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A Global Forum



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Atonement as Gift: Re-Imagining the Cross for the Church and the World

Katie M. Heffelfinger and Patrick G. McGlinchey (eds)

This volume grows out of the conviction that the central Christian doctrine of the atonement has wide reaching, life-giving, and practical implications for some of the deepest pastoral and theological questions individuals and communities face today. It asks the question, what difference does the atonement make for ecumenics, pastoral care, theodicy, gender, ecology, and social division? The answers given by experts in their fields point to the considerable potential of the doctrine to renew Christian theology and spirituality.

What a marvelous collection! It covers a wondrously wide set of issues. Each chapter made me think. One has to work quickly when writing a blurb for a book, but when this volume comes out, I shall want to read it again slowly.

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Atonement as Gift is a treasure that combines sound scholarship with faithful practices for contemporary communities. This volume will benefit people who seek an introductory understanding as well as those who desire to delve deeply into the topic.

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Editorial: Transition

As we come to the end of another volume, we begin a transition to a new year.

Our articles mark a transition also, moving from first principles to application. First, there is a legacy article from Gordon R. Lewis (USA) on general revelation, followed by Michael Borowski (Germany) with further reflections on ‘moving beyond’ from Scripture to theology, both dealing with fundamental issues of theology and method. Then we turn to practical application. Timothy Lim (Singapore) gives careful evaluation of an important recent papal encyclical on the environment. This is followed by Richard Hibbert and colleagues (Australia) on divine healing in a cross-cultural setting. Finally, we turn to Klaus Fiedler (Malawi) who deals with a pressing practical matter in Africa: wedding practices, and what they mean for Christian witness.

There is another transition as well. This is my last issue as editor. I now hand over to Dr Bruce Barron of Bethel Park, PA, USA. Dr Barron, (PhD, University of Pittsburgh), who has been working with me for several months now. He is a meticulous and widely experienced editor and author, and will bring his own stamp to this journal.

It has been a long journey since I first became involved with the WEF (as it was then) Theological Commission at a highly significant consultation in Singapore in 1986. I began my work with this journal in 1994 as Book Review Editor, assisting the founder, Dr Bruce Nicholls. I took over as Editor in 1998 and have continued ever since,

apart from a short break, 2009-2010, after which the editorial work (and the TC) operated on a somewhat different basis from previously. My editorial work also involved production of WEA *Theological News*, a task which has also continued up to the present. Alongside this work, I also became Administrator and then Executive Director of the Commission.

There have been many changes along the way, both for the TC and its publications, as well as for the evangelical world in general. I am pleased to have been involved with ERT in particular because of its unique role and positioning. This is perhaps best summed up in its original slogan which said its articles were aimed at helping readers in ‘discerning the obedience of faith’—an academically rigorous journal but not competing with specialist disciplinary publications because of its focus on showing how good theology impacts Christian life and witness. The journal is also broadly evangelical, not ‘sectarian’, and ‘a global forum’ (as the current slogan states), aimed at and drawing upon the entire *oikoumene*, not any particular country, region or institution.

It remains only for me now to thank very sincerely all those who have been part of the team during my time—I think particularly of our typesetters, copyeditor, publishers, and especially the authors and most of all, you dear reader, and to wish my successor well.

Thomas Schirrmacher, General Editor
David Parker, Executive Editor

General Revelation Makes Cross-Cultural Communication Possible

Gordon R. Lewis

Christian missions in the Orient had diminished effectiveness, observed Lit-sen Chang, when dependent upon either general or special revelation exclusively. On the one hand, liberals failed because they so identified with the natural theology of the people that they did not adequately present the distinctive gospel of Christ. On the other hand, pietistic fundamentalists failed because they so emphasized the gospel that they ignored the cross-cultural points of contact provided by general revelation;¹ a more effective theology of missions than either encompasses both God's universal and particular revelations.

For present purposes, however, I emphasize general revelation and its relationship to cross-cultural communication whatever the culture or language in use. I seek also to integrate some contributions of philosophical,

missiological, biblical, and theological materials.

Not all missiologists affirm a divine revelation to all everywhere. Hendrik Kraemer represents those who follow Christomonistic theologian Karl Barth in denying the contributions of general revelation and natural theology. Kraemer explained that Karl Barth admitted points of contact between God and man 'because the fact that faith in God's revelation occurs pre-supposes that it can be communicated to man and apprehended by him as revelation coming from God'. Nevertheless, with fierce emphasis Barth's assumption of an infinite qualitative distinction between God and man led him to assert that 'There is no point of contact'. Kramer explains,

... The sole *agent* of real faith in Christ is the Holy Spirit. ... Intent on maintaining integrally the unique character of the Christian revelation as God's sovereign condescending act, what it says is that there are no bridges from human religious consciousness to the reality in Christ,

¹ Lit-sen Chang, *Strategy of Missions in the Orient: Christian Impact on the Pagan World* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 105.

and that it is exclusively God's grace and no human contribution or disposition whatever that effects 'the falling of the scales from the eyes'.²

Kraemer's Barthian missiology validly underlines the uniqueness of salvation through Christ, but unjustifiably denies a general revelation and a natural theology by common grace. The Holy Spirit has chosen to work universally through means such as physical and moral laws. Although *salvation* is Christomonistic, *revelation* is given, not only in Christ, but also in nature (Rom 1:20) and the human heart (Rom 2:14). Barth does not succeed exegetically in overriding Romans chapters 1 and 2 on the consideration that they are not Paul's primary teaching on salvific experience. In his *Commentary on Romans* while trying to be free from philosophical presuppositions, Barth astonishingly interprets Romans 1:20 in a self-contradictory manner. The passage says, 'For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made'.³ Barth comments, 'And what does this mean but that we can know nothing of God ... ?'⁴

Although Cornelius Van Til also denies common ground 'in principle', he admits it in fact, but does not want missionary apologists to use it.⁵ However,

his prohibitions upon the use of common ground in apologetics or missions conflict with Paul's use of the teaching in Romans 1 and 2 and when ministering as the apostle to Gentiles (pagans) at Athens and elsewhere.⁶ After surveying numerous alternative theological perspectives, and exegetically irrelevant biblical evidence, Bruce Demarest and I developed a doctrine of general revelation in volume one of *Integrative Theology* with some of its missiological relevance.⁷ We conclude as did Robert Webber elsewhere that

God created the world with which He is in relationship. The world reflects the Creator (yet is not an extension of Him) and therefore communication is central. God's communication of Himself to the world is through nature as well as in time, space and history. This establishes the principle that creation is a worthy vehicle through which God can be communicated.⁸

What makes cross-cultural communication possible is the universal illumination of the human heart and mind to the truths of general revelation by

2 Henrik Kraemer, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 131–132.

3 Scripture quotations are from the NIV.

4 Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 47.

5 G.R. Lewis, 'Van Til and Carnell', ed. Geehan, *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussion of*

the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1970), 349–368.

6 G.R. Lewis, *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims: Approaches to Christian Apologetics* (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 125–150, and 'Gospel on Campus: An Expository Study of Acts 17', Parts 1–4, *His*, (October–December, 1966, January 1977).

7 G.R. Lewis and B.A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), I:61–91. See also Bruce A. Demarest, *General Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).

8 Robert E. Webber, *God Still Speaks* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980), 81.

the Logos (John 1:1–3). Regardless of the depth of the diversities of the languages in use and the cultural mores, the one Creator made us to know and love him and our neighbours, and to rule the world as accountable stewards. Our accountability for our stewardship of nature and our opportunities to serve others imply some conformity of the categories of our minds with those of the world and of our common Creator.

I respect the anthropological approaches of Mayers and Hiebert, the missiological emphases of Anderson and Lubzetak, the communicational emphases of Charles Kraft and David Hesselgrave, and the theological approach of Harvey Conn who seeks to moderate ‘the angry dialogue between cultural anthropology and theology’.⁹ To these approaches I urge adding axiological and epistemological approaches in preparing for communication from one world-view (*weltanschauung*) to another. The epistemological-axiological hypothesis concerning a universal revelation and illumination is proposed in part I. How it conforms to experience morally and intellectually is presented in part II. The question of whether it involves redemptive analogies is considered in part III.

I Globally Normative Truth

The culturally specific missiologists properly call attention to numerous differences among the languages and mores in the contexts of their experience

and research. Writers in philosophy also magnify contrasts among historical systems and contemporary existentialist, analytic, process, and theistic ways of thinking and speaking. The upshot of much of the philosophical and missiological work focused on variables tends toward a conceptual relativism and could proliferate in countless ethnocentric theologies and local ‘truths’. Both philosophers and missiologists need to emphasize also the similarities of all humans *qua* humans in the *imago Dei* with some common human frames of reference or categories and common human moral values.

However, some philosophers and missiologists appear to have given up hope of ever arriving at *the* truth about ‘the facts’. They are like a medical specialist who told me, ‘I used to think that there were three sides in counselling a married couple: her side, his side, and the truth. If I could only discover the truth and tell them, that would solve their problems. Now I do not think there is a third side, ‘the truth’. Each has to forgive the other, and that’s it. They wouldn’t accept the truth if they heard it’.

From both philosophical and missiological fields it seems conclusive that we are indeed related primarily to the one specific culture in which we were raised. I say culture-related rather than culture-bound because some rebel against their parents’ cultural influences. Admittedly, however, some of our knowledge is not only time-related, but time-bound and merely culture-specific. Some distinctive requirements for a specific cultural setting may not be normative for all times and all peoples.

Some culturally specific knowledge, however, has significance for culture

⁹ Harvie M. Conn, *Eternal Word and Changing Worlds: Theology, Anthropology, and Mission in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1984), 10.

after culture. And some known ethical principles like justice are normative for all cultures and subcultures. Even the claims for an apparently total cultural or philosophical relativism are proposed as supportable with objective validity to all others for belief. If it is universally true that all human knowing is influenced by the standpoint of the knower, then we can attain at least one transcultural truth!¹⁰

The fact that all interpreters' perspectives of nature are culturally influenced by changing historical situations, nevertheless, does not mean that we know nothing but our changing perspectives. Because reporters put a slant on the news does not mean that nothing happened which is distinct from their slants or that we can reduce all-knowing merely to slanted opinions. Some reporters are better informed than others about what happened in another part of our world. Humans as divine image-bearers have conceptual criteria for testing truth claims and critical methods of knowing that enable discerning people to sift more reliable from less adequate interpretations.

Historian H. Richard Niebuhr's works are properly concerned about the dangers of absolutizing the relative in history and in religion. But Niebuhr argues that his confessional faith makes 'reasonable sense of human life and thought' in terms of values, rather than a rational demonstration. That claim, however, appeals to some objective, non-confessional meaning of what is *reasonable* and of *value*. To the

extent that Niebuhr manages to avoid subjectivism and religious scepticism he inconsistently appeals to universal principles of logic, evidence, and value. Holding that all human understanding is language-dependent and socially determinate, he fails to explain how relative viewpoints are confirmed or changed and how different speech communities with different confessional faiths can communicate with one another.¹¹

Unless Niebuhr can recognize basic common categories of thought and being in the world and in persons created to know and love God, to know and love each other and to rule the world, he lacks a basis for cross-cultural communication and progress in thought among different communities of people. *If God created the earth and image-bearers to know it, to rule it, and to relate to one another under God*, changeable and sinful though we are, we are not left to solipsistic relativisms or totally time-bound contextualizations.

When judgmentally scrambling human languages at Babel, God did not destroy the basic common categories of thought or values necessary to meaningful human existence on earth. Since Babel cross-cultural communication is more difficult, but not impossible. Even though fallen and judged, God's image-bearers from East and West discover similarities in human moral and intellectual capacities and categories.

Linguist Eugene Nida has explained that although absolute communication

¹⁰ Gordon Lewis, 'Relativism', *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 926–930.

¹¹ See my 'The Niebuhr's Relativism, Relationalism, Contextualization, and Revelation', *Challenges to Inerrancy: A Theological Response*, ed. Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest (Chicago: Moody Press, 1984), 155–156.

is not possible, effective communication is possible between persons of different cultures. He offers three reasons for this: '(1) the processes of human reasoning are essentially the same, irrespective of cultural diversity; (2) all people have a common range of experience, and (3) all peoples possess the capacity for at least some adjustment to the symbolic "grids" of others.'¹² Across whatever languages may be in use in any context, human reasoning from experience is essentially the same and our 'grids' are compatible because of *divinely revealed transcultural categories and standards of truth and morality*. These thought forms and norms make worthwhile the efforts at cross-cultural personal relationships and make meaningful cross-cultural communication and confirmation of truth claims.

If universally humans are accountable to the same Creator and Sustainer for ethical norms (like justice) in their relationships with each other, we must be able to know some 'oughts' in spite of our finiteness, fallenness, and our cultural and linguistic diversities. Inwardly known moral laws, like the outwardly written law of Moses, make human life and cross-cultural respect and communication possible. The requirements of God's moral demands are reflected in the behaviour of those who did not have Moses' formulation (Rom 2:14, 15).

All non-Jews of any and every culture (Gentiles) in concrete situations encounter the demands of the law within. As self-conscious persons, pa-

gans were wise critically to evaluate their own conduct by standards (not essentially different from the commandments of Moses). Because of the internal analogue of moral laws making claims upon them, the biblically uninformed cannot escape divine judgment.¹³ If God universally and always reveals basic moral values as Scripture and experience indicate, then, contrary to Willard Van Orman Quine, all moral values do not differ with the language in use and cannot be reduced to discrete behavioural dispositions.¹⁴

If what Paul teaches is true, people everywhere independent of Moses' ten commandments know that they ought to value their Creator above all and worship the Logos as distinct from any creature. Furthermore they know they ought not to murder, steal, commit adultery, or bear false witness against one another, but to respect others' God-given inherent rights. Although this truth may be suppressed, it remains a basis of accountability for all persons in all cultures.

Before communicating claims concerning Christ as Saviour to people of other philosophies, religions, or cults, ordinarily we need to establish meaningful relationships and help people realize their moral need for the gospel of grace. The conditions necessary to meaningful experience within and

¹³ See Ernst Kasemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 63–65.

¹⁴ See 'Quine, Willard Van Orman', *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion Eastern and Western Thought*, W.L. Reese (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities, 1980), 474–75; C.F. Presley, 'Quine, Willard Van Orman', *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 53–55.

¹² Eugene Nida, *Message and Mission* (New York: Harper, 1960), 90.

across cultures do not compromise the distinctiveness of the gospel message. They reveal our sinfulness and demonstrate our need for mercy and grace provided by the Messiah's atonement.

