things such as the state) serves the ultimate and realizes the ultimate (Christ, the ultimate reality); see Stefan Heuser, 'The Cost of Citizenship: Disciple and Citizen in Bonhoeffer's Political Ethics', *Studies in Christian Ethics* 18, no. 3 (2005): 49–69.

cussed below.

Self-less living for 'the Other': Bonhoeffer's argumentation makes it clear that any person who is vicariously responsible lives a self-less life for the sake of 'the Other'. An essential part of being human is to live a self-less life in relation to others.[54] Such a person sacrificially engages in programmes that serve the needs of 'the Other' and certainly cannot plan evil against 'the Other'. In addition, *Stellvertretung* is a reminder to those in positions of power that they are there for the sake of 'the Other'. If properly motivated by this consideration, they will not indulge in corrupt practices that make 'the Other' suffer. Corruption is a sign of self-aggrandizement, which is the opposite of self-less living.

Bondage to God and to humanity. If all humanity would remember that they are bonded to 'the Other' in God's love, they would think twice before indulging in corrupt practices. They would refrain from stealing another person's property because of this bondedness. They would strive for openness (transparency) because the picture of 'the Other' would be so vivid in their face. Without this understanding, the picture and face of 'the Other' is blurred. *Stellvertretung* emphasizes the bondedness of Christ to human beings and to God; as part of our response to Christ, we should be bonded to one another, to Christ and to God. In this bondedness, self-denial, forgiveness, suffering, renunciation and love of enemies—all key qualities of a good life—are fundamental.[55] Embracing these values would equip people to resist the temptation to indulge in any corrupt practice.

Freedom of the individual life. For Bonhoeffer, the freedom of the individual implies individual accountability.[56] Instead of exalting themselves, individuals are conscious of their relationship with 'the Other'. At the end of the day, one has to give account to somebody. In *Stellvertretung*, the autonomous self does not exist; rather, the self exists only in relation to 'the Other'. 'For a Christian', says William Schweiker, 'the empowerment of persons to be responsible agents in history is to serve the purpose of respecting and enhancing the integrity of life before God.'[57] Where the self has no room to act on its own but always acts in relationship to others, there can be little room for corruption.

Disciple and citizen. A disciple is someone whose heart is ruled by Christ; a citizen is called to co-operate and help others in his or her life situations, or in the institutions where he or she works.[58] Fighting corruption must take place in the context of the realization that all Christians have responsibilities as both disciples and citizens. A disciple is called (i.e. given a vocation) and answers (responds) to Christ's call by acting in a 'self-less' manner in service to others. In his book *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonho-

54 Steven C. van den Heuvel, 'Leadership and the Ethics of Responsibility: An Engagement with Dietrich Bonhoeffer', in Patrick Nullens and Steven van den Heuvel, *The Challenges of Moral Leadership* (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 120.

55 Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 241.

56 Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 257–58.

57 William Schweiker, *Responsibility and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 31.

58 Heuser, 'Cost of Citizenship', 68.

effer urges Christians, as disciples of Christ, to 'bear the burdens and sufferings of the neighbour'.[59]

But what about our role as citizens? The challenge is that sometimes people view their Christian beliefs as something private and out of place in matters of political action. For Bonhoeffer, a citizen, by virtue of his or her submission to God's natural law, is also called (given a vocation, *Beruf*, in his or her respective placement) to be of service to fellow citizens.[60] Because these callings apply to everyone, I prefer to depart from the conventional definition of corruption as 'abuse of public office, power or authority' and instead to refer to it as 'abuse of *vocation*'.

Both as disciples and as citizens, we can fall prey to a deficient understanding of vocation which falls short of accountability, integrity and transparency.[61] For example, a police officer has a vocation to serve honourably as a police officer, much like any public official or even a vendor selling merchandise on a street corner. If the police officer abuses his or her vocation by taking advantage of his or her position for personal benefit, that is abuse towards oneself and also towards the calling of being a police officer. Moreover, in a country like Malawi that is 68 percent Christian, corruption would not be a major issue if Christian citizens would see the need for Christian 'values to be transformed in terms of practical moral integrity'.[62] William Schweiker argues for the development of a theory of values applicable to Christians which 'entails a transvaluation of values'.[63] For all this to happen, the church should have the kind of influence in society which would flow over to non-Christians as well. That would enable members of society to call on the church for support when they encounter temptations to indulge in corruption.

Practically, the church could undertake approaches to corruption besides the existing state-driven initiatives. For example, it could make the subject of corruption a priority in its programmes, church administrative meetings and Bible studies. Furthermore, lessons for children's Sunday-school classes and lay leaders could incorporate topics on corruption. Martin Ott also suggests a systematized and 'step by step' establishment of a robust ethics of the 'common good' in the church to address private and public morality. At the moment, this ethic is 'diffused and scattered'.[64]

The one-party era in Malawi, though its serious deficiencies must not be ignored, created an environment of accountability or even fear that pushed civil servants to perform with high quality. Through its 'four cornerstones', it enforced the concern for others that Bonhoeffer argued we all should embrace voluntarily. The

59 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, vol. 1 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*, vol. 1, ed. Clifford J. Green (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), 179.

60 Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 257.

61 Schirrmacher and Schirrmacher, *Corruption*, 23.

62 Schweiker, *Responsibility*, 30.

63 Schweiker, *Responsibility*, 30. The term 'transvaluation of values' here should not be understood in terms of Nietzsche's conceptualization, which was based on his contempt for Christianity and its moral system.

64 Ott, 'Role of the Christian Churches', 142, 143, 144.

arrival of democracy has caused corruption to flourish more freely rather than restraining it.[65] Embracing the 'four cornerstones' and Bonhoeffer's ethic of *Stellvertretung* would help to combat corruption and restore sanity in the financial sector. The positive value of removing an authoritarian dictator from power may be great, but so is the value of preventing corruption.

IV. Conclusion

Corruption has become an endemic part of the social fabric in multi-party, democratic Malawi. This situation is at least partly explained by the unique nature of Malawi's transition from a one-party state to a multi-party system. Even though a number of anti-corruption initiatives are present, these are state-driven and not sufficiently preventive or proactive; rather, they are reactive, focusing mainly on prosecutions (and sometimes even undermining those prosecutions).

Fighting corruption in Malawi requires a transvaluation of values by the church. We need conscious, ongoing development of a robust conception of the ethic of *Stellvertretung* in the church and in public life. This radically self-less ethic would supplement existing legislation on corruption, which by itself is insufficient and failing. Internalizing the centrality to all life of vicarious, responsible action, which calls for self-less living, would control the desires of the mind and heart, which are the main catalysts of corrupt practices.