But the question persists. How? How does general revelation make cross-cultural communication possible? Answers to 'how' questions are notoriously difficult, and mechanical, biological or physical explanations will not be forthcoming. Rather, I suggest a theological explanation. *The Logos who created everything illumines the darkness of our fallenness whenever humans learn truth about a matter of fact or a principle of morality (John 1:3-5). Having implanted in all humans capacities for knowing conditions that make any meaningful relationships possible, God also illumines all people to these standards, making understanding and communication possible within or across differences of age, race, sex, world-view, or cultural expression.*

In addition to a general revelation, depraved sinners need and receive a general illumination to attain any changeless truths about what happens once-for-all or uniformly under given conditions. Hence in Augustinian fashion, teachers in the final analysis are mere occasions for the teaching of the divine *Magistro*. And knowledge learned from the divine Teacher is God's truth wherever it may be found.¹⁵ So, if all humans are dependent on God and accountable to one God, some globally normative truth is possible

II An Analysis of Experience Confirms Universal Norms

If our Creator has implanted some mental categories and moral standards in our natures, Edward John Carnell reasoned, we should be able to discover them in our experience and make use of them in our cross-philosophical communication. Carnell sought to discover divinely given principles by an analysis. *Analysis* is not inductive or deductive inference from experience to something outside it. Neither is analysis simply a phenomenological description of culturally influenced experiences. Analysis is a reflective discrimination of the various elements already present in our relationships with other people which make distinctively human life meaningful. It is our own unique experience that we analyse. And we simply ask, 'What, if anything, makes human experience meaningful?'¹⁶

Are moral values too emotively explosive for productive cognitive evaluation across radically different philosophical preunderstandings or long-standing cultural traditions? Is it possible to consider with a high degree of philosophical fairness and objectivity issues with such deep, polarizing loyalties? Can we find a basis for meaningful relationships, dialogue, and evaluation? Difficult as it may be, an analysis of meaningful relationships between persons of different religious cultures and world views disclose several non-negotiable values best ac-

¹⁵ On general illumination see my 'Faith and Reason in the Thought of St. Augustine', (Syracuse University: Unpublished Dissertation, 1959) 25-54.

¹⁶ Edward John Carnell, *Christian Commitment* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), 44-46. For a condensation and discussion see also G.R. Lewis, *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims* (Chicago: Moody, 1976), 176-284.

counted for as given by the Logos who illumines the darkness of all.

1. Universal intrinsic human rights

Universally people's *intrinsic human rights* ought to be respected. Whenever we walk in a park and meet other human beings, we find ourselves under obligations greater than those of either things or animals. In relationships with persons, however different from us, we are obligated to respect their rights to life and liberty. If injured we ought not to take advantage of them, but to help them. If starving we ought to feed them, if hurting we ought to assist them. If Jews and Arabs, for example, are to communicate with each other harmoniously, they must respect each other's rights to exist. Similarly, if Christians are to communicate with non-Christians effectively, Christians must respect their human rights.

The confirmation of this analysis of human relations can be observed in relationships between humans of radically different political loyalties at the United Nations. Participation in the United Nations requires assent to its International Bill of Human Rights.¹⁷ An analysis of the basic recognition of the inherent value of human life regardless of political or religious differences is necessary for communication between people of the East and West, North and South. With tolerance for the inherent value and rights of those with whom we differ culturally and philosophically, meaningful communication

becomes possible. Total relativism, relationalism, and contextualization cannot account for the universality and the necessity of the obligation under which all human beings find themselves to respect the rights of all other persons. And on the basis of that oughtness we do find cross-cultural communication taking place at the Olympics and, however painfully, at the United Nations.

As empirical evidence of the correctness of this analysis, on December 10, 1948, the United Nations adopted its Universal Bill of Human Rights. An analysis finds that a *sine qua non* of meaningful human experience and communication cross-culturally is respect for the inalienable rights of persons, however differently interpreted in Marxist lands. The impact of this universal truth was perhaps a key factor in Russian *glasnost* and *perestroika*. And Chinese young people gave their lives for it in Tiananmen Square.

The most adequate explanation of the universal recognition that we *ought* to respect others is a universal divine revelation of moral law. God gave the negatives of the moral law to protect human rights. Because all humans of diverse cultures are my image-bearers you shall not murder, violate, or steal from them. All in God's likeness have a right to life, spouse, possessions, and religion. All also have a right to hear the way to eternal life and the gift of Christ's perfect righteousness.

How does general revelation make cross-cultural communication possible? It grounds the rights of the Christian and the pre-Christian, not in individual or collective achievements, but in the very constitution of our being as made in God's image and sustained by God. No earthly culture or authority

¹⁷ Reproduced by Allen O. Miller, *A Christian Declaration on Human Rights*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), Appendix 159-182.

can legitimately deny or suspend the intrinsic rights of a person to freedom in life, thought and religion. Universal and necessary moral principles come from above, they are not derived by inductive polls of human opinion. A moral law implanted in every human heart demands respect for the rights of all other human beings. That law may be violated, suppressed, and held down in unrighteousness, but those who disregard it remain inexcusable (Rom 1:20).

2. Universal demand for justice

Universally people can communicate because all appeal to *the demand for justice*. All know that they ought not treat others unjustly or unfairly. The universality and necessity of the obligation to just thought and conduct can best be explained as a product of universal revelation from above. Satanists and others may deliberately suppress this inner sense of obligation to the right versus the wrong and reverse it. But in doing so they disclose the depths of their sinful distortion. Nevertheless, *no one desires to be treated unjustly* whether by another person, a gang, a tribe, a government or a religion. The right of all men and women to equality of concern and respect, Dworkin argues, is not derived from social status, merit, or national citizenship.

The right is intrinsic to humanness.¹⁸ All desire to be treated fairly even beyond the realm of their country and its social contract. Prophets speak up against the mores of their cultures. Comparative judgments about better

or worse societies reflect universal norms. Social justice is judged ultimately, not by varying national cultural traditions, but by universal, normative criteria. These would include not only that we ought always to respect others' rights and dignity as persons, but also to say in word and deed what we intend in meaning.

When teaching and living in central India my wife and I and our tall fourteen-year-old son—all obviously from the USA—were distinct curiosities in a city not frequented by tourists. Although at the time the government of India was displeased with the U.S. government and suspicious of even American missionaries as 'spies', our freedom depended on a universal sense of justice from a population overwhelmingly Hindu, Muslim, and Buddhist. When any country unjustly deprives foreigners or citizens of their inherent rights, they incur greater guilt before the divine Judge of all the earth who does right.

Contrary to Charles Manson's reasoning, as influenced by monism, a vast difference remains between helping a person and murdering her (Sharon Tate). Violations of the rights to life and liberty ought never to take place. The outcries of the victims of mass murders in any culture assume a universal and necessary norm of justice. The former dominance of the Nazi power did not make discrimination against the Jewish people in the Holocaust excusable.

In the name of 'law and order' it is always wrong everywhere for 'the haves' to oppress and exploit 'the have-nots'. It is also unjust everywhere and always for the have-nots to become accuser, judge, jury, and executioner

¹⁸ See Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 182.

in personal vengeance against those who wrong them, even in the name of 'liberation'. Violations of the norms of universal revelation resulted in guilt before their Source for the Canaanite nations whose land became that of the Jews and for the Jewish people when they committed the same types of offences and were taken captive.

Talk about justice is cheap if no universal Administrator of justice exists. Personally we cannot take vengeance and are not free to administer proper penalties. Societies and court systems do not always achieve a just resolution. And societies and courts themselves need at times to have justice administered to them. But in every culture, for meaningful human life and communication, justice is non-negotiable. The most adequate explanation of this remarkable agreement in the midst of a host of relative differences is that God has imprinted this sense of obligation on the hearts of all persons in high places and low. The human heart longs for the restoration of the just peace lost in the Fall.¹⁹

In any culture or *weltanschauung* parents are responsible to educate their children morally. Why can children eventually be asked to do right, not simply for rewards, pragmatic advantage, conventional approval, law and order considerations, or a social contract made for them by others? How can Kohlberg expect us to teach our children to act morally in terms of universal ethical principles? In an age of relativism we can teach children to make judgments on universal moral

norms because God has implanted this capacity in their hearts. Beyond legalism, we can invite our children to obey these principles as motivated by love for their divine Source. However suppressed or rejected, universal principles distinguishing the just from the unjust can be discovered. God's negative commandments in their affirmative import protect each human's right to life, spouse and possessions in any contextual situation.

3. Universal need for mercy

Universally, furthermore, all people fail to live up to the standards of justice and need *mercy*, the withholding of deserved penalties and *grace*, the loving bestowal of undeserved benefits. General revelation, like Moses' law, is a school master to help fallen people realize their need for mercy and grace. It prepares fallen people to seek mercy and grace from their Creator. And when the missionaries arrive, sensitive persons have often been found, like Cornelius, prepared for the gospel of a merciful pardon from all guilt and the gracious imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness.

When visiting mission fields in ten different nations travelling to and from India, I found that people in cultures as different as those in Athens, Jerusalem, Calcutta, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Taipei, Manila, and Tokyo wanted love. Wherever love is wanting all else is inconsequential. It is no accident that love is the highest of human values. It makes all else worthwhile. Love is the fulfilling of the law, not only the law written on stone, but the law written on our hearts.

Again, it is difficult to explain the

¹⁹ For a development of the relationship of missions to justice see Waldron Scott, *Bring Forth Justice* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

universality of the value humans put on faithful love apart from our Sustainer's universal communication that above all else God wants our love, and he wants his image-bearers to love one another. He made us also to need people, merciful people, loving people, faithful people. Believers in a Creator who has made known his existence, power and moral values universally have a basis for faith in meaningful relationships cross-culturally because of these universal values revealed in our hearts by common grace.

4. Universal humility and integrity

For meaningful human relationships and cross-cultural communication people from the varied cultures need *humility* before relevant givens in reality and the *integrity* to report the data with *intellectual honesty*. That is, if a missionary's or a pre-Christian's view of an event or matter of fact should be inadequate, we may need openness to assess new evidence and/or willingness to accept a more adequate interpretation.

The value of intellectual openness and honesty is important in so simple a communication as seeking directions to a place in a strange land, reporting the causes of an airline disaster to the world press, or describing the situation in an area of the world involved in revolution. We know from the requirements of the law written on our hearts not only that we should not bear false witness, but that the theories we propose for acceptance should fit the relevant, given data.

Our knowledge is not limited to experiential reactions entirely divorced

from the givens themselves (phenomenalism). Ben Kimpel argues, 'A distinction must be made between knowledge which consists of interpretations and knowledge which is exclusively of interpretations.'²⁰ Some interpretations, furthermore, are better informed than others. The determination of which are the more reliable interpretations can be decided only by referring again and again to the given data. As Kimpel reasoned, 'Neither Immanuel Kant, nor anyone else has made it fully clear that our knowledge is only of interpretations and not of reality itself.'²¹

Washington columnist James Reston reported that when Stalin's purges were in full swing a resident news correspondent in Moscow was asked by a wide-eyed visiting leftist how far the court proceedings could be believed: 'Everything was true', he replied, 'except the facts'.²²

In spite of all the subjective differences influenced by childhood experiences (Freud), economic status (Marx), educational communities (Dewey), historical standpoints (H.R. Niebuhr), non-rational impulses (Reinhold Niebuhr), and cultural contexts (Kraft), people do critically examine data and determine some truth about events, crimes and nature's laws. On this basis our diagnoses of actual problems in the *status quo* in societies, schools, and churches need not be imaginary predicaments.

The *ought* of our social concern cannot be understood without a grasp of

²⁰ Ben F. Kimpel, *Language and Religion* (NY: Philosophical Library, 1957), 39.

²¹ Kimpel, *Language and Religion*, 39.

²² *New York Times* (January 30, 1980).

the *is* of actual human existence. Lasting justice will not be built on false witnesses or half-truths. Responsible policy for liberation of the poor does not grow out of irresponsible analysis. With the help of criteria of truth as checks and balances, and a critical method for confirming or disconfirming hypotheses people can overcome sinful biases and achieve a high degree of probability for critically determined conclusions. The attainment of truth in matters of fact is not easy, but its value is worth the painstaking effort. Unless one's knowledge in some respect conforms to reality, it misleads in relationships to others and to God who knows what is the case.

How to choose among the changing paradigms in rapidly developing sciences? Kuhn wrote, 'As in political revolutions, so in paradigm choice—there is no standard higher than the assent of the relevant community.'²³ Apparently Kuhn and his followers do not see the contradiction in speaking of the 'structure' of scientific revolutions since a structure transcends the events. As Stanley I. Jaki pointed out, Kuhn failed to ask, 'What must nature, including man, be like in order that science be possible at all?' or 'What must the world be like in order that man may know it?'²⁴

5. Universal communication

In meaningful human relationships persons from varied cultures must communicate in ways that others can follow. For meaningful communication to take place within or across cultures people need to express themselves *without self-contradiction*. If what is affirmed is also denied at the same time and in the same respect, nothing remains for the receptor to receive. For lasting meaningful relationships settlers of the Americas ought not to contradict their promises to the Indians already living in the land. Neither men nor women ought to contradict the spirit or the wording of their marriage or other vows.

The givenness of the law of non-contradiction in general revelation is indicated by the fact that one cannot argue against it without assuming its validity. The recognition of the error of self-contradiction by children at very young ages and people of differing cultures everywhere can most coherently be accounted for as a product of general revelation. *God is faithful; his judgments and words are faithful*. Similarly, we know that the judgments and words of God's image-bearers ought to be *without hypocrisy and without self-contradiction*. The Creator who cannot deny himself creates us to communicate with himself and with others created in his image.

Integrity in thought and communication is as important as integrity in action. Non-contradiction is the norm of integrity in thought and word. Although some Eastern writers advocate abandoning the law, what is communicable in their writings adheres to it. Hinduism may be presented as embracing all contradictory positions,

²³ Thomas Samuel Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 93.

²⁴ Stanley I. Jaki, *The Road of Science and the Ways to God* (Chicago: Chicago University, 1978), 239.

but when one suggests the contradictory of the basic tenets of Hinduism, a Hindu monist suddenly uses the law of logic. Hindu monists do not admit the contradictory of 'all is Brahman' or of 'all that we observe is maya'. On the unquestioned authority of the guru's affirmation of monism we are expected to deny the contradictories: a dualism of Creator and creature and the reality of the observable world.

Intellectual truth and personal faithfulness, although often divorced in our experience, are closely related in Scripture. Intellectually, truth is a quality of propositions that conform to reality. Existentially, faithfulness is a quality of persons who conform to universally revealed norms of what is and what ought to be. The hypocrisy so castigated by the existentialists is inconsistency of life with what is professed. Jesus faithfully taught the truth conceptually; he authentically lived the truth existentially. Hence he is the way, both in thought and life.

If the central claims of Christianity are true, then it follows that the incompatible claims made by other religious and philosophical writers are false. Harold Netland, a missionary to Japan, has effectively shown that the exclusivism of Christianity's claims is not different in kind from other logical claims to truth.²⁵ All of the teachings of other religions are not false, only those that contradict teachings validly derived from soundly interpreted Scripture. Humility and respect should characterize our interaction with those of other faiths. But it is a serious mis-

understanding to presume that humility and respect demand glossing over the question of truth.

The universal presence of such personal, moral, relational, and intellectual standards enables people in a pluralistic world to overcome total relativism and have more than mere opinions, fleeting images, or passing models of thought. Granted that God has implanted within us moral, factual and logical values, people everywhere can live, learn, and relate with increasingly well-informed, correctable opinions for which they are accountable to one another and God. On the basis of such non-negotiable absolutes as these we can account for the success of communication, time-consuming and difficult though it may be, across different presuppositions of diverse cultures, philosophies, and religions.

The God-given inner demands for personal integrity and intellectual honesty provide the bases on which Marvin K. Mayers can expect cross-cultural communicators to begin by developing a trust bond in mutual respect. At the end of each of the fine chapters in *Christianity Confronts Culture*, Mayers provides helpful biblical illustrations of mutual respect and personal trust.²⁶ But the possibility of success is there for the missionaries in these biblical examples because of the moral and epistemological laws essential to meaningful human relationships with God and one another.

How is it that people from cultures all over the world at the United Nations have the potential to develop in

²⁵ Harold Netland, 'Exclusivism, Tolerance and Truth', *Missiology* 15:2 (April 1987), 77-95.

²⁶ Marvin K. Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, Revised, 1987), 5-73.

respecting one another's rights? Demanding justice? Caring about others? Conforming to reality? Representing states of affairs faithfully (without self-contradiction)? Capacities for the eternal are in their hearts! God has created the inner person with these moral and noetic values in his image.

6. The best explanation of values

Summing up, general revelation provides the most adequate explanation of values essential to meaningful human relationships and communication. Like the source of this revelation to all, all effective communicators should be pro-life in the broadest sense. All need justice, mercy, grace and love, knowledge of given data, and logical consistency in reference to their lives.²⁷

General revelation explains the dependence, obligation, and guilt of all people and cultures. By making clear our sinful disrespect of others, injustices to others, lack of love for others, misrepresentation of our neighbours and inconsistencies, general revelation points up our need. Like Moses' outward expression of God's law, this inner expression prepares us for the missionary who comes with the salvation of Christ. The *telos* of the law in either case is Christ.

III Does General Revelation Supply 'Redemptive Analogies?'

With all the values of general revelation for theism and moral norms, we have found no evidence in it of God's plan of redemption through the incarnate Logos or his sacrificial death and resurrection. General revelation prepares people for the good news of special revelation. Can we find in nature and history analogies of the Messiah's redemption?

Don Richardson has popularized the view that general revelation provides 'redemptive analogies'. As he says, instances from ordinary history may serve as 'eye-openers' for some aspects of redemptive revelation when people first hear the gospel of Christ illumined by the special calling of the Holy Spirit. Analogies from history do not communicate the gospel before it comes via special revelation. Neither biblical nor experiential evidence indicates that general revelation redeems, regenerates, or reconciles to God. The people missionaries have found already prepared to receive Christ, do in fact receive him and mark their salvation from the time of their commitment to Christ. Cornelius was redeemed when he received the gospel.

Paul's approach to the Athenians utilizes points of contact from Stoic thought for theism but not for the gospel of Christ. Paul quotes a Stoic poet when he affirms our common Creator of all humans, but not when he reports the resurrection of the crucified Christ. The Lord of all is, of course, the Lord of the plague and the unknown God the Athenians should have sought. An element of truth is found in the Stoic pan-

²⁷ Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 1:82-90.

theistic writer, that God is immanent and actively sustaining life on earth. But the Stoic poet is not therefore a sinner who, as Don Richardson said, 'reached out and found' God redemptively.²⁸ Rather, Paul commanded all everywhere to repent for not worshipping and serving God more than the creation.

General revelation logically and temporally precedes special revelation, as Don Richardson agrees. But Richardson's designation of general revelation as 'the *Melchizedek* factor' prior to Abraham confuses general and special revelation. Melchizedek, Richardson says, stands as 'a figurehead or type of God's general revelation to mankind'.²⁹ To follow Richardson and most critics in taking Melchizedek as a Canaanite priest, Bruce Waltke argues, 'presupposes that Scripture is deceptive and that man's historical reconstructions are more trustworthy than the inspired Word of God'.³⁰

Melchizedek, 'like the Son of God', had no pedigree recorded in Scripture (Heb 7:3). Most likely he is a human specially called prior to the Abrahamic covenant and so is a type of Jesus Christ. Since the Messiah is the supreme instance of special revelation, it seems out of character to take him as a type of general revelation. The author of Hebrews demonstrates that he is a type of Christ, for both are a king of righteousness, and of peace, and both are without descent and abide as priests continually (Heb 7:1-3). The

fact that Melchizedek was greater than Abraham as indicated by his receiving Abraham's tithes, also indicates that he had more than general revelation (vv 4-10). Apart from Melchizedek, Richardson could speak of the general revelation factor preceding special revelation.

Richardson has well pointed out that in any culture we need to distinguish the intermingled factors of good and evil. We need to respond to elements of revealed truth about God and about morality already there and reject the evil factors resulting from rebellion against it, such as Richardson's occult or Sodom factor.³¹

Also in agreement with Richardson against some of his critics, we need not jump to the conclusion that general revelation in any way threatens the uniqueness of the Bible as God's only inspired, written revelation.³² Beliefs in folk religions paralleling those in Scripture need not be discredited as distortions or Satanic counterfeits in so far as they portray the content of theism and morality. Any non-Christian parallels to the redemptive plans of God, however may be traced to some influence of the Bible or people who have accepted its special revelation.

In agreement with Richardson, furthermore, the misinterpretations of some missionaries (calling Jesus the tenth incarnation of Vishnu!) need not keep us from finding some similarities that help in communicating the message of Christ once-for-all.

Richardson says that his references to redemptive analogies do not mean

²⁸ Don Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1981), 22-23.

²⁹ Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts*, 31.

³⁰ Bruce Waltke, 'Melchizedek', *ZPEB* 4:177.

³¹ Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts*, 33.

³² Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts*, 52.

redeeming, i.e., that people could find relationship with God through their own lore apart from the gospel. By 'redemptive' he means, 'contributing to the redemption of a people, but not culminating it'.³³ So there may be 'God-fearers' in the midst of otherwise pagan people.³⁴ But Richardson's use of 'the Melchizedek factor' goes further than this and tends to confuse general revelation and illumination with the specially revealed redemptive message.

Conclusions

In cross-cultural communication of the faith Christians can capitalize upon the points of contact provided by general revelation, but should not consider the gaining of agreements on theism and morality sufficient for salvation. Having attained some metaphysical, moral, and epistemological common ground, Christians ought by all means and analogies to communicate the good news of the Logos who came to save those who in fact do not live up to the truth they know.

Both transcultural absolutes and their culture-specific applications have crucial contributions to make in both the East and the West. Some philosophers emphasize the objective validity of Christianity's transcultural truth claims. And some missiologists seem to be more concerned with the culture-specific adaptations or applications of Christian truth. The objective validity of Christianity's truth-claims is neither Western nor Eastern, but human. Gen-

eral revelation utilizes the capacities that all humans as divine image-bearers have for recognizing objectively valid truths about God's existence, power, and moral values and supplies the criteria for testing claims to special revelation.

Culturally specific missiology may tend to focus on communicative functions more than communicated content. Philosophers and theologians are generally more concerned with issues of communicated content than the process. Both contributions are needed for the sake of cross-cultural communication. We need not limit ourselves to dynamic equivalents, but on the above analysis of general revelation our cross-cultural communication can also achieve conceptual equivalents.

More cross-disciplinary communication would help to develop a more adequate view of the objective validity of truth and value claims and a more effective communication of them to specific peoples. Yet, if this article has some validity, then one cannot follow postmodernism's denial of epistemological '*foundationalism*' without explicitly contradicting the Creator's universally revealed basis for cross-cultural communication and moral accountability.

The issues of missiological contextualization are not radically different from those of philosophical relativism. Philosophers have been struggling for years with the issues of persuading others with radically different presuppositions, categories, and methods of reasoning. The history of philosophy is the history of attempts at communication across radically different world views and radically different values.

As philosophers attempt to commu-

33 Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts*, 59.

34 Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts*, 107.

nicate across different *weltanschauungs* they can learn something from the history of missions that exhibits the attempts to communicate with people of different contextualized interpretations of experience in different cul-

tural expressions of these world views. Philosophers and theologians do well to listen to missiologists and missiologists may profit from listening afresh to philosophically perceptive theologians.

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‘Moving beyond’ Scripture to theology—Towards a ‘Mere Evangelical’ Account

Michael Borowski

I find myself at a decisive point—*after* witnessing significant damage within the German evangelical community and *before* starting doctoral studies. Although these seem to be rather diverse categories for locating oneself, they both share the topic of this essay: theological method. For it is theological method (or maybe more the lack thereof) that I hold personally responsible for a good portion of the calamity I sense within German evangelicalism in particular, and more broadly in evangelicalism as a whole.

While I have not personally suffered these calamities too much myself, too often I find the state of evangelical churches to be frustrating. One way of describing the cause of such frustration is to refer to the state of doctrine: it seems to me that doctrine was first overemphasized (middle of the twentieth century), then ignored (end of the twentieth century), and today we have to deal with churches consisting of individuals who on the one hand have no theological training, but who, on the

other hand, make strong *theological* claims. How does one live in a community that consists of such individuals? With frustration, I guess, and with the hope that not too many calamities result from it.

In view of all this, I have come to believe that evangelical theology in general must catch up in various ways, particularly in the area of theological method. In his *Theological Method—A Guide for the Perplexed*, Paul Allen identifies five key issues of theological method, which he addresses under the following headings: philosophy (for instance, the relationship between theology and philosophy), criteria (most importantly the determination of valid criteria to make theological claims in the first place), sources (the Bible, experience, tradition and reason), ontology (seeking to answer the question of what the nature of the theological task is) and procedure (for instance, answering the question of which procedure actually follows from a given

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theological method).¹

It may be granted that theological method is a rather unpopular field within theology, and Allen readily identifies a number of reasons for this. For some, theological method would be too far removed from the content of theology (which they would consider to be of higher importance). For others, theological method would be too philosophical (and less ‘divine’, somehow), or simply boring.² At the same time, Allen argues that reflection on theological method since the middle of the twentieth century has not yet yielded satisfying results.³

Similarly, but with an explicitly evangelical perspective in mind, Allister McGrath has addressed the quest for a proper theological method by pointing to the theological approaches of Wayne Grudem and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, both of whom professors at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois back in 2000. Grudem was well known for his *Systematic Theology*,⁴ while Vanhoozer was recognized for his studies in hermeneutics and the ‘meaning of meaning’.⁵

McGrath drew attention to some issues with the theological approach of Grudem, especially claiming that

Grudem’s *Systematic* treated biblical passages ‘as timeless and culture-free statements that can be assembled to yield a timeless and culture-free theology that stands over and above the shifting sands of our postmodern culture.’⁶ Vanhoozer, on the other hand, proposed a different approach to theology, focussing on communication, hermeneutics, prolegomena, and doctrine.

Now, for almost two decades Grudem has produced more systematic works that seem to be aiming for application both in church and society, while Vanhoozer has pursued studies on the foundations of mere evangelical theology as such.⁷ While I am certain that both Grudem and Vanhoozer share the same ultimate goals with their work, I believe that they exemplify different approaches to theological method.

So in the *first* section of this paper I will interact with Grudem’s work to analyse the theological method he demonstrates. I will conclude that his work seems to be carried out under a specific assumption and with a specific method. I will conclude further that both the assumption and the method are valuable, yet not without danger. Ultimately, I will conclude that there is a case to be made for further reflection on theological method.

In my *second* section, I will survey Vanhoozer’s work regarding the development of doctrine as a case of theological reflection, with the aim of laying a foundation for further studies

1 Paul L. Allen, *Theological Method—A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), 4.

2 Allen, *Theological Method*, 1.

3 Allen, *Theological Method*, 1-2.

4 Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology—An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000).

5 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is there a meaning in the text?—The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

6 Allister McGrath, ‘Evangelical Theological Method—The State of the Art’, in *Evangelical Futures—A Conversation on Theological Method* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 30.

7 I will address some examples in the course of this essay.

in theological method in general, and hence the development of (evangelical) doctrine.⁸

I The Case for Theological Reflection

In this section, I present an analysis of Grudem's theological method and praxis. I deliberately say 'an' analysis, since I do not claim that this analysis is complete regarding everything that should be said. However, I believe that this analysis proves the claim that informs the following section (ie, the survey on a case of theological reflection), which is that evangelicals need to invest more into their theological method.

1. On Grudem's theological method

Grudem's flagship volume, *Systematic Theology—An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, has now been in print for over two decades. It is, I believe, among the most popular introductions to theology in the evangelical realm. Beyond the US, it is in use in many countries around the globe.⁹ There are also courses available based on it, among them audio- and video-format. Now, as any other popular textbook, Grudem's *Systematic* has a foundational impact on the shaping of the evangelical community—pastors, teachers and laypeo-

ple start to think theologically, in this case, within a rather reformed framework. However, my concern here is not Grudem's explicit positions like the trinity, or election, but rather the less obvious theological method which he exemplifies throughout his work.

With John Frame, Grudem holds that systematic theology is 'any study that answers the question, "What does the whole Bible teach us today?" about any given topic.'¹⁰ Grudem goes on to claim that this 'definition indicates that systematic theology involves collecting and understanding all the relevant passages in the Bible on various topics and then summarizing their teachings clearly so that we know what to believe about each topic.'¹¹ I think it is safe to say that this very definition already represents Grudem's first principle of theology.

However, Grudem goes on to address the issue of theological method in this introductory chapter (he always never applies the term, but rather asks 'how then should we study systematic theology?').¹² Grudem names six methodological items: prayer, humility, reason, the help of others, by collecting and understanding all the relevant passages of Scripture on any topic, and praise.¹³

Now, while I do believe that Grudem applies all his six items in his own work, it appears to me that 'collecting and understanding all the relevant passages of Scripture on any topic' is the most traceable, and therefore the most

⁸ For now, I am using the terms 'development of doctrine' and 'moving beyond' (i.e., moving beyond Scripture to theology) interchangeably.

⁹ In fact, Grudem's *Systematic Theology* has recently been translated into German and is, for instance, the standard textbook also at the Martin Bucer Seminary, where I myself teach.

¹⁰ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 21.

¹¹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 21.

¹² Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 32.

¹³ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 32-37.

formative tool throughout his work. This becomes evident in the first part of *Systematic Theology*, where Grudem outlines the doctrine of the word of God. Here he surveys ‘four characteristics of Scripture’, of which the second and fourth are of importance for my argument.

The second characteristic of Scripture is clarity: Can only Bible scholars understand the Bible rightly? Grudem offers this definition: ‘The clarity of Scripture means that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it’¹⁴ Grudem has addressed the clarity of Scripture more recently by referring back to the time when he wrote his *Systematic Theology*:¹⁵ Despite the critique of some evangelical scholars, who would think that one needs much more research in commentaries, historical theology and so forth, he concluded

that to do such original research thoroughly for all the topics in theology would take several lifetimes. And yet I did not believe that God would require several lifetimes of work just to learn or to teach what he wanted us to believe.¹⁶

It seems, then, that Grudem gives the reason for what I termed his ‘first principle’ above: his approach of systematizing passages of scripture is *possible* for the individual.

The fourth and final characteristic of Scripture then is its sufficiency: Is the Bible enough for knowing what God wants us to think or do? Here Grudem states:

The sufficiency of Scripture means that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.¹⁷

In this chapter, there are two following sections, both identified with a ‘proposition’.

Proposition (1) reads: ‘We can find all that God has said on particular topics, and we can find answers to our questions.’¹⁸ The claim here not only seems to be ontological (i.e., that Scripture would provide all the answers), but also explicitly pragmatic (i.e., Christians can focus on Scripture and collect all relevant passages *rather than on all writings of Christianity*).¹⁹

Proposition (2) reads: ‘The Amount of Scripture given was sufficient at each stage of redemptive History.’²⁰ As with the first proposition, the claim here is pragmatic: At a given time in history, the individual had the means to know what he or she had to know. And again, the argument for Grudem’s reasoning for his method is that it is possible for an individual.

Overall, a central underlying assumption is that theology is developed from God’s *communication* for human’s

¹⁴ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 108.

¹⁵ Grudem had prepared the paper for the John Wenham Lecture in 2009 (Cambridge, England).

¹⁶ Wayne Grudem, ‘The Perspicuity of Scripture’, in *Themelios*, 34 no 3 Nov 2009, 290.

¹⁷ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 127.