65 Mogha, 'Assessment of the Nexus'.

ERT (2020) 44:2, 175-189

The Trinity and Mission: *Missio Dei* in St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*

P. V. Joseph

The concept of *missio Dei*, which situates the source of mission in the nature of the triune God, is often considered to have originated at the International Missionary Conference at Willingen, Germany in 1952. However, the idea is quite present in Augustine's monumental work on the Trinity, *De Trinitate* (hereafter DT).[1]

The *missio* (sending) of God as a theological category is a significant theme in Augustine's trinitarian doctrine. He sees God's revelation and redemption as accomplished through the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit in mission, who reveal the inner life of the Triune God in the generation (*generatio*) of the Son and the procession of the Spirit. Thus, mission in Augustine's trinitarian doctrine brings together the inner trinitarian life of God and human reconciliation with God. In this paper, I explore the relationship between *missio* and the Trinity in Augustine's thought.

I. The Trinity and Divine Missions

Theologically, for Augustine, mission refers to the economic activity of the trinitarian sending in the New Testament, by which the Father sends the Son and the Father and the Son together send the Holy Spirit (DT 4.29, 181–82). This mission is identified with the generation and procession of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The sending of the Son and the Spirit in mission is located in their being (*filiation* and *spiration*) from the Father. The Father is never said to have been sent because unlike the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Father 'has not got anyone else to be from or proceed from' (DT 4.28, 181).[2]

Mission is the self-communication of the Father, his sending forth of the Son and the Holy Spirit in their visible manifestations in the world—the permanent visible manifestation of the Son and the transitory visible manifestation of the Holy Spirit (DT 2.7–9, 101–8).[3] More specifically, God's mis-

1 Augustine, *De Trinitate* (The Trinity), trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 1991). Citations in the text give the book and paragraph number from Augustine, followed by the page number from Hill's translation.

2 See Linda Darwish, 'The Concept of the Mediator in Augustine's Understanding of the Trinity', *Didaskalia* 13, no. 1 (2001): 71.

3 See Mary T. Clark, '*De Trinitate,*' in *The*

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sion takes place only in the incarnation of the Son and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost—not in earlier Old Testament theophanies. In the incarnation, the Son's divine nature is united with human nature, and the inner trinitarian identity of the Holy Spirit is revealed in the Spirit's procession from the Father. The mission of God that occurred in the incarnation and Pentecost is the central event in the economy of salvation because it reveals the inner trinitarian life and God's reconciliation of humanity to God (DT 4.28–29, 181–83).[4]

The equality of the persons of the Godhead comes into sharp focus in Augustine's discussion of the divine mission, where he refutes the contention of his opponents that 'the *one who sends* is greater than the *one sent*' (DT 2.7, 101; emphasis added). The implication of such a claim, according to Augustine, is that because the Father sends the Son, the Father is greater than the Son and both are greater than the Holy Spirit.

Refuting the proposition that sending implies inequality, Augustine seeks to demonstrate the inseparability and equality of the trinitarian persons. Inseparability entails that sending (*missio*) is the activity of all three persons of the Godhead. The sending of the Son is the activity of both the Father and the Son: 'But God's Word is his Son. So when the Father sent him by word, what happened was that he was sent by the Father and his Word. Hence, it is by the Father and the Son that the Son was sent because the Son is the Father's Word' (DT 2.9, 103).

Moreover, the presence of the Father implies the presence of both the Son and the Holy Spirit. Augustine asks:

> Is there anywhere he [the Father] could be without his Word and his Wisdom, who *stretches mightily from end to end, and disposes all things properly* (Wis 8:1)? Nor for that matter could he be anywhere without his Spirit. … [Therefore] both Son and Holy Spirit are sent to where they already are. (DT 2.7–8, 102)[5]

The trinitarian mission is historically demonstrated in the Father's sending of the Son 'in the fulness of time, made of woman' (Gal 4:4). The Son was sent from the Father into the world as attested in John 16:28: 'I came from the Father and have come into the world.' Accordingly, mission is the 'going forth [of the Son] from the Father and coming into this world' (DT 2.7, 102). For Augustine, this going forth of the Son must be seen in relation to the assertion that the Son 'was in the world, and the world came into being through him. … He came to what was his own' (Jn 1:10–11). Accordingly, the Son was sent to the world where he already was. The same principle applies to the Holy Spirit: 'If God is everywhere, his Spirit is everywhere too. So the Spirit also was sent to where he was already' (DT 2.7, 102).

The mission of the Son was not without the Holy Spirit, because the Son was born of the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:18). Thus, the incarnation and the virgin birth are indivisible works of

Cambridge Companion to Augustine, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 93.

4 Luigi Gioia, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's* De Trinitate (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 34, 114–16.

5 See Gioia, *Theological Epistemology*, 162.

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (DT 2.8–9, 102–3).[6] Since the Father *who begot* and the Son *who was begotten* are one, the *one who sends* and the one *who is sent* are also one along with the Holy Spirit (DT 4.29, 181–82).[7]

This differentiated work of the Trinity in divine mission, for Augustine, presupposes unity in the substance of the Godhead and hence the equality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The equality of the Son and the Holy Spirit with the Father stems from their inseparability and unity within the Trinity, which affirm that the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit is the work of all persons of the Godhead. The fact of their being sent does not undermine the equality of the Son and the Holy Spirit; in fact, it signifies the mission of the Trinity. More specifically, the trinitarian mission constitutes the sending forth of the Son and the Holy Spirit by the Father. It is the manifestation in history of the second and the third persons of the Trinity. It was their going forth from the essential *invisibility* of the triune God to historical manifestation. Accordingly, the Father remains invisible as the sender, who is never said to have been sent, and the Son and the Holy Spirit are manifest to the world in their being sent forth by the Father (DT 3.3, 128–29; 4.32, 185).

The Son, who was jointly invisible with the Father, is made visible in mission in the incarnation. Although the Son 'appeared outwardly in created bodily form' (*in creatura corporali*), he always remains invisible 'in uncreated spiritual form' (*intus in natura spirituali*) (DT 2.9–10, 106). The visibility of the Son in the incarnation was accompanied by the visibility of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit appeared in created guise like a dove (Mt 3:16) at the baptism of Jesus and again appeared as tongues of fire at Pentecost (Acts 2:3). Augustine calls these visible manifestations the mission (sending) of the Holy Spirit. Yet the substance of the Spirit, like that of the Son, is concealed, pointing to the Spirit's essential invisibility and immutability (DT 2.10, 107).