¹⁸ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 128.

¹⁹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 128.

²⁰ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 129.

application. Now, it is hard to take issue with this assumption. However, it is also not true that Grudem's actual work is inherently reductionist as some have claimed, because he does, for instance, apply other elements in his theological enterprise—elements such as reason, tradition, experience at times. The problem seems to be, however, that he does not make the overall process *transparent*.

However, in the next subsection I will show that this is not only a problem for the student who might conclude that turning to Scripture is basically everything Grudem does, but that a lack of transparency is at times also a problem for Grudem's theological praxis in itself.

2. On Grudem's theological praxis

a) Example 1: Theology proper

My first example of Grudem's theological praxis comes also from his *Systematic Theology*, of which the second part is dedicated to theology proper. Here in the first chapter Grudem addresses the issue of the existence of God: how do we know that God exists?

There are three major sections: humanity's inner sense of God, believing the evidence in Scripture and nature, and then the traditional 'proofs' for the existence of God. One must recognize, however, that there is no biblical reasoning for these very headings that Grudem develops. That is a real problem, since it is Grudem's outline that eventually determines the train of thought, not the passages of Scripture to which he refers. I found that John D. Morrison had pointed out this problem earlier, when commenting on Grudem's

work on theology proper, and in particular with regard to the Trinity.

Morrison explained that Grudem's expressed method is, again, to go directly to relevant texts and to then summarize 'the clear biblical teaching on the Trinity'. But does Scripture make direct statements concerning the Trinity as classically formulated? Scripture is explicitly handled by Grudem as though a Trinitarian doctrinal summary comes immediately off the surface of Scripture and not also through the soteriological-hermeneutical conceptualization as created (properly, I believe) by the history of interpretation. But implicitly Grudem assumes Nicaea in all scriptural summaries and only then alludes to theological controversies in order to show what to avoid.²¹

Grudem is said to be applying historical concepts as an *a priori* framework of interpretation. This procedure would not represent a problem if done properly, but Grudem's claim on his theological method does not address this issue. One could argue that a lack of transparency is due to the fact that *Systematic Theology* is an introduction. Even then I would see the danger of using a problematic example regarding the applied theological method.

b) Example 2: Gender

However, I would like to turn to a second example for Grudem's theological praxis, which I find in his *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*. The first two chapters are foundational for the approach of the entire 850-page book.

²¹ John D. Morrison, 'Trinity and Church: An Examination of Theological Methodology', in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 40 no 3 Sep 1997, 449.

In the first chapter, Grudem argues for his ‘Biblical Vision of Manhood and Womanhood as created by God’: man and women are equal in value and dignity, but would have different roles (as is the case in the Trinity). Chapter two addresses the ‘Biblical Vision of Manhood and Womanhood in the Church’. Here Grudem develops the themes of chapter 1 more for the context of the church. He concludes that there are roles in a church that are clearly forbidden by Scripture, yet there are roles that are clearly permitted. Grudem then proposes a spectrum ranging from what is clearly forbidden to what is clearly allowed, arguing it needs ‘wisdom’ to determine, which roles along the spectrum would be permitted in a given situation.

It is clear then, that Grudem sees the need for ‘moving beyond’ Scripture, and that ‘wisdom’ is the proper tool for such a move. Yet how this move *via wisdom* is to be made is not explicated. Furthermore, it appears to me that the very spectrum Grudem proposes could be challenged once it comes to theological method.²²

c) Example 3: Politics

As a third and final example I refer to some of the reviews of Grudem’s more recent book, *Politics According to the Bible*. Here Grudem lays out what he understands to be basic principles of scripture regarding politics. In the major part of this 600-page volume he addresses specific issues, such as family, economics, national defence and so

forth. Now, David McIlroy argues that the general approach, as well as the initial chapters, for that matter, is very commendable: ‘He is to be commended for his commitment to the relevance of the Bible to contemporary political questions. There is much useful material in the opening four chapters.’²³ However, McIlroy also offers ‘serious criticism’, focusing on Grudem’s scepticism regarding climate change, lack of interaction with other commentators in the field and the lack of a consistent hermeneutic. McIlroy states:

Grudem does not deploy a consistent hermeneutic. ... Grudem’s book identifies for European Christians the selective readings from the Bible upon which Republican Christians in America rely in support of their positions. However, Grudem has not allowed the biblical perspective on the priorities of relationships, love, justice and mercy to result in a radical critique of the values of his culture and as a result has merely found support in the Bible for positions he had already decided to adopt.²⁴

In a similar fashion, Bart Bruehler argues that the greatest weakness of this book is ‘its lack of exegesis and hermeneutical reflection’²⁵—exegesis

²² For the sake of argument I will state that I do not take issues with Grudem’s position on biblical man- and womanhood in itself.

²³ David McIlroy, ‘Politics according to the Bible—a comprehensive resource for understanding modern political issues in light of Scripture,’ review in *European Journal of Theology*, 21 no 1 2012, 81.

²⁴ McIlroy, ‘Politics according to the Bible’, 81.

²⁵ Bart Bruehler, ‘Politics according to the Bible—a comprehensive resource for understanding modern political issues in light of Scripture,’ review in *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 47 no 2, Fall 2012, 203.

is limited, his applications of both Scripture and theological concepts are subjective at times, and the choice of biblical passages ‘very selective’ in certain cases.

Likewise, Peter Sanlon fears that ‘the book assumes a reductionist view on the nature of the Bible and how we move from texts in it to the advocacy of cultural change in a fallen world’.²⁶ He continues: ‘Repeatedly Grudem states a political view aligned with the libertarian right and then backs it up with a Bible verse. This is taken to demonstrate the said view as biblical’.²⁷

Sanlon identifies several major instances and also more generally, he claims that Grudem is selective in his choice of biblical passages. Although he applauds several of Grudem’s positions as well as the general interaction between state and church as welcome, overall he finds ‘Grudem’s book wanting both exegetically and hermeneutically’.

3. Conclusion

While some critics claim that Grudem applies a reductionist method by interacting with Scripture entirely ‘on his own’, I hold that Grudem at times does apply a more complex method for ‘moving beyond’ than he claims to do. This should be the case: given the scholar he is, Grudem naturally applies certain

methods from an advanced standpoint with a particular goal in mind.

However, some tendencies are troubling. For one: doubtlessly Grudem made major contributions in important areas of evangelical theology (see, for instance, my second example of Grudem’s work above—gender). Nevertheless his research method seems to fall short. His work lacks transparency of when and how he applies which tool (see my first example above—theology proper), and in some cases he falls short in establishing convincing theological proposals (see my third example above—politics).

Secondly, while I share Grudem’s conviction that Scripture must be accessible to every believer in a sufficient way, this does not necessarily mean that an individual must be able to develop a systematic theology on his or her own. Since these are actually two different things, Grudem’s argument for what I termed his ‘first principle’ earlier is not convincing.

Thirdly, Grudem’s work creates a problematic pattern for the innumerable students of his work. It seems to me that an uncritical student may be inclined to follow either one of two problematic trails: accepting the positions Grudem holds, or applying the method of ‘collecting and understanding all the relevant passages of Scripture on any topic’ on his or her own, coming up then with a subjective yet normative (!) ‘theology’.

In any case, I believe that further study in theological method is necessary. For if theological method is at least an issue in the work of Wayne Grudem, it definitely is a problem in several local churches. These local churches are the real stages for the

²⁶ Peter Sanlon, ‘Politics according to the Bible—a comprehensive resource for understanding modern political issues in light of Scripture’, review in *Themelios*, 36 no 3 Nov 2011, 593.

²⁷ Sanlon, ‘Politics according to the Bible’, 539.

calamities I referred to in my introduction. It is here that naïve biblicism results in simplistic proof-texting, leading to simplistic theologies and worldviews, and thereby challenges the unity of these churches and the sanctification of individual lives.

Therefore, I claim that there is a case to be made for further theological reflection. I will start with that work in the following section.

II A Case of Theological Reflection

There are many ways to start a conversation on ‘moving beyond’ Scripture to theology from an evangelical perspective. However, at this time I find the work of Kevin Vanhoozer the most appealing for various reasons. This is why I present my attempt of a survey on his case of theological reflection in this second section.

1. Vanhoozer on ‘moving beyond’—up to 2015

Rhyné R. Putman has recently provided a comprehensive overview on Vanhoozer’s theology.²⁸ Putman’s published dissertation does not refer to Vanhoozer, hermeneutics or theological method in general, but it deals more specifically with the development of doctrine. Since his dissertation was published in 2015, I will survey Vanhoozer via Putman first, and present a survey of Vanhoozer’s related works after 2015 in the following subsection.

Putman starts by locating Vanhoozer’s

approach of ‘moving beyond’ in the larger context of Vanhoozer’s work by laying out the development of Vanhoozer’s normative theological hermeneutics.²⁹

Putman briefly touches on Vanhoozer’s dissertation (1985), published in 1990 as *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology*. Secondly, he addresses Vanhoozer’s major work, *Is there a Meaning in this Text?* (1998), then his collection of essays on theological method up to 2002, published under the title *First Theology*. He gives some more room to *The Drama of Doctrine* (2005), which would be the most comprehensive exploration of the relationship between hermeneutical theory and theological method.³⁰

With Daniel Treier, Putman identifies a new period in Vanhoozer’s work within the *Drama*.³¹ For Putman, the relevant point in the light of our concern is Vanhoozer’s approach of following Scripture, by ‘making *theological judgment* patterned after biblical texts’.³² For ‘it is not enough simply to understand the grammar, background, and meaning of a text. Interpreters must strive to understand the authorial discourse, but they must *put Scripture into practice as well*.’³³

²⁹ Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 176-184.

³⁰ Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 179.

³¹ My personal impression that proposing ‘something new’ here is similar to the attempt to relate modernity and postmodernity to each other—and in case of Vanhoozer’s work, I think there are overall more indicators for great continuity.

³² Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 181, italics his.

³³ Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 181, italics his.

²⁸ Rhyné R. Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine—Evangelicalism, Theology and Scripture* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015).

This approach is unfolded further by Putman in his second section where he characterizes the Canonical-Linguistic or theo-dramatic theological method as 'a means of going beyond the written word of Scripture in a way that is faithful to the spirit and direction of Scripture'.³⁴ Here Putman offers some important summaries on Vanhoozer's concern for 'moving beyond' Scripture:

Canonical-linguistic theology ... is an ongoing means of developing habitual, practical wisdom grounded in the canon or Scripture. This notion of theology practical wisdom stems from the Augustinian distinction between *scientia* (knowledge) and *sapientia* (wisdom), between knowledge and wisdom. For Vanhoozer, theology must be both *scientia* and *sapientia*, concerned first with biblical exegesis and doctrinal content of Scripture (*scientia*) and then with cultivating practical judgment based on Scripture for contemporary settings (*sapientia*). The canon must guide the church's action, but to do so, the text must move from the past into the present. The canonical-linguistic approach, then represents a new, favourable evangelical approach to doctrinal development.³⁵

Vanhoozer's approach would clearly differ from approaches such as principlizing, second hermeneutics, or trajectory hermeneutics.³⁶

Regarding Vanhoozer's method of developing doctrine, Putman traces two major sources: the impact of Ba-

khtinian Dialogism and the concept of theodrama in the work of Urs von Balthasar.

With regards to the Bakhtinian Dialogism, Putman defines Dialogism with Susan M. Felch:

Dialogism insists on the priority of two or more persons who remain distinct from one another. Thus, it is not words *that* communicate, but *we who* communicate in interactions that require, as a minimum, the irreducible community of two.³⁷

For the development of doctrine, this approach is crucial. The relationship between Scripture and tradition is not in dialectical synthesis between biblical texts and contemporary philosophical or cultural thought. Rather, doctrinal development grows out of an ongoing exchange occurring between new interpreters in new settings and the human-divine authorship of the Bible.³⁸

Four dialogical terms of Bakhtin would be foundational for Vanhoozer's model of doctrinal development: Polyphony (the concept of multiple voices in one document), chronotope (indicating the intersection of axes as spatial and temporal), great time (referring to the growing importance of important works over time) and creative understanding.³⁹ Creative understanding is the most important, since theology is not a creation *ex nihilo*, but rather the setting forth of what is already in place.⁴⁰

³⁷ Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 188, italics hers.

³⁸ Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 188.

³⁹ Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 188-202.

⁴⁰ Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 193.

³⁴ Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 184.

³⁵ Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 185-6.

³⁶ Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 184, fn.

With regards to the concept of theodrama, Putman addresses the overarching theatrical metaphor of the Swiss Roman Catholic Urs von Balthasar, proposing dramaturgical categories (author, actor, director, role, action and so forth). His five-volume cannot be addressed in this paper. Yet Putman summarizes Vanhoozer’s difference from Balthasar by pointing out that Balthasar ‘focuses on the dramatic content of Christian doctrine’, while the focus of Vanhoozer’s ‘canonical-linguistic approach is on the performative nature of doctrine itself.’⁴¹

While there are numerous terms from theatre, it is probably the concept of improvisation that is most important for Vanhoozer’s doctrinal development. Hence, ‘Theology’s ongoing task is training to think about the world biblically and cultivating a gospel-oriented *phronesis* that aids in faithful improvisation’ of the biblical theo-drama in new contexts.⁴² Vanhoozer—as Putman—is quick to address concerns and misunderstandings which can easily derive from the term of improvisation in the realm of theology. Yet there are many issues of life which are not addressed specifically by Scripture, and these may function as examples for instances, in which ‘moving beyond’ (and thereby improvisation) is without alternatives.

2. Vanhoozer on ‘moving beyond’—2015 and following

Vanhoozer has recently published several works that are related to the

development of doctrine. As far as I can see, there are two books and two articles of special importance. I will first survey all of them very briefly, and then attempt to summarize some major contributions specifically to the quest of moving beyond.

a) Overviews

The first book is *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture—A Mere Evangelical Account*, co-authored by Daniel J. Treier (2015). I have summarized the argument elsewhere a little more closely;⁴³ so here I can outline the two parts of the book. Part one proposes a ‘mere evangelical agenda’: what is the basis of evangelical theology, and how should it be structured?

Vanhoozer and Treier discuss how to apply the ‘material’ and the ‘formal’ principles of protestant theology (i.e. the ‘Gospel of God and the God of the Gospel’ for one, and Scripture for the other). After addressing ontology and epistemology, Part Two relates this agenda more to the current praxis of evangelical theology. It argues that wisdom must be the nature of evangelical theology (chapter 3). Vanhoozer and Treier then address theological interpretation as a means for doing justice to such a nature (chapter 4), and relate both within the church (chapter 5) and the academia (chapter 6).

In 2015 Vanhoozer also published an essay of some relevance with the title ‘Scripture and theology—On ‘prov-

⁴¹ Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 197.

⁴² Putman, *In Defense of Doctrine*, 199.

⁴³ Michael Borowski, ‘Of Mirrors and Men—Surveying a Trajectory for “Moving Beyond” from Scripture to Theology’, in *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Apr2017, Vol. 41 Issue 2, 127-130.

ing' doctrine biblically'.⁴⁴ In this piece, he calls for a 'biblical' theology, proposing a way forward by following 'the way the biblical words go':⁴⁵ One must appeal to the diverse discourses of the canon of Scripture by giving credit to the individual kind of discourse at hand. He concludes that—as exemplified in the way Jesus referred to Scripture—the task of the theologian is proof-texting,⁴⁶ but a kind of proof-texting of a 'higher order'.⁴⁷ In this higher order, one sets forth 'the way the words go' rather than finding individual passages of Scripture to back up propositional claims.⁴⁸

Then in 2016, Vanhoozer published his book entitled '*Biblical Authority after Babel—Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity*'. Here he addresses the challenge of what he perceives as 'interpretational anarchy' by referring to Allister McGrath's stance of Christianity's 'dangerous idea'. According to McGrath, 'Protestantism took its stand on the right of individuals to interpret the Bible for themselves rather than being forced to submit to "official" interpretations handed down by popes or other centralized religious authorities.'⁴⁹

According to McGrath, this approach is dangerous, for because of it Protestantism is not only highly adaptable—it is also out of control.

Following Graeme Goldsworthy and Herman Bavinck, Vanhoozer argues that the five Protestant *solas* represent 'what we might call the *first theology* of mere Protestant Christianity.'⁵⁰

Firstly, *Sola Gratia* can be understood as the framework of biblical interpretation (chapter 1). Secondly, *Sola Fide* would be the antidote to epistemological scepticism, namely epistemic trust (chapter 2). Vanhoozer sets the authority of the Bible (*Sola Scriptura*) in context (chapter 3), for instance in its context to tradition. *Solus Christus*, then, refers to Christ—yet what is reality in Christ cannot be separated from the church, which is why Vanhoozer addresses both the authority and the responsibility of the royal priesthood, the (local) church (chapter 4). Finally, with *Soli Deo Gloria*, Vanhoozer calls for a celebration of the diverse, yet united catholic church (chapter 5).

Vanhoozer concludes that the *solas*, taken together, provide a powerful *first theology* for the local, and therefore for the catholic church.

In addition to these three work, there is also an important essay published in 2016, asking 'May we Go Beyond what is written after all?'⁵¹ Here Vanhoozer addresses the principle and the pattern of 'moving beyond'. He comments on the use of creeds and

44 Kevin Vanhoozer, 'Scripture and theology—On "proving" doctrine biblically' in: Mike Higton and James Fodor (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to the Practice of Christian Theology* (Oxon: Routledge, 2015).

45 Vanhoozer, 'Scripture and theology', 148.

46 Vanhoozer, 'Scripture and theology', 154.

47 Vanhoozer, 'Scripture and theology', 154.

48 Vanhoozer, 'Scripture and theology', 155.

49 Kevin Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel—Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 3.

50 Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel*, 27, italics his.

51 Kevin Vanhoozer, 'May we Go Beyond what is written after all?' in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (London: Apollos, 2016), 747-793.

confessions as potential examples of ‘moving beyond’. His programmatic proposal for following biblical directions includes imitation, imagination and improvisation.

b) Systematization

In the foregoing overview I could only give a brief idea regarding Vanhoozer’s recent work. However, in the following I present an initial idea for the systematization of Vanhoozer’s four contributions surveyed above: What are major aspects of his proposal to ‘move beyond’ Scripture?

I hold, then, that *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture* represents the general agenda for evangelical theology, and that the first part in particular highlights core-elements for doctrinal development. In the first chapter, Vanhoozer and Treier indicate that in some way biblical theology does not start with the Bible, but with the reality of which it speaks—they literally anchor evangelical theology in the triune God and the cross of Jesus Christ.

With the second chapter, Vanhoozer and Treier relate the ontological considerations regarding ‘what is in Christ’ to their epistemological theory: the gospel of God is witnessed in Scripture, which thereby mirrors the reality ‘in Christ’, and of which also the church is a part. The overall task of theology, then, is to help the church to understand the story of salvation, its reality, and the place of the church within it.

These are very general outlines. To be more specific, the task of evangelical theology is to ‘set forth’ the gospel. It seems to me that for this ‘setting forth’ Vanhoozer stresses in ‘Scripture and theology’ the various types

of biblical discourse. He depicts four quadrants in a diagram of two axes (proposition/statement and narrative/story on the horizontal and spiritual/ideal and earthly/literal on the vertical axis). The four quadrants—principles, images, testimony and data—are all different aspects of what Scripture is,⁵² and dealing with them (or setting them forth) must do justice to the nature of each particular discourse.

Having established this approach as the pattern, Vanhoozer explicates three ways of ‘moving further along the grain of what is written’:⁵³ *imitation* (that is, walking in Jesus’ steps), *imagination* (for instance, by locating oneself in the bigger story), and *improvisation* (that is, acting in accordance with the pattern of Scripture in a given situation).⁵⁴ While these ways are not ‘methodological operations as much as means or cultivating good habits of evangelical ... judgment’,⁵⁵ one can still determine the *fittingness* of given attempts for ‘moving beyond’ by applying the criteria of canon sense (i.e., by locating oneself in the divine drama), catholic sensibility (i.e., by taking into account the apostolic tradition) and contextual sensitivity (i.e., by translating into a given cultural situation).⁵⁶

However, the task of putting doctrine into praxis is yet an integral part of the doctrinal task. In sum, Vanhoozer-

⁵² Vanhoozer, ‘Scripture and theology’, 151.

⁵³ Vanhoozer, ‘May we Go beyond what is written after all?’, 777.

⁵⁴ Vanhoozer, ‘May we Go beyond what is written after all?’, 777-784.

⁵⁵ Vanhoozer, ‘May we Go beyond what is written after all?’, 777.

⁵⁶ Vanhoozer, ‘May we Go beyond what is written after all?’, 788-790.

er's essay 'May we Go Beyond what is written after all?' seems to be the contribution among the four that interacts best with these comparatively practical issues.

The task of setting forth the gospel (and, one might add, performing it!) is given to the local church—a church that might be on the edge of living in interpretational anarchy and doctrinal chaos. Vanhoozer covers these challenges specifically in *'Biblical Authority after Babel'*. Nevertheless, the church is required to exemplify the *ecclesia semper reformanda*, most evidently by applying the five *solas*, and thereby demonstrating 'that the glory and genius of mere Protestant Christianity is "mere evangelicalism"'.⁵⁷

Conclusion

I get the strong suspicion that Kevin Vanhoozer is (still) following the lead of Bernhard Ramm, who named five areas relevant for sound 'moving beyond': Scripture, the inner structure of evangelical theology, cultural climate, the God-world-relation, and Linguistics/Philosophy of language/communications. I believe that this is an approach worth further following, especially regarding Scripture, evangelical theology and the God-world-relation. I believe such work is worthy to be pursued. I hope it will ultimately help to limit the doctrinal chaos, doctrinal illiteracy and doctrinal apathy within some of our local churches—and the calamities that go with it.

⁵⁷ Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel*, 217.

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Laudato Si: An Evangelical Response

Timothy T. N. Lim

I Introduction

Catholics, evangelicals, and Protestants globally have expressed their desires to collaborate purposefully in witnessing for the gospel.¹ As a step towards collaborative witness between Catholics and evangelicals, this paper² presents an evangelical reading of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si (LS)*.³ I seek to show how evangelicals can build on the initiatives encouraged by the encyclical regarding care for the biosphere in conjunction with Catholics and other Protestant groups.

To prepare churches for prospective collaboration, one must consider

entrenched evangelical reservations about creation care,⁴ as well as the prevailing evangelical positions about dialogue or engagement with other Christian organizations.⁵ Evangelicalism generally has moved from ambivalence and reservations towards accepting some developments in the modern ecumenical movement.

This paper begins with a concise review of evangelical positions on caring for creation. Next, I review *LS* and place it in a broader context by discussing relevant Catholic social teaching and mainstream responses to the release of the document. I then summarize evangelical responses of affirmation, ambivalence, and abstinence towards this document's appeal. I con-

1 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Rome: Vatican, 2013); *Together Towards Life* (Geneva: WCC, 2013), 10–11; *The Cape Town Commitment* (Cape Town: Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, 2010), 218–22; *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and World Evangelical Alliance, 2011).

2 I wish to thank Dr Gail Trzcinski for proofreading the original and revised drafts, and Ms Sherry Hamilton for copyediting the final version.

3 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* (Rome: Vatican, 24 May 2015), hereafter cited as *LS*.

4 An example of fruitful Evangelical–Catholic dialogue is the Third Annual Evangelical and Catholic Conversation, at University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, III, 2–5 September 2015.

5 David W. Cloud, *Evangelicals and Rome*, rev. ed. (Port Huron, Michigan: Way of Life Literature, 1999); Gabriel Fackre, *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993); Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).

clude by affirming the possibility of collaborative ecological witness.

II No Longer Observers: Evangelicals, Social Witness and Earth Care

Evangelicalism's approach to eco-care has mirrored its larger struggle to embrace social witness as a core commitment to the gospel. Evangelicals who trace their roots to the eighteenth-century pietistic and Wesleyan movements in Europe and North America have always been committed to the direct and indirect proclamation of the gospel in thought and action.⁶ Overall, however, evangelicalism has maintained an uneasy stance regarding social witness and activism that do not directly proclaim the salvific message of Jesus Christ. Thus, evangelicals have also been critical of liberation theology, which was first developed in Latin America⁷ and which has been regarded in some quarters as subverting the gospel's central message about the eternal salvation of souls.

From the 1960s through the 1990s, evangelicals were ambivalent at best towards environmental initiatives by committees of the World Council of Churches.⁸ Often the reason was a mis-association of these initiatives with developments that evangelicals considered unacceptable, such as New

Age beliefs, interreligious unity and liberal Protestantism.⁹ Consequently, evangelicals have not been regarded as avid supporters of ecological care, despite earlier invitations by theologians like Francis Schaeffer and, three decades later, by John Stott.¹⁰ Both Schaeffer and Stott reminded evangelicals of their God-given responsibility in the creation mandate to care for the earth.

Today, evangelicals are no longer merely observers on eco-care. A proliferation of literature attests to their commitment.¹¹ In recent years, evangelicals in North America have organ-

⁹ John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Ecology and Religion* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2014), 87; Jonas Jonson, *Wounded Visions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 22, 31–2, 43, 50, 60, 128. A favourable evangelical exception is Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).

¹⁰ Chris Sugden, 'Evangelicals and Environment in Process', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 17.2 (1993): 119–21; Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1970); E. Calvin Beisner, *Where Garden Meets Wilderness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Acton Institute and Eerdmans, 1997); John Stott, foreword to R. J. Berry, *The Care of Creation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 7.

¹¹ Loren Wilkinson, ed., *Earthkeeping* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) and *Earthkeeping in the Nineties* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); Fred van Dyke, David C. Mahan, Joseph K. Sheldon, and Raymond H. Brand, *Redeeming Creation* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1996); Ed Brown, *Our Father's World* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008); Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010); Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010) and *Living with Other Creatures* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011); Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler, and A. J. Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).

⁶ Michael P. Young, *Bearing Witness against Sin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

⁷ Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1947).

⁸ Ulrich Duchrow and Gerhard Liedke, *Shalom* (Geneva: WCC, 1987).

ized forums and issued statements on science and faith, chemical safety, clean air and water, mercury exposure, and threats to the environment. In the US, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) has featured environmental concerns,¹² and the Southern Baptists, generally viewed as evangelical, have published a statement on the topic.¹³ Nationally, however, the 2014 US Pew Religious Landscape Study (released on 3 November 2015) reported that evangelicals tend to disdain stricter environmental laws because enforcement hurts the economy and costs too many jobs.¹⁴

At a global level, the World Evangelical Alliance's Creation Care Task Force organized its first project—the Joint Lausanne–WEA Global Creation Care Consultation in Jamaica from 29 October to 3 November 2012.¹⁵ The WEA Global Issues Series saw publications on evangelical engagement with environmental ethics, public ethics, and responsible creation care in 2014 and 2016. These built on the initiatives and statements adopted by the WEA membership at its General Assembly in

2008, its consultation with the Micah Network in 2009, and the co-hosting of a global Call to Action with the Lausanne movement in 2012.¹⁶

Transformation has indeed occurred among American evangelicals with regard to their role and participation in climate change.¹⁷ Relative to their prior ambivalence (primarily due to assessing it as a social-gospel emphasis), evangelicals have now been more willing to accept eco-care as a Christian responsibility. But this resurgence of hopeful engagement on eco-care is limited for the most part to working with fellow evangelicals.¹⁸

A backlash against evangelicalism's support for environmental care came from the Cornwall Alliance, a non-profit, evangelical, earth steward-

¹² On the NAE, see <http://nae.net/tag/environment/> (accessed 21 April 2017). The Creation Care document has received signatories from hundreds of Evangelical leaders.

¹³ 'A Southern Baptist Declaration on the Environment and Climate Change', <http://www.cfr.org/religion/southern-baptist-declaration-environment-climate-change/p15847> (accessed 21 April 2017). The declaration has hundreds of signatories.

¹⁴ 'U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious' (Pew Research Center, 3 November 2015), 105.

¹⁵ See Evangelical Environment Network, <http://creationcare.org/> (accessed 21 April 2017).

¹⁶ Ken Gnanakan, *Responsible Stewardship of God's Creation*, rev. ed. (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2014), and Thomas Schirrmacher and Thomas K. Johnson, *Creation Care and Loving Our Neighbors* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2016). See *Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change* (adopted by the WEA General Assembly, 2008); *On the Care of Creation* (the collaborative initiative with the Micah Network, 2009); and WEA's co-hosting of a global consultation, *Call to Action* (with the Lausanne Movement, 2012).

¹⁷ Victor Lam, 'The Heat Is On: The Role and Transformation of American Evangelicals in Climate Change Dialogue in the United States', *Human Dimensions of Climate Change* (2014): 1–11.

¹⁸ David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb, eds., *Deep Ecology and World Religions* (New York: State University Press of New York, 2001); Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., *This Sacred Earth* (New York: Routledge, 2003; rpt. Taylor & Francis, 2004); Anne Marie Dalton, *Ecology and the Practice of Hope* (New York: State University Press of New York, 2010).

ship organization.¹⁹ This group warns that ‘radical environmentalism’ represents a ‘false religion’ of secular and pagan religious environmentalism. It warns that the National Association of Evangelicals’ *Creation Care Declaration* (2006) will be ‘deadly to the gospel of Jesus Christ’.²⁰ The Cornwall Alliance has also expressed reservations about Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environment.

III *Laudato Si*: An Integral Ecology

1. Background

The Pope’s encyclical, *Laudato Si* (*LS*), was released on 24 May 2015. This document’s weighty, multi-disciplinary analysis may have come as a surprise for those who would have expected it to focus solely on religious responsibility for creation. Advance leaks about the document caused *LS* to be greatly anticipated. It is a substantive, important contribution that we can study with interest and profit.

Though not Pope Francis’ first encyclical, *LS* stands out from his others as well as from the declarations of previous popes in at least three ways, which make it an important document for evangelicals to examine as they

consider the possibility of collaborative witness with Catholics.

First, *LS* is the only encyclical devoted to ecological care, and it addresses the widest possible audience. *LS* is aimed at the whole world, unlike *Lumen Fidei*’s address ‘to the bishops, priests, and deacons, consecrated person[s], and the lay faithful’.²¹ It calls all people to recognize and act on an urgent responsibility before us—to care for creation—as an expression of our commitments to God, creation and future generations. Francis expressly desires to ‘dialogue with all people about our common home’.²² He continues to call for widespread action, such as in his recent address to the UN General Assembly, which may be read as the quintessence of *LS*.²³

Second, *LS* presents a compelling case for a broad and interdisciplinary openness to caring for creation. It not only discusses environmental issues but also explains how the many and immense social and political crises of our time (e.g. consumerism, global inequality, social degradation, human trafficking, wars and conflicts, statecraft) are interwoven with the ecological crisis. *LS* explains why an effective ecological care program cannot compartmentalize or focus narrowly on environmental issues. Caring for the earth would also have to address

¹⁹ Cornwall Alliance, www.cornwallalliance.org/about/what-we-do/ (accessed 21 April 2017).