However, there is a distinction between the manifestations of the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit did not manifest in a creaturely form as the Son did; there was no hypostatic union. The Spirit did appear as a dove, a violent wind and tongues of fire, but the 'Spirit did not make the dove blessed, or the violent gust, or the fire; he did not join them to himself and his person to be held in an everlasting union', as did the Son who is eternally God and human (DT 2.11, 107). Thus, while the visible manifestation of the Son is permanent, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is transient.

II. Incarnation, Pentecost and *Missio Dei*

Augustine's discussion of the divine sending (*missio*) and theophanies occupies most of the second and the third books of *De Trinitate*. He had already rejected the traditional Christological interpretation according

6 See Malcolm Spicer, *The Mystery of Unity: A Commentary on Saint Augustine's* De Trinitate (Québec: National Library, 1993), 26.

7 For Augustine, the oneness of God rests upon the inseparability, equality and consubstantiality of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Yet each person of the Trinity is differentiated from each other. See DT 1.7.

to which the second person of the Trinity appeared in the theophanies. Nevertheless, he believed in the trinitarian character of the theophanies, and accordingly he understood these visions as a symbolic representation of the Trinity.

Augustine concludes that the theophanies 'were produced through the changeable creation subject to the changeless God, and they did not manifest God as he is in himself, but in a symbolic manner as times and circumstances required' (DT 2.32, 124).[8] 'Whenever God was said to appear to our ancestors before our savior's incarnation, the voices heard and the physical manifestation seen were the work of angels' (DT 3.27, 146).

Having ruled out the appearance of the Trinity, particularly the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the theophanies, Augustine returns to the mission of the Trinity as evidenced in the incarnation and at Pentecost. Two themes are inseparably linked to each other in Augustine's discourse on the mission of the Son: trinitarian revelation and reconciliation (mediation). For Augustine, mission is essentially both revelatory and redemptive. No revelation is conceivable without the mediation of the Son, and no human reconciliation with God is possible without revelation. Hence, the mission of the Son is the mediation of revelation and reconciliation—revealing God to humanity and reconciling humanity to God (DT 4.11–12, 164–66). The next two sections examine these two functions.

1. The *Missio Dei* and Trinitarian Revelation

Although Augustine does not rule out the trinitarian significance of the theophanies, for him the mission of God begins only in God's self-revelation in the incarnation of the Son. He seeks to establish this point in the latter part of the fourth book of DT, having rebutted the claim that theophanies represent the sending (mission) of the Son (DT 4.26, 178–79; 2.8, 102–3).[9]

The Son's mission has opened up the possibility of human redemption as well as human knowledge of the triune God. Despite God's revelation through the mission of the Son, humanity is incapable of perceiving it due to sin:

> [W]e were incapable of grasping eternal things, and weighed down by the accumulated dirt of our sins, which we had collected by our love of temporal things, and which had become almost a natural growth on our mortal stock; so we needed purifying. But we could only be purified for adaptation to eternal things by temporal means. (DT 4.24, 175)

According to Augustine, temporal things have deluded us and rendered us incapable of contemplating eternal things (the divine mysteries). Interestingly, God has chosen to redeem us through temporality, in the mission of the Son. This entry into the world of human existence is an act of divine grace. We respond to this divine initiative with faith in the work of Christ who, being the eternal Son of God,

8 See also Kari Kloos, *Christ, Creation, and the Vision of God: Augustine's Transformation of Early Christian Theophany Interpretation* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 141–42.

9 The transition to this significant theme of the Son's mission is marked by 4.25 (178) and continues to the end of the fourth book.

became the Son of man. When our minds have been purified by faith, we are enabled to contemplate eternal things (DT 4.24, 175). The contemplation of God, according to Augustine, is the eternal reward of the new covenant.[10]

Faith itself is related to the realm of temporality and is generated by grace. Our faith is then transformed into truth, 'when we come to what we are promised as believers', namely the eternal life which is to know the Father (Jn 17:3) (DT 4.24, 176).[11] Knowing the Father involves knowing both the Son and the Holy Spirit, because the trinitarian persons are inseparable (DT 1.17–19, 80–83).

Revelation is impossible unless the eternal God enters into our created world and unites himself to our mutable human condition. In the mission of the Son, God has 'provided us with a bridge to his eternity' in order that we may 'pass from being among the things that originated to eternal things' (DT 4.24, 177). Thus, in the incarnation as well as at Pentecost—i.e. through the missions of the Son and the Spirit—humanity is given a glimpse of the mystery of the Trinity. The transition to this significant theme in *De Trinitate* is marked by the following remarkable passage towards the close of the fourth book:

> There you have what the Son of God has been sent for; indeed there you have what it is for the Son of God to have been sent. Everything that has taken place in time in 'originated' matters which have been produced from the eternal and reduced back to the eternal, and has been designed to elicit the faith we must be purified by in order to contemplate the truth, has either been testimony to this mission or has been the actual mission of the Son of God (*testimonia missionis huius fuerunt aut ipsa missio filii dei*). (DT 4.25, 178)[12]

The visibility of the Son in the incarnation, which marks the actual mission of God, and his visible nature and actions are intended to generate faith that 'may be consummated in the contemplation of eternity when we truly see that which the visible Christ represents'.[13]

One of Augustine's most central concerns in *De Trinitate* is to establish the unity and equality of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit from the authority of Scripture. For Augustine, the sending of the Son is compatible with his generation from the Father, and thus it underlines the essential unity and equality of the Father and the Son. 'On this foundation', writes Lewis Ayres, 'Augustine articulates the principle that one of the central purposes of this sending is the revealing of the Son and Word as Son and Word, that is a revealing of the Word as *from* the Father and as the Word *with* Father and Spirit.'[14]

The outward movement of the Son

10 Augustine, 'The Spirit and the Letter', in *Augustine: Later Works*. The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 8 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), 223.

11 See Edward W. Poitras, 'St. Augustine and the *Missio Dei*: A Reflection on Mission at the Close of the Twentieth Century', *Mission Studies* 16, no. 2 (1999): 36.

12 See also Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 184.

13 Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 184.

14 Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 185; emphasis added.

and the Spirit into the world in visible forms results in the temporal mission of God. Augustine writes, '*I went forth from the Father,* he [Jesus] says, *and came into this world* (Jn 16:28). So that is what being sent [*mitti*] is, going forth from the Father and coming into this world' (DT 2.7, 102).[15] However, the divine mission points to the dimension of both the Son's visibility and invisibility. The Son who was *timelessly* begotten by the Father was sent in *time* in the world. His appearance in the corporeal world was in created bodily form, and yet, being timeless in his eternal and essential (spiritual) being, the Son was always 'hidden from mortal eyes' (DT 2.10, 106–7; 15.47, 438).

Mission, for Augustine, is the economy of salvation that reveals the mystery of the inner trinitarian life, the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit. Yet generation and procession themselves are not mission; rather, mission, as noted earlier, is the coming forth of the Son and the Spirit from the Father and their coming into the world (DT 2.7, 102), at the incarnation and at Pentecost, respectively. By revealing the inner life of God in this way, mission signifies the economic dimension of the Trinity. Hill's observation is quite pertinent here:

> The divine missions in fact constitute the very form of the economy of redemption. God is not constituted a triad by the economy. … [God] is revealed as a triad by the economy, because in fact the eternal divine triad unfolds the saving economy according to a triadic pattern. So the mystery of the Trinity is of the essence of our redemption.[16]

Mission reveals that in their being sent, the Son and the Spirit are known to be from and proceed from the Father. 'And just as being born means for the Son his being from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to be from him. And just as for the Holy Spirit his being the gift of God means his proceeding from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to proceed from him' (DT 4.29, 182).[17] While distinguishing mission from the eternal generation and procession, Augustine identifies mission not only with being sent, but with being known in the world.[18]

Augustine captures the trinitarian interiority and inseparability in mission as follows:

> Since then it was a work of the Father and the Son that the Son should appear in the flesh, the one who so appeared in the flesh is appropriately said to have been sent, and the one who did not to have done the sending. Thus events which are put on outwardly in the sight of our bodily eyes are aptly called *missa* because they stem from the inner designs [*apparatus*]

15 See David Coffey, 'The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love of the Father and the Son', *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 200.

16 Edmund Hill, 'St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*: The Doctrinal Significance of Its Structure,' *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 19 (1973): 285–86.

17 Hill, in note 98 on page 182, observes that this passage is the culmination of Augustine's discussion on divine missions that he began in Book 2, showing that mission 'reveal[s] the inner core of the trinitarian mystery'. See also Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 185.

18 Hill, 'St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*', 282.

> of our spiritual nature. (DT 2.9, 105–6)

The mission of the Son is grounded in his being from the Father and in his being known or perceived to be from the Father. Therefore,

> the Son of God is not said to be sent in the very fact that he is born of the Father, but either in the fact that the Word made flesh showed himself to this world; about this fact he says, *I went forth from the Father and came into this world* (Jn 16:28). Or else he is sent in the fact that he is perceived in time by someone's mind. … That he [the Son] is born means that he is from eternity to eternity—he is *the brightness of eternal light* (Wis 7:26). But that he is sent means that he is known by somebody in time. (DT 4.28, 181)[19]

The fact that this mission of God takes place in our temporal world demonstrates that by God's grace, humanity is given the privilege of knowing God through temporal reality.[20] The invisible, immutable and unknowable God is made known to us in grace through the temporal missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This mission of God, accomplished in the incarnation of Christ and his redemptive work, is central to the revelation of the triune God and of eternity. The God whom the Son reveals in his mission is the triune God. Therefore, the revelation of God in the incarnation is fundamentally a trinitarian revelation.

2. *Missio Dei* and Reconciliation

According to Augustine, God's revelation to humanity and human comprehension of that revelation are both the work of God. Our inability to perceive God's revelation is healed in the mediatorial work of the Son, which reconciles humanity with God.

Augustine expounds this reconciliatory (mediatorial) mission of Christ against the background of Plotinian metaphysics of 'the one and the many'. Many scholars have seen the influence of Plotinus' philosophy on Augustine's trinitarian doctrine, particularly in his doctrine of the unity of God.[21]

The problem of the one and the many emerged as a prominent philosophical challenge in the ancient world, and it continues to defy simple solutions. It emerges from the assumption of an underlying unity behind the universe and the diversity and multiplicity in the world.[22] There have been attempts to discover the origin of the 'many-ness' in the world from a single universal principle (often termed as 'idea', 'mind', or 'God') behind everything, and thus to reconcile the many with the one (principle or reality). Augustine discovers the origin of the multiplicity in the one

19 Augustine distinguishes between the eternal generation (begottenness) of the Son from the Father and 'the human experience of the Son's being sent in the mission of redemption' as testified in the New Testament. Scott A. Dunham, *The Trinity and Creation in Augustine: An Ecological Analysis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 146.

20 Gioia, *Theological Epistemology*, 80.

21 See Thomas A. Wassmer, 'The Trinitarian Theology of Augustine and His Debt to Plotinus', *Harvard Theological Review* 53, no. 4 (1960): 261–68.

22 See Gareth B. Matthews and S. Marc Cohen, 'The One and the Many', *Review of Metaphysics* 21, no. 4 (1968): 630–55.

God from whom are all things (DT 4.3, 154). The one and the many are resolved in the incarnation of Christ who mediated on behalf of humanity and reconciled them to the one God (DT 4.2–6, 153–59; 4.11, 164–65).[23] Humanity, through sin, has fallen into the many—into discord and division—and consequently moved away from the one true God. The ultimate salvation of disintegrated humanity lies in being restored to unity and to God. This, Augustine believes, has been accomplished through the mediation of Christ (DT 4.11, 164–65).[24]

The incarnation of Christ is also a revelation of human sinfulness. God's self-manifestation both brings in the knowledge of the triune God and displays our sinful situation. Therefore, God's mission in Christ takes place in the context of human sin and estrangement, and of our inability to know God. Without the incarnation, we would be unable to know God because of our sinful nature and alienation from God (DT 4.2, 153).[25] Through the Son revealing to us the triune God, we come to see our sinful nature and the depth of God's love and are thus led into God's way of humility. As Augustine explains:

> First we had to be persuaded how much God loved us, in case out of sheer despair we lacked the courage to reach up to him. Also we had to be shown what sort of people we are that he loves, in case we should take pride in our own worth, and so bounce even further away from him and sink even more under our own strength. So he dealt with us in such a way that we could progress rather in his strength; he arranged it so that the power of charity would be brought to perfection in the weakness of humility. … So we needed to be persuaded how much God loves us, and what sort of people he loves; how much in case we despaired, what sort in case we grew proud. (DT 4.2, 153–54)

Calling attention to Romans 5:8, Augustine underscores the necessity of incarnation as the demonstration of God's love and grace towards humanity and finally as God's redemption of humanity (DT 4.2, 154). In the divine mission, incarnation was indispensable for the hypostatic union of the divine and the human in Christ, so that he could reconcile humanity to God through his death. In the incarnation, God's mission presents a suffering God who identifies himself with suffering humanity.[26]

The mission of Christ's mediation is itself a trinitarian work. Although Christ is the Son of man and the mediator between God and humanity, he is also the Son of God, equal to the Father and consubstantial with him. The object of the Son's mediation on behalf of all who believe in him, as reflected in his high priestly prayer in John 17, is their ultimate oneness and reconciliation with the triune God.