²⁰ Cf. 12-part video, ‘Resisting the Green Dragon,’ cited in John Collins Rudolf, ‘An Evangelical Backlash Against Environmentalism’, *New York Times* (30 December 2010), http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/12/30/an-evangelical-backlash-against-environmentalism/?_r=0 (accessed 21 April 2017).

²¹ Cf. *LS* 3, p. 2 with Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei* (Rome: Vatican, 29 June 2015).

²² *LS* 3, p. 2.

²³ Pope Francis’ Address to 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (25 September 2015), http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/09/25/pope_francis_addresses_the_un_general_assembly/1174588 (accessed 21 April 2017).

many pressing and interrelated social, economic and political concerns. The reason for the global appeal is that all of life is interconnected.²⁴

Third, *LS* is the only papal document in recent decades to have generated great interest both before and after its release (on 24 May 2015).²⁵ Episcopal Church of Europe Bishop Pierre Wahlon predicted that *LS*' impact will be felt politically and in 'the major environmental and economic debates of our time'.²⁶ Various Catholic agencies have produced documents to instruct, apply and act on *LS*' recommendations. These activities and the designation of the World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation (1 September 2015) indicate the extent of *LS*' impact.²⁷

24 *LS* 138, p 40.

25 Jim Yardley and Laurie Goodstein, 'Pope Francis, in Sweeping Encyclical, Calls for Swift Action on Climate Change,' *New York Times* (18 June 2015), www.nytimes.com/2015/06/19/world/europe/pope-francis-in-sweeping-encyclical-calls-for-swift-action-on-climate-change.html?_r=0 (accessed 21 April 2017).

26 Pierre Wahlon, 'Laudato Si: What's Missing, What's Not,' *The Huffington Post* (22 June 2015), www.huffingtonpost.com/bishop-pierre-whalon/laudato-si-whats-missing-whats-not_b_7630516.html (accessed 21 April 2017).

27 See examples from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/; Catholic Social Teaching (UK) (www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk/themes/care-creation/reflection/); Cindy Wooden, 'Pope designates Sept. 1 as World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation,' *Catholic News Service* (10 August 2015), www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2015/pope-designates-sept-1-as-world-day-of-prayer-for-care-of-creation.cfm (all accessed 21 April 2017); for Catholic Climate Covenant program initiatives, www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/# (accessed 21 April 2017).

2. Structure

LS contains six chapters after the introduction which hails Francis of Assisi as an example par excellence in caring for the vulnerable and for his integral ecology.²⁸ The introduction frames the papal teaching as continuous with his predecessors' teachings, and in unison with philosophers, environmental scientists, civic advocacy groups, and leaders from other ecclesiastical traditions.²⁹ There is substantial mention of ecological thoughts from the works of the medieval theologian Bonaventure. *LS* also contains eighteen references to documents from various world conferences of Catholic bishops.

Chapter one reviews the present ecological crisis in light of the wide-ranging and interweaving socio-political factors that have impacted the rapid loss of biodiversity in our common home. Chapter two argues that the Judeo-Christian theology of creation and the message of the gospel call Christians to commit to the environment. Chapter three analyses the human roots and deepest causes of the ecological crisis. Chapter four presents the possibilities of conceiving intra-individual, intra-organizational, and international solutions as an integral ecology.

Chapter five proposes lines of action. Chapter six broadens the practical

[catholicclimatecovenant.org/#](http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/#) (accessed 21 April 2017).

28 *LS* 10, p 3.

29 Francis draws from John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* (1963), Paul VI's *Octogesima Adeniens* (1971), John Paul II's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), *Centesimus Annus* (1991) and *Catechesis* (2001), and Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate* (2009). *LS* 3–6, 2–3.

application from concrete ecological action to education and the cultivation of virtues, ethics and spirituality. *LS* ends with two prayers, one of which esteems Mary as the Mother of Jesus and as the Queen of Creation.³⁰

3. The integral care for our home

Humanity lives in a connected world in which the rich, the poor and the vulnerable are engulfed in the economy and the exercise of power (in their many forms and contexts). Humans should neither dominate nor exercise a 'tyrannical anthropocentrism' over creation.³¹ Humanity carries the responsibility to care for the environment.³² Instead of exercising sobriety and tenderly caring for creation, Francis observes that humanity's progress in science and technology in the market-based, consumerist economy has unwittingly driven the environment into a crisis.

In the papal analysis, the scientific and technological advances of recent centuries, despite their immense good and benefit to mankind (especially in alleviating human suffering and pain), have mistreated the ecosystem and have caused drastic harm to the environment and human civilization. By introducing man-made solutions to fulfil utilitarian goals, humanity has inevitably upset the ecocycle, causing the environment to deteriorate at an alarming rate.³³ When humans become

masters, consumers and exploiters of creation for their selfish wants, they trade away their rights to be stewards of creation.³⁴

The encyclical identifies the influence of non-ecological factors that fuel today's ecological crisis: depletion of natural resources, massive pollution, adverse effects on global warming, lack of fresh and safe water, devastating effects of rapid climate change, loss of biodiversity, and collateral damage to life, relationships and economy. This collateral damage has been generated by inefficient structures of production and consumption, the fragility of the deified market interest, and the shortsighted, self-serving vision of political leaders and consumers in accumulating wealth.

The document frowns on the throw-away culture and the inhumane exploitation of the poorest, all conducted at the expense of others in present and future generations. The apathy or indifference to ecological care is evident in the collusion of political, financial and corporate entities to maintain the status quo instead of collaborating to resolve the complex human and ecological plight.³⁵ The earth's goods will not indefinitely supply human wants.³⁶

Francis recommends an integrated program of interdisciplinary dialogue and multi-dimensional and multi-agency efforts to shape a better future.³⁷ He calls for (a) rethinking ecological care processes, (b) correcting the misdi-

30 *LS* 246, pp. 70-2.

31 *LS* 67-8, 82, pp. 20, 24.

32 *LS* 95, 28; cf. Thomas Berry, *The Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth* (New York: Orbis 2009).

33 *LS* 25, 32, 51, 107 and 162, pp. 8, 10-11,

15, 32, 47.

34 *LS* 11, p. 4.

35 *LS*, ch. 1.

36 *LS* 106, p. 31.

37 *LS* 13-5, 53, 141, pp. 4-5, 16, 41.

rected logic underlying the present-day culture,³⁸ (c) convening dialogues, and (d) commissioning regulated action plans to overturn the current downward 'spiral of self-destruction'³⁹ and so as to arrive at a 'global consensus' of thought and action to confront the grave problems facing humanity.⁴⁰

Francis urges individual efforts such as reduced driving, planting trees and avoiding use of non-renewable plastics, as well as teaching and modelling ecological behaviour in the family setting.⁴¹ Religions offer valuable supportive resources and should not be relegated to a negligible role or place in the process.⁴²

4. *Laudato Si* and Catholic social teaching

LS is quite consistent with previous Catholic social teaching, as contained in the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace's *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.⁴³ Most specifically, fighting poverty, fostering international community and values, taming or positive use of biotechnology (206), responsible sharing of goods, and sensitivity to new lifestyles all contribute to the protection or at least the safeguarding of the environment as a col-

lective good.

The call of *LS* for humankind (and not just the church) to seek common good and collective goodwill and to be in solidarity with and caring for creation, for the most vulnerable, and for the poorest in the market economy is noteworthy. Humanity indeed needs to respect creation and demonstrate ways to preserve the biodiversity and eco-systems of life, minimize pollution, cut back on wasting resources, and restrain the selfish use of human and political will power. It also needs to exercise sobriety in the use of 'technoscience', especially to facilitate human development towards justice, peace, love and beauty in society.

Catholic social teaching also urges correcting infrastructural, institutional, communal and interpersonal inequality and disrespect, along with financial, economic, social and political initiatives to improve the quality of human life, creational co-existence, and society. Moreover, *LS* bases its appeal on the interconnectedness of the universal family of humanity and creation, as Francis urges 'an unwavering commitment' of all people to this fraternal bond and 'universal communion'.⁴⁴

5. Responses from religious groups

Despite general consistency of this document with Catholic social teachings, the secular world seems to have received Francis' appeal as a radically new proposal. To those who have been sceptical about the calls of religious communities for social transformation, *LS* has become an instrument

38 *LS* 197, p. 57.

39 *LS* 163, p. 47.

40 *LS* 164, p. 48.

41 *LS* 211, 213, p. 61.

42 *LS* 199, p. 57.

43 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004). See also Sean McDonagh's commentary on *LS* in Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* (New York: Orbis, 2016), Part 1.

44 *LS* 89, 91-2, pp. 26 and 27.

for re-reception of the teachings, convictions and values of Christianity. Thus, *LS* has provoked many different responses from those outside the Roman Catholic Church, ranging from enthusiastic to scathing.⁴⁵ Space does not permit a complete examination of these responses, but I will discuss five responses from religious sources of various prominence and perspectives.

The World Council of Churches' (WCC) Ecumenical Water Network (EWN), which comprises representatives from the Catholic bishops in Latin America and Africa, as well as regional ecumenical organizations and representatives of the Orthodox and Protestant churches in the WCC, issued a document in support of *LS*. EWN evaluates *LS* as a document with 'deep insight and timely commentary', especially 'on the critical and interconnected issues of water, injustice, climate change and the loss of biodiversity'. EWN agrees with Francis' rejection of '“tyrannical” and “distorted anthropocentrism” and ... affirms outright the intrinsic value of all creatures'. It also finds credibility in Francis' analysis that human greed, selfishness, ignorance and self-interest are 'the sources of human misconduct' that contributed to human judgements and decisions that wrecked the ecosystem.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See a page in Yale's Forum on Religion and Ecology website dedicated to responses on the encyclical: <http://fore.yale.edu/news-related-to-pope-francis-climate-change-and-the-environment> (accessed 21 April 2017).

⁴⁶ 'Response from EWN on the Encyclical *Laudato Si*,' World Council of Churches (24 July 2015), www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/diakonia/water-network/response-from-ewn-on-the-encyclical-2015/laudato-si-2015-1 (accessed 21

The Plymouth Brethren-born evangelical and internationally recognized climate scientist, Katherine Hayhoe, who co-authored *A Climate for Change*, met with eleven evangelical leaders and a few George Fox Seminary professors from Portland, Oregon, USA before presenting 'Climate Change: Facts and Faith' to the World Affairs Council in June 2015. Acclaimed by *Foreign Policy* as one of the 'Leading Global Thinkers' and by *Time* magazine as one of the '100 Most Influential People,' Hayhoe merits careful consideration.

At the gathering, she affirmed discussion in *LS* of the urgency of pursuing environmental ethics, agreeing that the problems of climate change have transmuted into disproportionate suffering among the poor and the most vulnerable. The most affected, she said, are those who reside in areas affected by heat waves, stronger hurricanes, major changes in growing seasons, wildfires, etc. She expressed agreement with analyses contained in *LS* about the 'indirect impacts of climate change, such as civil unrest and climate refugees'. Hayhoe also mentioned the Pentagon's concern that climate change may exacerbate other social problems and critiqued various capitalist and market economy policies in a fashion similar to *LS*.⁴⁷

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President, Albert Mohler Jr., though not an expert on ecotheology, has also expressed appreciation for the Pope's appeal. According to Mohler, in 'tell[ing] the poorest nations that

April 2017).

⁴⁷ Dan Brunner, 'Climate Change: Evangelicals and the Pope', *Bearings* (Collegeville Institute), 6 August 2015.

they must forego immediate needs for refrigeration, modern medicine, and advances of the modern age',⁴⁸ Francis is not hiding behind an ulterior motive to critique the free market system. Rather, he is urging all nations to become more environmentally conscious in their lifestyles.

An interesting response by a local parish with a commitment to care for the environment came from the Peace Lutheran Church of Seattle, Washington, a member congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The Peace Lutheran Church of Seattle received *LS* positively. For six consecutive weeks in March and April 2016, it invited members from various local Christian groups to explore how they could accept this document's 'urgent challenge to protect our common home' and 'dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet'. Participants agreed to seek 'a non-consumerism model of life, recreation, and community'. They called for wider consensual, collaborative actions between community leaders (such as scientists, activists, business leaders, politicians, and faith community leaders).

Though the Peace Lutheran Church consortium at Seattle affirmed many of the Pope's analyses, they disagreed about how the wealthy regions ought to intervene. They warned that 'under the guise of noble claims' proposals may generate 'new wars'. The disagreement is notwithstanding their agree-

ment about the 'grave implications' that may follow the 'unprecedented destruction of ecosystems'. The group also shared Francis' observation about how the lack of 'culture and leadership' would confront those residing both in the more developed regions and the less developed regions.⁴⁹

In his personal capacity as an ecclesial theologian, Russell R. Reno, the editor of *First Things* and an Episcopalian by birth and who was received into the Catholic fold in 2004, published a weighty analysis of *LS*.⁵⁰ Although Reno affirms Francis' observations about the 'much-needed effort to grasp and respond to today's global realities' and his 'strong, often comprehensive criticisms of the secular technological project' that would impinge upon the global, environmental concerns and the 'central ecological issue today', he also points out what he considers the 'weakness' of the encyclical.

Indeed, *LS* utilizes a 'dire' and 'doomsday ... rhetoric of crisis' to communicate the urgency of the ecological situation. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with such a tactic, Reno contends that phrases in this document such as 'integral ecology' and 'lines of approach and action' fail to provide cogently the 'new synthesis', 'radical change', or 'bold cultural revolution' needed to resolve 'the spiral of self-destruction which currently

48 R. Albert Mohler Jr., 'Mohler responds to Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*,' *Southern News* (18 June 2015), <http://news.sbts.edu/2015/06/18/mohler-responds-to-pope-francis-laudato-si/> (accessed 21 April 2017).

49 See Peace Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington's letter of response to Pope Francis, www.peacelutheranseattle.org/?p=2378 (accessed 21 April 2017).

50 R. R. Reno, 'The Weakness of *Laudato Si*,' *First Things* (1 July 2015), <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2015/07/the-weakness-of-laudato-si> (accessed 21 April 2017).

engulfs us’.

According to Reno, *LS* sounds ‘like just another version’ of weighing the ‘trade-offs’ between ‘risks and benefits’. Reno deems the current approach to choosing between ‘risks and benefits’ as the ‘signature achievements of scientific and technological mastery’. While *LS* claims to offer a truly ‘new, integral and interdisciplinary approach’, Reno contends that Francis’ recommendations actually resemble the ‘best practices’ offered by McKinsey consultants.

McKinsey’s ‘best practices’ are read as ‘technocratic conceits’ of late modernity, ‘designed to avoid substantive moral and metaphysical questions’. McKinsey consultants would take God out of the puzzle instead of urging a return to God to solve the problems of humanity. If the root cause of the present ecological crisis is ‘the failure to acknowledge God’, Reno observes, then Francis’ endorsement of the Earth Charter (a secular initiative for sustainable society) does not overcome a humanistic approach that seeks to exclude God.

Reno’s mixed review should be placed alongside other Catholic critiques. For instance, Daniel Mahoney observes in *National Review* that Francis’ ideological remarks in *LS* ‘sometimes, too, confuse Christian charity with secular humanitarianism’. Mahoney also thinks that *LS* has drawn from ‘secular apocalypticism’ which ‘the pope must avoid’. Mahoney claims that at times, ‘he [Pope Francis] confuses his personal judgments ... with the full weight of Catholic wisdom’.