23 See Hill's introduction to Book 4 (DT, 149); Spicer, *The Mystery of Unity*, 47.

24 See also Isabelle Bochet, 'The Hymn to the One in Augustine's *De Trinitate* IV', *Augustinian Studies* 38, no. 1 (2007): 42.

25 See also Gioia, *Theological Epistemology*, 32–33; Maarten Wisse, *Trinitarian Theology Beyond Participation: Augustine's* De Trinitate (London: T & T Clark, 2011), 136.

26 A clearer expression of this point is found in Augustine, *Exposition on the Psalms* 64.11, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (hereafter NPNF), 1st Series, vol. 8 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 265–66.

Augustine writes:

> This is what he means when he says *That they may be one as we are one* (Jn 17:22)—that just as Father and Son are one not only by equality of substance but also by identity of will, so these men, for whom the Son is mediator with God, might be one not only by being of the same nature, but also by being bound in the fellowship of the same love. Finally, he shows that he is the mediator by whom we are reconciled to God, when he says, *I in them and you in me, that they may be perfect into one* (Jn 17:23). (DT 4.12, 165–66)[27]

The apparent lack of oneness of the disciples, implied in the prayer, reflects divided humanity, full of 'clashing wills and desires, and the uncleanness of their sins' (DT 4.12, 165). The mediation of Christ offers hope for humanity, alienated from the one true God, to become united with God in Christ in the Spirit of love. The ground of their oneness with God is the unity that exists eternally in the Trinity. Their oneness with each other is derived from their oneness with the triune God through Christ, and from the reconciliation with God accomplished through his mediation. Therefore, human salvation through the mission of the Son as the mediator cannot be thought of apart from the mystery of the Trinity.[28]

In Augustine's view, as is evident in the above passage, there is a particularity in this human reconciliation and unity with the triune God which points to the relationship between the Church and the Trinity. Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity and his ecclesiology are profoundly intertwined.[29] The Son who unites human nature to himself in his incarnation is also the one who, through his own mediatory work, unites the Church with the triune God. This unity is derived from the Church's union with Christ: '"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt in us." To that flesh the Church is joined, and so there is made the whole Christ [*Christus totus*], Head and body.'[30]

In the unity of the Son with the Father and the unity of the Son with the Church, Christians are 'fused somehow into one spirit in the furnace of charity … bound in the fellowship of the same love' (DT 4.12, 166). Thus, one can say here that 'the church shares in the life of the Trinity through the Son's giving of the Spirit

27 See Gioia, *Theological Epistemology*, 89. Strangely enough, Augustine does not talk about the Trinity in the fourth book until near the end, where he takes up the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit. See Bochet, 'Hymn to the One', 41.

28 Bochet, 'Hymn to the One', 42. According to Hill, the Trinity as a mystery of the divine economy is fundamental to Augustine's trinitarian theology. See Hill, 'St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*', 284–86.

29 See Adam Ployd, *Augustine, the Trinity, and the Church: A Reading of the Anti-Donatist Sermons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

30 Augustine, *Homily 1 on the First Epistle of John* 1.2, in *NPNF*, 1st Series, 7:461. *Christus totus*, according to Augustine, suggests that the head (Christ) and the body (Church) constitute one Christ. However, this does not imply that Christ is not 'complete without the body, but that he was prepared to be complete and entire together with us too, though even without us he is always complete and entire'. Augustine, *Sermon* 341.11, in *Sermons (341–400) on Various Subjects*, trans. Edmund Hill, ed. John E. Rotelle (New York: New City, 1995), 26.

to his own body'.[31] The oneness of the Trinity is extended to the Church in the Son's sacrifice, as Augustine states: 'This one true mediator, in reconciling us to God by his sacrifice of peace, would remain one with him to whom he offered it, and *make one in himself those for whom he offered it,* and be himself who offered it one and the same as what he offered' (DT 4.19, 171; emphasis added).

Through the sacrifice of the Son, as a redeemed and reconciled community, the Church shares in the divine-humanity of the Son and, through him, in the triune God. There is 'a new level of oneness in which the many come together in the person of Christ. … We are united to Christ and in Christ, united to God.'[32] In 'becoming a partaker of our mortality he [Christ] made us partakers of his divinity' (DT 4.4, 155). Thus, in Augustine's thought, one might say that the Church has its existence in the Trinity.[33]

3. *Missio Dei* and Pentecost

The Holy Spirit was sent and manifested in the world, similar to the Son albeit in a different manner. The manifestation of the Spirit was the Spirit's coming forth from the hiddenness of God into visibility in the world in some bodily form, just as in the incarnation. This sending of the Spirit occurred at Pentecost, 'as a dove in bodily guise and as fire in divided tongues' (DT 3.3, 129; 2.10, 106–7). However, Augustine stresses that as in the incarnation of the Son, the Holy Spirit's essential spiritual being always remains invisible to mortal eyes.

Also, the Son's becoming flesh (human) and assuming human form has a dimension of perpetuity, and hence he is eternally God and human. Unlike the incarnation, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in corporeal form was transitory and served merely as a temporary signification adapted to our mortal senses of vision. The Spirit did not become a dove or fire so as to be united to them in eternal union as humanity was united eternally with divinity in the Son (DT 2.10–11, 107–8).[34]

The sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, like the incarnation of the Son, reveals the mystery of the trinitarian life of God. The mission of the Holy Spirit emerges from the Spirit's coming forth (spiration) from the Father and the Son (DT 4.29, 182).[35] Although the procession of the Spirit itself is not the mission of the Spirit, it is nevertheless an important aspect in Augustine's understanding of the Spirit's mission.

Augustine's views on the Holy Spirit's procession must be viewed in the light of his emphasis on the unity of God, which was very central to his battle against Arianism. Although he noted distinctions within the three persons of the Trinity, their unity was of paramount importance to him. He particularly regarded the place of the Holy Spirit within the triunity of God as very crucial in affirming the unity of the Godhead. Augustine refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit

31 Ployd, *Augustine, the Trinity, and the Church*, 3.

32 Darwish, 'The Concept of the Mediator', 81–82.

33 See Gioia, *Theological Epistemology*, 91.

34 See Spicer, *The Mystery of Unity*, 26.

35 See also Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity*, 185.

of both the Father and the Son, the communion and love of the Father and the Son, and their unity. '[T]he Holy Spirit is something common to Father and Son, whatever it is, or is their very commonness or communion, consubstantial and coeternal. Call this friendship, if it helps, but a better word for it is charity [love]' (DT 6.7, 210; 15.27, 421).[36]

Being the Spirit of the Father and the Son, and as their common gift, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father principally and also from the Son (DT 15:29, 422–23). Augustine affirms this double procession of the Spirit more convincingly in the final book of *De Trinitate*. He argues that the generation of the Son from the Father and his consubstantiality with the Father necessitate the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son as well. In other words, the procession of the Spirit from the Son is given to him by the Father in his co-eternality and consubstantiality with the Father:

> And anyone who can understand that when the Son said, *As the Father has life in himself, so he has given the Son to have life in himself* (Jn 5:26), he did not mean that the Father gave life to the Son already existing without life, but that he begot him timelessly in such a way that the life which the Father gave the Son by begetting him is co-eternal with the life of the Father who gave it, should also understand that just as the Father has it in himself that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him, so he gave to the Son that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him too, and in both cases timelessly; … to say that the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Son is something which the Son has from the Father. If the Son has everything that he has from the Father, he clearly has from the Father that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him. (DT 15.47, 438)

Augustine seems to base his argument for this double procession of the Holy Spirit on two key Johannine texts: 'whom [referring to the Holy Spirit] I will send you from the Father' (Jn 15:26) and 'whom the Father will send in my name' (Jn 14:26). These statements indicate to Augustine that (1) the Spirit is of both the Father and the Son; and (2) the Father is the origin (*principium*) of the Godhead. Here one must not ignore Augustine's emphasis on the purpose of missions, which is to reveal the Father as the source of all (DT 4.29, 182; 15.27, 421). Yet we must also guard against misconstruing him as subordinating the Son and Holy Spirit to the Father. Augustine is fully convinced that the three persons of the Godhead are united in love and that the Spirit is the consubstantial bond between the Father and the Son (DT 15.37, 429).[37]

36 Augustine's view of the Holy Spirit as love between the Father and the Son, followed in the Western Church, has elicited strong criticism from the East. The Eastern Church has felt that in identifying the Holy Spirit as the mutual love of the Father and the Son, the West is depersonalizing the Holy Spirit and upsetting the personal relationships within the Trinity. See Gerald Bray, 'The Double Procession of the Holy Spirit in Evangelical Theology Today: Do We Still Need It?' *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41, no. 3 (1998): 422–23.

37 See Augustine, *De Trinitate* 15.37, in *NPNF*, 1st Series, 3:219. Lewis Ayres, 'Augustine on the Triune Life of God', in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. David V.

Delving a little more deeply into Augustine's thoughts can help us gain a clearer picture of double procession. The fact that the Spirit is of both the Father and the Son, for Augustine, seems to convey the idea of procession. Although the two Johannine texts (14:26; 15:26) do not explicitly speak of double procession, they evidently refer to the Spirit's procession from the Father. Augustine comes back to John 15:26 in the final book of *De Trinitate* and asks, 'So if the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, why did the Son say *he proceeds from the Father* (Jn 15:26)?' (DT 15.48, 439; cf. 4.29, 182). He then builds his case for double procession in a somewhat convoluted manner, stating that it was characteristic of Jesus to attribute to the Father all that belonged to himself. For instance, Jesus said, 'My teaching is not mine but his who sent me' (Jn 7:16). Jesus certainly did not say that the Holy Spirit did *not* proceed from him. Therefore, according to Augustine,

> He (the Father) from whom the Son has it that he is God—for he is God from God—is of course also the one from whom he has it that the Holy Spirit proceeds from him as well; and thus the Holy Spirit too has it from the Father that he should also proceed from the Son as he proceeds from the Father. (DT 15.48, 439)

Further, Augustine seeks to infer double procession in a nuanced manner from John 5:26: 'As the Father has life in himself, so he has given the Son to have life in himself.' This is, Augustine says, the Father's eternal begetting of the Son and by virtue of his eternal begetting, the Father 'gave to the Son that the Holy Spirit should proceed from him' as the Spirit proceeds from the Father (DT 15.47, 438). Therefore, the Father and the Son together are the one 'origin of the Holy Spirit (*patrem et filium principium esse spiritus sancti*); not two origins [since the] Father and Son are one God' (DT 5.15, 201).[38]

Augustine draws further support for the double procession of the Spirit from John 20:22: 'He [Jesus] breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."' He treats the material sign of Jesus breathing on the apostles as 'a convenient symbolic demonstration that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father' (DT 4.29, 182). This post-resurrection action, for Augustine, also demonstrates that the Holy Spirit is a virtue that went out from the Son (DT 15.45, 436). He seeks to ground his claims for double procession in Scripture; however, his attempts to extrapolate an immanent Trinity from a corporeal sign, rather than drawing it from the whole collection of biblical data and especially from the New Testament, have not fared well with modern biblical scholarship.[39]

Meconi and Eleonore Stump, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 76.

38 The issue of the double procession of the Spirit was important for Augustine, and he wished to give it further consideration as indicated in DT 2.5 (100). However, towards the end of *De Trinitate*, he admits that perceiving the mystery of the double procession of the Holy Spirit is beyond any human reasoning. He reconciles himself to the hope that the mystery of the procession will ultimately be revealed only in eternity (DT 15.45, 435).

39 See Coffey, 'The Holy Spirit as the Mutual Love', 194–95.

The mission of the Spirit is assumed to be emerging from the Spirit's procession from the Father and the Son. We have earlier referred to the Spirit's indispensable role in the incarnation and thereby in the Son's mission prior to Pentecost. In the fulness of time, when God sent his Son, God did not send him without the Holy Spirit. In fact, Mary 'was found to be with the child of the Holy Spirit' (Mt 1:18). Even prior to this, says Augustine, Isaiah prophetically described the Son as sent by the Spirit: 'And now the Lord, and his Spirit, has sent me' (Is 48:16) (DT 2.9, 103).

However, the mission of the Holy Spirit would take on a unique character at Pentecost, as the Spirit's mission was awaiting the glorification of the Son. Augustine says:

> As for what the evangelist says, *The Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified* (Jn 7:39), how are we to understand it, except as saying that there was going to be a kind of giving or sending of the Holy Spirit after Christ's glorification such as there had never been before? (DT 4.29, 182–83)

Augustine views the sending forth of the Spirit at Pentecost as a distinct and unique event in the economy of God. The manifestation of the Spirit occurred in perceptible signs and languages, to indicate that the redemption accomplished in the mission of the Son would be realized in the life of nations and peoples through the mission of the Spirit, when they 'believe in Christ by the gift of the Holy Spirit' (DT 4.29, 183). The saving work accomplished through the Son is actualized in the life of believing humanity through the work of the Spirit. This happens by faith that works through love—and both of which come through the ministration of the Holy Spirit: 'In order that faith might work through love, the charity [love] of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us (Rom 5.5). And he was given to us when Jesus was glorified in his resurrection' (DT 13.14, 355).