Still, Mahoney urges respect for Francis’ artful engagement with environmental concerns. *LS* demonstrates

‘ample continuities and equally ample discontinuities with the great tradition that preceded him’,⁵¹ i.e. Catholic social teaching and the tradition of western political philosophy.

IV Locating an Evangelical Response to *Laudato Si*

In previous time periods, many evangelicals held to a dominionist reading of creation for human ends and did not imagine any possibility of rehabilitating fallen creation (due to doomsday eschatological presuppositions).⁵² Now, evangelicals accept more interconnected theologies of creation and embrace the intrinsic beauty of creation even in its post-lapsarian condition. Contemporary evangelicals recognize more readily their God-given roles as witnesses to eco-care, and to morality in various socio-political contexts.

This shift is demonstrated most clearly in *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology* (2014).⁵³ The book presents evangelicals’ journey in several parts: biblical-theological, historical and praxis. The authors affirm (a) the necessity of ‘listening to scripture’ for eco-care, (b) ‘the grandeur and groaning of the earth’, (c) the history of Christian engagement with creation as

51 Daniel J. Mahoney, ‘*Laudato Si* and the Catholic Social Tradition,’ *National Review* (10 October 2015), www.nationalreview.com/article/425349/laudato-si-and-catholic-social-tradition-daniel-j-mahoney (accessed 21 April 2017).

52 Kyle S. Van Houtan and Michael S. Northcott, eds., *Diversity and Dominion* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010).

53 Brunner, Butler and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*.

a journey 'in the wilderness', and (d) the Trinitarian call to restore earthly Eden. Evangelicals could follow the book's commitment to pursuing eco-activism in six ways: justice, mercy, heavenly-minded living for earthly good, embodied earthly living, supporting greening efforts of the church, and maintaining hope in the resurrection.

In the spirit of promoting evangelical eco-care, and against the backdrop of shifts in evangelical ecotheology, I craft in this section of the paper a possible tripartite response to *Laudato Si* for evangelicals. My purpose is to consider how Francis' appeal relates to evangelical understanding and thus to what extent evangelicals may accept *LS*' appeal to witness collaboratively on eco-care.

In considering this question, we should locate the appeal of *LS* for collaborative witness for the sake of the gospel as one among other such invitations extended in the *Cape Town Commitment* (2010), *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World* (2011), *Together Towards Life* (2013), and *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013).⁵⁴

1. Affirmations with additions

Like the biblical, theological treatment found in *LS*, the evangelical imperative to care for God's earth rests on a biblical basis for ecotheology.⁵⁵ However,

⁵⁴ See references in note 2. See also my reading of these documents in Timothy T. N. Lim, 'The Holy Spirit in EG, TTL, and CTC: The Pneumatological Impulse for Christian Mission,' *International Review of Mission* 104.2 (November 2015): 203–16.

⁵⁵ Bouma-Prediger, *Beauty of the Earth*, 81–110 and 111–29; Calvin B. DeWitt, 'The Scientist and the Shepherd: The Emergence of

LS makes no substantial mention of eschatological presuppositions and implications, which is a drawback in his treatment. I hold that eschatology is an integral aspect of Christian dogmatics and theology, and that it ought to influence the shape of ecotheology and be viewed as praxis of discipleship (as God's stewards in caring for life and creation).

Adding an eschatological dimension to an appeal for creation care is also relevant for evangelicals who have been wearied by controversies in eschatology. The eschatological reality of the future should not inhibit evangelical participation in eco-care in the present time, regardless of one's eschatological stance.⁵⁶

Evangelicals need not fear the eschatological dimension of ecotheology. We need not reject 'this-worldly' concerns to live an 'otherworldly' life or vice versa. Neither do speculations about the plight of the earth at the eschaton (as complete destruction, recreation, or the transformation of the present universe into a new heaven and earth) imply the meaningfulness or futility of pursuing ecological praxis in the present life.

Evangelical Environmentalism,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, edited by Roger S. Gottlieb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 568–87.

⁵⁶ See Thomas N. Finger, *Evangelicals Eschatology and the Environment* (Wynnewood, PA: Evangelical Environmental Network, 1998); for more recent developments, see Jacques Berlinerblau, *Thumpin' It* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), ch. 2, 'The Bible and the Environment: Evangelicals Discover Climate Change and Democrats Discover Evangelicals'. See also Bouma-Prediger, *Beauty of the Earth*, 57–80.

If the gospel entails the restoration and renewal of the earth and all creation as part of Christ's incarnational mission (Rom 8:21–23), then the mandate of living the gospel includes our part in seeking the renewal of creation, which will be reconstituted in Christ.⁵⁷

As eschatological theologian Brian Hebblethwaite explains, drawing from Jürgen Moltmann's *The Coming God*, 'the ultimate hope of resurrection, anticipated in Jesus Christ ... opens up, empowers, and demands Christian hope for this-worldly liberation in all its aspects', which would include the pursuit of an ecological restoration as a this-worldly responsibility for the other-worldly life to come. Hebblethwaite continues, 'Just because the resurrection of Jesus is the anticipation of the end of universal history, the Christian must hope and work for the transformation of every aspect of the present.'⁵⁸

Secularists, dating back to Lynn White in 1967, have frequently blamed Christians' otherworldly eschatology for lack of interest in, or even for exacerbating, the environmental crisis. However, evangelical ecological views have matured, showing that there is plenty of room for believers to care for this world as well. Christian eschatology generally values the transformation of creation, not its rampant destruc-

tion, even if God may put an end to this earth at a future time unknown to us.⁵⁹

The social costs of greed, carelessness and ignorance have been enormous. Exploitation of the environment and other socio-economically and politically irresponsible decisions have furthered ecological degradation and caused our ecological crises to spiral. All humanity is responsible for preserving our complex, multi-layered, interconnected, bio-diverse, ecological and atmospheric home. In response to Francis' plea, evangelicals may affirm with Catholics their eco-concern for making the world a better place.

2. Ambivalence amidst agreement

Yet, unlike the explicit openness of *LS* to the use of the work of secular scientists and environmentalists to inform a Christian response to the ecological crisis, some evangelicals remain ambivalent about 'environmental justice', which is read as a notion advanced by secular environmentalists in either too cosmocentric (and not sufficiently anthropocentric and theocentric) or too biocentric terms.⁶⁰ Although scientific findings do inform an understanding of

⁵⁷ William J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 297–8; Shane Clifton, 'Preaching the "Full Gospel" in the Context of Global Environmental Crises', in *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth*, edited by Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 117–34.

⁵⁸ Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Christian Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 181, 187.

⁵⁹ Lynn White Jr., 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,' *Science* 155 (10 March 1967): 1203–7; for a response, Richard T. Wright, 'Responsibility for the Ecological Crisis,' *Bioscience* 20.15 (August 1970): 851–3.

⁶⁰ For secular environmental ethics, see Renee Skelton and Vernice Miller, *The Environmental Justice Movement* (Natural Resources Defense Council, 2016). <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/environmental-justice-movement> (accessed 5 May 2017). For an evangelical appropriation of ecojustice, see Brunner, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 162–7.

the natural world, not all evangelicals could accept secular environmentalists' *de facto* assumption that the sciences provide concrete authority for their pursuits in environmental care.⁶¹

Neither do all evangelicals, especially American capitalistic evangelicals, agree with *LS*' analysis that economic policies have exacerbated the ecological crisis rather than contributing to human flourishing.⁶² Evangelicals generally see themselves as hopeful agents of God's transformation,⁶³ amid some literalists who still hold a more ephemeral view of the earth because of a doomsday or pre-millennial eschatology.⁶⁴ Also, not all evangelicals

agree that salvation includes a healed creation.⁶⁵

Even so, evangelical theology agrees on the value of all life, not just human life, as does *LS*. However, evangelicals typically affirm the 'instrumental value' of creation. This is in contrast to *LS* which agrees with environmental justice ethicists in recognising the 'intrinsic value' of the non-human natural world.⁶⁶ For those evangelicals, only humans are moral beings, with the right to exercise dominion over other creatures, and non-human species are resources for the use of humanity.⁶⁷ Still, creation is more than and not less than a resource for humanity, because, as the psalmist declared, creation sings forth the glory of God (Ps 19:1).

Humans do not own creation, but are stewards entrusted with the care of creation. Together with all crea-

61 Evangelicals' reservations about the sciences are more complex than a choice of either affirmation or rejection. See David N. Livingstone, D.G. Hart and Mark A. Noll, eds., *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Michael Roberts, *Evangelicals and Science* (New York: Greenwood, 2008).

62 *For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility* (Washington, DC: National Association of Evangelicals, 2004) demonstrates a willingness not just to urge policy changes but also to collaborate in socio-political spheres and, in that sense, to draw upon the political economy as a change agent.

63 Jürgen Moltmann's works *The Future of Creation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1979), *The Coming of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), *The Spirit of Life*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) and *In the End—The Beginning*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 2004), among other works, have been appropriated in various evangelical eschatologies despite Moltmann's pantheistic tendencies. For a different eschatological reading, see Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

64 Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 213–4.

65 Howard A. Snyder, *Salvation Means Creation Healed* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011); cf. Ernst M. Conradie, ed., *Creation and Salvation*, 2 vols. (London: LIT Verlag, 2012).

66 Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 61–2. Among other things, Wirzba also critiques contemporary culture for abandoning the interconnectedness, which aids flourishing of life, and for displacing the relevance of God in contemporary understanding of creation.

67 Several corrections have emerged. David S. Cunningham, 'The Way of All Flesh: Rethinking the Imago Dei', in *Creaturely Theology*, edited by Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009), 100–18 rejects the *imago dei* as a distinctive feature of the human creation. Ryan Patrick McLaughlin, *Christian Theology and the Status of Animals* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), affirms cosmo-sacramental of peace. On Christian animal rights, see Stephen M. Vantassel, *Dominion over Wildlife?* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2009).

tion, humanity showcases the Creator's handiwork, and in our earth and animal stewardship, we too join all creation to give God the glory! As the late Reformed scientific theologian, Thomas Torrance, reminds us, 'an unbreakable bond' in the Christian hope of redemption and recreation 'extends not just to human beings but to the universe as a whole'.⁶⁸

Thus, though evangelicals have maintained ambivalence about how to respond to the ecological crisis because of conflicting data in ecological science, technology and theology,⁶⁹ the invitation of *LS* provides an example for collaborative action amid disagreements. However, I am not claiming that evangelicals have to formulate their responses based on controversial scientific findings.

The relationship between science, theology and ethics has been rigorously discussed among a wide range of evangelicals, and to date no clear consensus has been reached.⁷⁰ For our purpose, even if evangelicals may not agree with the reading in *LS* about the findings of secular scientists, environ-

mentalists, economists and anthropologists, we can still heed its appeal to collaborate with others, not just Christians, in repairing the world we inhabit.

Francis' theological understanding, charitable spirit and recognition of the urgency of the crisis have motivated his appeal for a holistic and interdisciplinary adoption of creation care, working alongside constituencies outside the Catholic tradition. Evangelicals can learn from Francis' goodwill and willingness to work with others for the sake of 'saving' the world ecologically. Ecological conversion is a part of the gospel.⁷¹

3. Abstinence

Notwithstanding many evangelicals' positive appraisal of Pope Francis and/or *LS*,⁷² some within the evangelical camp would likely resist (or at least abstain from following) *LS* and its appeal to activism, and in doing so they would demonstrate historic continuity with much of their own tradition. Evangelicals abstained from participation in the early days of global ecological coalitions, such as in 1972 when the Unit-

⁶⁸ Thomas Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 244.

⁶⁹ John Jefferson Davis, 'Ecological "Blind Spots" in the Structure and Content of Recent Evangelical Systematic Theologies,' *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 43.2 (June 2000): 273–86.

⁷⁰ J. P. Moreland, *Christianity and the Nature of Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989); Phillip E. Johnson, *Reason in the Balance* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995); Jürgen Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); James K. A. Smith and Amos Yong, eds., *Science and the Spirit* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

⁷¹ Denis Edwards, *Partaking of God* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), Part 3.

⁷² For example, Evangelical Environmental Network President and CEO, Mitchell C. Hescox, 'All Children Deserve a Healthy Climate', *National Catholic Reporter* (3 June 2015), <https://www.nconline.org/blogs/ecco-catholic/all-children-deserve-healthy-climate> (accessed 21 April 2017); University of Wisconsin–Madison environmental scientist. Calvin B. DeWitt, 'Evangelical Contributions to Earth Stewardship: *Laudato Si* and Stewardship as Con-SERVICE', presented at the 100th anniversary of the Ecological Society of America, 18 June 2015.

ed Nations first convened an ecological conference titled 'Only One Earth'. Evangelicals have also had limited representation at the Earth Charter, a global ethical project that declares ethical principles of building a sustainable future and which held a worldwide civil society consultation in 2000.⁷³

Historically, evangelicals' distrust of government and suspicion of global coalitions have led them to mis-characterize these entities as unfavourable developments or even as works of the anti-Christ. Yet changes are evident, particularly since evangelical John Houghton's involvement as co-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the initiation of American mega-church pastor Rick Warren's PEACE program.⁷⁴

Moreover, ideas about 'natural spirituality' have frequently been intertwined in the quest for eco-care, and evangelicalism maintains a studious distance from New Age movements or groups that seek a harmonization with 'Mother Earth'. This harmonization schema is an essential belief and practice of many New Age proponents, but evangelicals view it as incompatible with Christian belief.⁷⁵ The acqui-

escence of *LS* in engaging with native, non-Christian, planetary spiritualities would sit uncomfortably with Evangelicals who have had unfriendly encounters with folk spiritualities, and thus some degree of abstinence is to be expected.

In light of these historic and contemporary cases of evangelical reluctance to join in global collaborations, albeit for noteworthy causes (such as the care of creation), one can likely project that some evangelicals will not be excited about the call of *LS* for global collaboration on eco-care, though they may be unlikely to speak against the necessity of joint or complementary efforts at some level.

Still, with regard to these evangelical reasons for abstinence, it may be relevant to consider George Fox Seminary faculty member Randy Woodley's inquiry as to whether there can be a different reception of 'harmony' through the notion of shalom.⁷⁶ Or could biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann's urge for harmony among all creation be fruitfully appropriated to redirect some evangelicals' tendencies towards abstinence?⁷⁷

V Preliminary Preparations for Collaborative Witness

The recommendation for evangelicals to participate collaboratively with Catholics and others in 'caring for our common home' entails the following

⁷³ See The Earth Charter Initiative 2006; <http://earthcharter.org/virtual-library2/the-earth-charter-text/> (accessed Apr. 21, 2017).

⁷⁴ Brunner, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 94, 153; cf. Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen, and David van Heemst, *Hope in Troubled Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 16–23.

⁷⁵ Douglas R. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986); Ron Rhodes, *The Counterfeit Christ of the New Age Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991) and *New Age Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

⁷⁶ Randy Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

⁷⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Peace* (St Louis: Chalice, 2001), 13–4; cf. Brunner, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 129.

preliminary preparations, especially in light of the prior considerations of why some evangelicals may be cautiously open to an action plan while others remain ambivalent or choose to abstain from such collaborations.

1. Extending the conversation

Evangelicals could intentionally extend their conversation to others who may not think, conceive, and act like us—Christians and non-Christians, religious and non-religious, governmental and non-governmental, etc.