Augustine's identification of the Holy Spirit as mutual love between the Father and the Son, and as the consubstantial bond between the Father and the Son, is a distinct manner of conceiving the mystery of the Trinity. He contends that 'if the love by which the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father, ineffably demonstrates the communion of both, what is more suitable than that He should be specially called love, who is the Spirit common to both?'[40] Through this love, redeemed humanity is united to one another in Christ and through him to the Father. Furthermore, the unity within the Godhead is not only because of the equality of divine substance; it also comes through their unity of will and through the mutual love that exists between the Father and the Son, which is the Holy Spirit (DT 4.12, 166).

Augustine admits that his inference that the Holy Spirit is the mutual love between the Father and the Son is not found in Scripture. Yet he seeks to adduce an array of scriptural passages (e.g. 1 Jn 4:13) in a rather nuanced manner to substantiate his claim. He concludes, 'So the love which is from God and is God is distinctively the Holy Spirit; through him

40 Augustine, *De Trinitate* 15.37, in *NPNF*, 1st Series, 3:219. I have used Philip Schaff's translation here because I believe that it is clearer than Hill's.

the charity of God is poured out in our hearts, and through it the whole triad dwells in us' (DT 15.32, 425; 15.27–31, 421–424).

Although the Spirit is of the same equality of divine substance, it is through the Spirit that the Father and the Son are united to and love each other. The Holy Spirit is the 'supreme charity conjoining Father and Son to each other and subjoining us to them, and it would seem a suitable name since it is written God is love (1 Jn 4:8,16)' (DT 7.6, 226). This unity of the Trinity that comes through 'love in the Holy Spirit provides the *content* of the metaphysical notion of unity of essence or consubstantiality'.[41] This love of the Holy Spirit through which the Father and the Son are eternally united is translated through the missions of the Son and the Spirit into redeemed humanity so that we are not only united with the Father, but also reconciled to each other.[42]

The Holy Spirit as love of the Father and the Son demonstrates inner trinitarian relations at the deepest level. God's eternal plan to bring humanity into that communion is accomplished through his mission. The trinitarian communion of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is replicated in God's communion with us as the triune God abides in us and as we are given the Holy Spirit, the spirit of love and unity (DT 15.31, 424).

Two crucial things emerge from this discussion: only in the mission of the Son and the Spirit can humanity have a glimpse of the inner trinitarian life; and human communion with the triune God and with each other would never be realized without God's *missio.*

III. Conclusion

Augustine seeks to drive home the equality and inseparability within the Godhead which necessitate that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be equally invisible. Since divine invisibility evidently presupposes that God is unknowable, how does God reveal himself to the world? Augustine seeks the answer to this question in the divine mission, the incarnation of the Son and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Mission becomes the pivotal point of trinitarian revelation in the generation of the Son from the Father and in the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. Mission is actualized visibly in the sending of the Son and the Spirit so that the human race would be reconciled to God through the mediation of the Son. Thus, God's visibility in the economy of salvation becomes revelatory and reconciliatory to the extent that humanity is privileged to know God and be saved.

Augustine locates *missio* as an activity of the triune God in the interior filiation and procession and in the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation. The objective of this divine sending is the revelation of the triune God as well as the reconciliation of humanity to God. For Augustine, mission is the inner-trinitarian work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a much wider sense—namely, God's overarching plan of human redemption. Hence, mission belongs to the triune God who is both the initiator and author of mission. It can be described as the work of God the Father, through the

41 Gioia, *Theological Epistemology*, 130.

42 Gioia, *Theological Epistemology*, 126.

Son, in the Holy Spirit.

Recognizing mission as the work of the triune God calls into question the contemporary perception of mission, which takes as its point of departure the experiences, contexts and existential realities of suffering, marginalized and oppressed groups, rather than the triune God who is the author of mission.[43] In the divine *missio* manifested in the incarnation of the Son, the triune God comes down to a suffering and hurting world. As Augustine says, the Son became human to suffer, to be smitten, and finally to be crucified and die as human. *Missio Dei*, for Augustine, takes place in response to human need for God's love and for ultimate union with God. Therefore, the answer to the physical suffering of the oppressed and marginalized cannot be sought apart from the mission of the triune God.

43 See Poitras, 'St. Augustine and the *Missio Dei*', 42.

Character and Virtue in Theological Education: An Academic Epistolary Novel

Marvin Oxenham

Carlisle: ICETE/Langham Global Library, 2019

Pb., 393 pp., index

Reviewed by Patrick Mitchel, Director of Learning, Irish Bible Institute, Dublin, Ireland

"It is AD 2019, and theological education is suffering from Philistine domination. … This book argues that it is time to arm our slings with the stones of virtue and character and reclaim portions of lost territory that are rightfully ours" (p. xv). So begins Marvin Oxenham's creative, scholarly and passionate argument for a radical reimagining and restructuring of contemporary theological education. In this review, I unpack each of those three adjectives in turn.

Regarding creativity, as the title hints, this is no neutral, detached academic analysis. Oxenham develops his case in the form of a fictional correspondence from a Christian educator in the West to his friend Siméon in the majority world, who is working to re-envisage and re-launch a 'Theological Academy for Character and Virtue' in his context. Each chapter/epistle contributes to articulating Oxenham's overall vision (Part 1), theological and historical underpinnings of virtue (Part 2) and proposals for practice (Part 3).

This creative move is not without risk; it could feel a bit artificial to have such a one-sided conversation consisting of 'letters' that are primarily academic and theological argumentation rather than personal epistles. But overall, the risk pays off at a number of levels. First, the dialogical tone makes the book a pleasure to read (this is also due to Oxenham's gift for clear prose). Second, the epistolary structure gives the book a sense of unfolding narrative as each chapter carries the conversation forward. Third, the letters help to root the discussion in the nitty-gritty realities of theological education—for example, persuading a sceptical seminary board of the central place of character and virtue in the theological enterprise, or how to re-imagine teaching and assessment in that scenario. Fourth, the conversation with Siméon repeatedly opens up the importance of context. Oxenham has written before on the particular challenges facing higher education in the West within 'liquid modernity' and, given his global experience, is acutely aware of the dangers of uncritically exporting a Western model of theological education to the majority world. He candidly acknowledges that he wished he had more space to integrate learning from rich traditions of character and virtue in non-Western cultures.

In terms of scholarship, Oxenham covers a wide range of complex academic territory related to virtue, theology and higher education with the assurance of a well-travelled guide. There are many fascinating conversations to enjoy en route. Some of these cover the difference between spiritual formation and character and virtue education; a critique of loose assumptions of what constitutes Christian discipleship, accompanied by a case for more coherent integration of character and virtue within discipleship paradigms; a critically astute apologetic for an Aristotelian framework to underpin character and virtue education in theological schools; his 'reading Romans backwards' (à la Scot McKnight's recent book of that name, but written independently of it) as 'a comparatively straightforward invitation to character and virtue' (p. 211); the author's familiarity with and critical

assessment of the virtues in the classical tradition; and a rich description of the virtues themselves. In addition, as a fan of Stanley Hauerwas I appreciated Oxenham's frequent engagement with and acknowledged indebtedness to this Texan's distinctively Christian approach to virtue.

Running throughout the book are extensive footnotes, often in the form of quotations or expanded discussion. I am glad that the publisher did not eliminate these footnotes, which constitute a rich resource for the reader who wishes to take a detour (or ten) along the way.

The passionate nature of Oxenham's treatise leaves perhaps the most lasting impression. His analysis of the death of character and virtue in theological education will likely be recognized by most of us working in that field—and by many churches. Oxenham clearly writes with a sincere desire to be of service to fellow theological educators across a theological and geographical spectrum who share his concern to restore character and virtue to the heart of their discipline.

This goal becomes especially evident in Part 3, which explores what actual implementation of Oxenham's vision might look like at the level of criteria for hiring staff, community ethos, curriculum design, teaching virtue, module content, assessment and quality assurance. He contends that much of what he writes is globally transferrable, yet is keen to emphasize that his work is not a textbook but an epistolary novel, designed to inspire and resource his peers in their God-given calling to develop graduates of virtuous character who will serve God's people with integrity. The book succeeds admirably in achieving that goal. At my institution, we will certainly be reflecting on this book together as a team.

Joseph: A Story of Love, Hate, Slavery, Power, and Forgiveness

John C. Lennox

Wheaton, IL, USA: Crossway, 2019

Pb., 232 pp., index

Reviewed by Boris Paschke, Guest Associate Professor of New Testament, Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium

According to its back cover, this book belongs to the category of biblical studies, but it would actually fit better on the spirituality or counselling shelf. In a sermon-like manner, John C. Lennox, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics at the University of Oxford, retells the biblical story of Joseph (Gen 37–50) while inserting worthwhile pastoral advice and application. 'As we think our way into the narrative', he writes, 'it rapidly becomes a penetrating searchlight into the complex psychodramas of our own lives' (11). The major areas of reflection are indicated in the book's subtitle.

As Lennox repeatedly stresses, the relevance and literary beauty of the Joseph narrative can hardly be overestimated: 'The story of Joseph the son of Jacob has a timeless quality' (9). 'He [Joseph] reveals himself to them [his brothers] and publicly forgives and embraces them in one of the most moving scenes in all of world literature' (11).

Lennox convincingly demonstrates that 'there are deep pointers to the gospel of Jesus Christ embedded in the Joseph narrative' (197). However, he states that his main focus is 'to look at and learn from Joseph's life in its own right' (75).

Nevertheless, Lennox repeatedly loses Joseph out of sight. The book's relatively long Part 1 (13–69) is titled 'The Broader Context in Genesis' and summarizes Genesis 1–36. At the beginning of Part 2 (71–220), Lennox remarks, 'At long last we reach the main objective of

this book, the story of Joseph' (73). The recapitulating of this story, however, is often interrupted by other matters. This becomes particularly obvious in the chapter 'The Nature of Forgiveness' (171–84). After referring to various more recent statements concerning, studies on, and examples of forgiveness (e.g. Corrie ten Boom's moving encounter with a former Ravensbrück concentration camp prison guard), Lennox announces, 'With all these things in mind we return to Joseph' (181). The very short remainder of the chapter (pages 181–84) finally discusses Joseph.

Throughout the book, Lennox draws valuable spiritual lessons from the Joseph narrative. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are his thoughts on (1) the (often unfelt) presence of God in the lives of believers (114; cf. the phrase 'The LORD was with Joseph' in Gen 39:2, 21); (2) the imprisoned Joseph's sensitivity to the sadness of his fellow prisoners (139; cf. Gen 40:6–7); (3) the biblical notion of 'waiting on the Lord' (144); and (4) gratitude as the best remedy against self-pity (183; cf. Gen 42:36).

Lennox's remarks on slavery require some additional discussion. He aptly stresses that 'Joseph was a slave, but he clearly enjoyed considerable freedom as head steward of Potiphar's house' (117). Lennox is correct in concluding, 'That's very different from the kind of slavery that Wilberforce abolished and should not be confused with it' (116). Further, Lennox is sensitive to the miserable situation of modern-day slaves: 'We should … not forget the very disturbing fact that there are still many slaves in the world today, men, women, and children suffering … horrendous conditions of dehumanizing servitude similar to that which Wilberforce saw abolished in England. Their numbers run into millions, and they are to be found even in the most civilized of nations, where slave victims of human trafficking are regularly discovered' (117). However, the parallel advice that Lennox gives in this context is out of place: 'Also, we should not forget that in the Greek and Roman world academics were all slaves (some of us are tempted to think we still are!)' (116). The first part of this statement is wrong from a historical perspective, and the second part downplays the desperate and agonizing situation of all those who really have to live in slavery.

The references to non-biblical primary sources are not indicated. Herodotus' statement 'Egypt is the gift of the Nile' (105) comes from his *Histories* 2,5 (literally 'river'). 'The sun god Ra was self-created. An Egyptian text says: "He became, by himself"' (110). The respective text is the *Book of the Dead* (chapter 17). 'She [Joseph's wife Asenath; cf. Gen 41:45] may even have been a convert to Joseph's God, as one Jewish tradition has it' (159). The tradition in question is the ancient romantic novel *Joseph and Asenath* (chapters 9–15).

Lennox's documentation of more recent works is also incomplete at points. He appropriately mentions the works of 'the brilliant Jewish commentator Leon Kass' (80), British Egyptologist Kenneth Anderson Kitchen (96), and German Old Testament scholar Claus Westermann (157). However, Lennox frequently refers to 'some commentators' (160), 'scholars' (19), or 'other scholars' (80) without mentioning their names, let alone their publications.

The book concludes with an appendix on 'Major Divisions of Ancient Egyptian History' and general and Scripture indices.

Despite some weaknesses, Lennox has published a worthwhile pastoral interpretation of the story of Joseph. For all those who teach this narrative in church or school settings, the book can provide valuable ideas with regard to application of the biblical text.