Evangelicals have been comfortable talking and collaborating among themselves. Though some may interpret willingness to dialogue as a tacit approval of other groups' beliefs and practices, in most cases dialogue merely provides an occasion for understanding ourselves and others better.

Because evangelicals do not have resources like the Catholic magisterium and do not look to an authoritative teaching office, esteemed evangelical para-church organizations such as the World Evangelical Alliance ultimately do not confer with or claim to establish any authoritative power over others in the diverse evangelical conscience and polity. Thus, collaborations with constituencies within and outside evangelicalism could occur only as voluntary participation.

2. Providing resources

Evangelical leaders could provide a more representative set of resources to assist the re-thinking of a theology, practice and ethics of dialogue, participation and collaboration with participants outside evangelicalism for the care of creation.

Although many notable individuals have published various useful resources, documenting officially the principles of dialogue and the ethics of collaborative eco-witness will prepare evangelicals 'to enter into critical dialogue with the religious (and non-religious) convictions of other people'.⁷⁸ As these resources have highlighted in their examination of aspects of creation care, many potential challenges may inhibit meaningful engagement.⁷⁹ Still, without a representative commission of sorts, these individual voices do not speak for the diverse evangelical community.

Along with these insights, I wish to emphasize that collaboration is also about partnership and that there is value in learning the dynamics of group interaction and of intra- and inter-group engagement. Skilful use of group processes can help dialogue partners to overcome inhibitions, encourage effective group interaction, and prevent collaborative pitfalls.⁸⁰ A call for more

⁷⁸ Schirmacher and Johnson, *Environmental Ethics*, 60.

⁷⁹ For instance, Schirmacher and Johnson's *Environmental Ethics* (2016) has indirectly shown that the evangelical conscience does impact how we support of appeals for the right to drinking water, respond to inappropriate dualities in public ethics, converse with other religious and non-religious, secular groups on their approaches to creation care and the use of technology, and so forth. Gnanakan's evangelical adumbration of the theological, ecclesiological and practical aspects of eco-understanding in *Responsible Stewardship of God's Creation* (2014) can help congregations to formulate an evangelical consciousness of and response to the environmental crisis.

⁸⁰ I have written on the dynamics of collaboration among churches in *Ecclesial Recognition* (Leiden: Brill, 2017). See also Christena

representative efforts from the diverse evangelical community will hopefully provide resources for enabling effective dialogue and facilitating collaboration.

3. Articulating a response

Evangelicals who have been at the forefront in the appreciative use of technology could come together to articulate a much-needed response, both to those who are ambivalent and fearful about technological advancement (because they are horrified by the enormously ‘unprecedented proportion’ of destructive capacities of technology), and to avid champions of technological research.

Given the weighty caution *LS* has issued about technology (while acknowledging technological contributions to well-being and civilization) and the many emotional and highly charged and contentious debates for and against *LS* in both religious and secular communities, it seems that a fresh piece of deeper theological reflection is necessary ‘to clarify our [humanity’s] dependence, fragility, and finitude’: how should humans remain responsible in the development, production and use of technology?⁸¹ Technology may promise utopia, yet improving material conditions, business practices, living standards and lifestyle convenience and comfort cannot eradicate the world’s most pressing problems.

Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013).

81 I borrow insights from David Lewin, ‘Technology,’ *Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 457–76.

As realistic supporters of technological research and use, evangelicals are poised to provide a balanced response. Evangelical theology reflects realism (not naïvete) about the fallibility of humanity, the ethics of responsible stewardship and the needed anchor of spirituality in a pleasure-seeking, consumeristic, fallen world. Evangelicals have much to offer a world filled with misaligned hopes for the capabilities of science and technology. God alone satisfies humanity’s deepest yearnings, and contentment is not measured by what the world offers or by the conditions and situations of our life.⁸²

4. Sharing results

Evangelical non-profit and advocacy groups could gather to share their successes and failures in influencing the wider culture. Evangelical lobby groups, which have had various levels of success in bringing about cultural change, could draw on their experiences in policy-making and advocacy to start and lead new initiatives.

I am not implying that a more grandiose plan is better or more effective. From its small beginnings, the Earth Charter has generated substantial interest in environmental care. Evangelicals too, by pulling resources together and galvanizing support, could more effectively generate awareness, influence policy-making, and mobilize action.⁸³

82 James M. Houston, *Joyful Exiles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

83 *2000-2010 Earth Charter Initiative: At a Glance* (San Jose, Costa Rica: Earth Charter International Secretariat, 2009).

5. Envisioning outcomes

If envisioning a wide plan of action, which could be disseminated among evangelicals' global networks, is achievable, what are some possible outcomes of a compelling, massive initiative?

I am implicitly asking here if the appeals contained in *LS* and key evangelical documents may be resources for evangelical agencies' officials to begin conversations about inviting concrete participation across their relational and ecclesial networks. Which evangelical or non-evangelical bodies and their leaders are willing to be the organizers? Maybe, after decades of dialogue, we are now more ready to join hands with others to serve the world we live in and are called to serve.

VI Collaborating for Creation Care

I began by noting the expressed intent of various Catholic, evangelical, and Protestant agencies to collaborate for creation care. Yet efforts by the agencies in these communions have largely been stand-alone projects. Surely, we can do more together than if each group makes its case separately or independently.

Though evangelicals are less likely than Catholics or secular environmentalists to call eco-actions a movement towards 'environmental justice', this article has also demonstrated evangelicals' deep acknowledgement of their biblical-theological ecological responsibility as stewards and witnesses of God. Perhaps the time is right for for-

mulating ethical guidelines for encouraging collaboration among Catholics, evangelicals, and other Protestants. Maybe we need not more declarations but an acknowledgement of what Kusumita Pedersen summarizes as the fourfold norms of eco-care: solidarity, sustainability, sufficiency and participation.

As Pedersen argues, the present milieu is poised to welcome multiple approaches to prophetic and pragmatic action in eco-care, rather than a further deferral of our moral responsibility. Despite our various religious worldviews and their differing senses of eco-responsibility, after decades of conversation at varying levels, we ought to be able to draw from cross-cultural resources to catalyze change concretely, not just for our generation but also for posterity, so long as the Lord Jesus tarries.⁸⁴

Maybe it is time for our concrete action to correct secular environmentalists' still-unjust criticism that Christianity contributes only to ecological denigration. Maybe eco-care can bring the churches together in unprecedented ways.⁸⁵ May the Trinitarian Spirit, who renews all creation, help us in our witness, ecologically and in all areas of discipleship, and pour out the Spirit again without measure, for the transformation of our home.

⁸⁴ Kusumita P. Pedersen, 'Religious Ethics and the Environment: A Review Essay', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 43.3 (2015): 558–85.

⁸⁵ Max Oelschlaeger, *Caring for Creation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 120.

The Role of Divine Healing in Cross-Cultural Ministry

Richard Hibbert, G. Geoffrey Harper
and Evelyn Hibbert

Introduction

When people first hear of Jesus, they often wonder not so much about who he is but what he is able to do for them. They want to know whether Jesus has power to help with the practical problems that threaten to overwhelm them. Among the most pressing of these is sickness.

Despite advances in modern medicine, the experience of being ill brings people face to face with the frailty of their bodies and their powerlessness over life and death. For most people in the Global South, illness is an everyday reality that threatens the survival of both children and adults.¹ Sociologist Rebecca Bomann, who studied sickness and healing in Colombia, describes the constant threats to health posed by living in a marginalised neighbourhood in one of Africa's,

Asia's, or Latin America's cities. Following ethnographic fieldwork in a Bogota *barrio*, she recalls, 'Open sewer drains, piles of uncovered garbage, and foul-smelling meat markets were common sights... . Hygiene was a luxury that only a minority could afford, and even fewer had access to quality medical care.'²

At the same time, healing from illness or injury is prominent in the conversion narratives of many Christians across the world. In the second month of Richard and Evelyn's church planting ministry among the Millet (Turkish Roma) in a Bulgarian city, three believers from a town five hours' train journey away arrived on our doorstep. As we had arranged to travel to Turkey the next day, they offered to stay for the two weeks we would be away. During that time, they prayed for a nine-

1 World Health Organization, 'The Top Ten Causes of Death,' *Fact Sheet 310*, 2014, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs310/en/>.

2 Rebecca Bomann, 'The Salve of Divine Healing,' in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, ed. Candy Gunther Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 198.

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year-old girl who had never been able to speak. She ran to her devout Muslim mother crying, 'Mummy, mummy, I can speak!' Deeply impressed by the healing that followed prayer in the name of Jesus, her mother started coming to the meetings of the newly formed church.

This is not an isolated incident. Reports of healing as a significant element in people's journey in and towards faith in Christ can be found throughout the Global South. A multi-country survey of Pentecostals found that in eight countries across Latin America, Asia, and Africa, more than 70 per cent claimed they had received divine healing for themselves or a family member.³

Todd Hartch suggests that divine healing is part of the reason for the 're-birth' of Latin American Christianity.⁴ A recent study of Protestant churches in China estimates that more than half of all church members became Christians because they personally experienced divine healing or saw a family member healed.⁵ In one Filipino denomination, 83 per cent of church attendees surveyed reported that healing was highly significant in their conversion.⁶

3 Luis Lugo et al., *Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals* (Washington, DC, 2006), 17, <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2006/10/pentecostals-08.pdf>.

4 Todd Hartch, *The Rebirth of Latin American Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 101–102, 125.

5 Gotthard Oblau, 'Divine Healing and the Growth of Practical Christianity,' in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, ed. Cathy Gunter Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 308, 313.

6 Melba Maggay, 'The Persistence of the Old Gods: Some Inter-Cultural Dimensions', *Journal of African Christian Thought* 11, (2008): 26.

On this basis, Philip Jenkins claims that divine healing 'is the key element that has allowed Christianity to compete so successfully with its rivals outside the Christian tradition'.⁷ Illustrations of how healing has attracted people to the gospel can be found throughout the history of mission. Jesuit work in Vietnam in the seventeenth century, for example, led to around 70,000 Vietnamese becoming Christians. Historian, Nola Cooke, points out that it was divine healing that particularly caught the attention of the local people and attracted them to Christ. Despite the Jesuits' stress on the rationality of Catholicism, it was the readiness of missionaries and local converts to pray for the sick that gave the Christian message legitimacy at every level of society.⁸

This article explores the role that this 'key element' plays in people's faith journey. It begins by examining reasons why the role of healing in Christian ministry has often been downplayed and analyses the expectations of missionaries and other Christian workers with respect to healing. It then explores the role of divine healing among the Turkish Roma in a recent church planting movement in Bulgaria. Reflecting on this analysis in the light of the Psalms, implications for Christian workers are drawn out.

7 Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 159.

8 Nola Cooke, 'Christian Conversion in Cochinchina', in *Asia in the Making of Christianity: 1600s to the Present*, ed. Richard Young and Jonathan Seitz (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 39–40.

I The Search for Supernatural Power for Healing

Across the world, people from many religious traditions seek supernatural power for healing and for protection from sickness.⁹ Unlike people from western cultures, who tend to make a clear division between the natural and the supernatural, the material and the spiritual, most people from Africa, Asia, and Latin America are more holistic in their thinking.¹⁰ One reason for this is that they see life as an indivisible whole. They believe that 'nothing happens in the physical world that does not have spiritual undertones.'¹¹

Followers of primal and folk religions across the world believe that both benevolent and malevolent spiritual forces influence people's health. The majority of the Ghanian Akan, the Nigerian Kamwe, the Indian Mizo, the Thai, and the Navajo, for example, perceive that illness is caused by spiritual powers, and that spiritual power is needed for healing.¹² They therefore

regularly seek spiritual help for sickness. Africans, for example, consult traditional spiritual healers far more often than they go to doctors or nurses trained in modern medicine.¹³

Because of this assumption that spiritual forces are at work in sickness, many people expect whatever faith they adopt to address all of life and to provide power to help them with life's challenges. More pointedly, they expect that the Christian God presented to them in the gospel will be able to help them with ill health. Like the people who came to Jesus for healing, they expect God to be a God of the here and now, and believe that 'a God who cannot provide the basic needs for survival is not a true God, especially when, before conversion, their ancestor spirits were able to "bless" them' holistically.¹⁴

II The Downplaying of Divine Healing

Reports of divine healing are often downplayed or excluded from offi-

⁹ Paul G. Hiebert, Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 77; Charles H. Kraft, *Worldview for Christian Witness* (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 2008), 242.

¹⁰ Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas? The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2014), 3.

¹¹ Ben Y. Quarshie, 'African Perspectives on Theological Education for Mission', in *Reflecting on and Equipping for Christian Mission*, ed. Stephen Bevans et al. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 264.

¹² Lalsangkima Pachuau, 'Mizo 'Sakhua' in Transition: Change and Continuity from Primal Religion to Christianity', *Missiology: An International Review* 34 (2006): 43–45; Cephas

Omenyo, 'New Wine in an Old Wine Bottle? Charismatic Healing in the Mainline Churches in Ghana,' in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, ed. Cathy Gunther Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 234; Marguerite Kraft, *Understanding Spiritual Power: A Forgotten Dimension of Cross-Cultural Ministry* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1995), 16, 120.

¹³ Meredith Long, *Health, Healing, and God's Kingdom: New Pathways to Christian Health Ministry in Africa* (Carlisle: Regnum Books, 2000), 118–21.

¹⁴ Wonsuk Ma, 'Asian (Classical) Pentecostal Theology in Context', in *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia*, ed. Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 54.

cial accounts of mission history. Gary McGee has convincingly shown that standard histories of mission from the late 1800s through to the 1970s mostly overlooked miracles in their writings.¹⁵ Possible reasons for this exclusion include doubts about the credibility of sources, questions over the ideological agenda of the authors, historiographical presuppositions of the academy that do not allow for speculation about cause and effect, theological presuppositions that authentic God-inspired miracles ended with the age of the apostles, and fear that the controversial nature of miracles might harm the goal of recruiting people into the missions movement. Yet there is compelling evidence that physical healing has played a role in the conversion of individuals, tribes, and nations from at least the third century through to the present.¹⁶

Theological presuppositions are particularly powerful in persuading Christians to ignore or de-emphasise the role that divine healing might play in ministry. Some adopt a view that miracles ceased with the completion of the canon. In subscribing to this view they believe they are following reformers like Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin, who are widely understood to have taught that signs and wonders were attestations of new revelation and therefore ceased with the completion of the New Testament.¹⁷

¹⁵ Gary McGee, 'Miracles and Mission Revisited,' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 25 (2001): 146–151.

¹⁶ McGee, 'Miracles and Mission Revisited,' 146, 147, 149.

¹⁷ McGee, 'Miracles and Mission Revisited,' 147.

For the reformers, taking this stance minimised the danger that people might be led astray by superstitions or false teachers who claimed miracles as confirmations of their teachings.¹⁸

Yet, both Luther and Calvin affirmed that miracles of healing did occasionally take place; in fact, Luther reported that several people were healed when he prayed for them.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Miroslav Volf argues that Protestant theology, following Luther's lead, has largely tended to focus on salvation as a spiritual liberation of the inner person which does not directly affect the health of the body.²⁰

However, there is a danger in Christian workers downplaying divine healing: it can hinder people from coming to faith in Christ. People who might otherwise be drawn to the salvation God offers them through Jesus may walk away when they cannot see any answer to their need for healing being presented in the communication of the gospel. Ignoring divine healing can also encourage 'split-level' or 'dual-allegiance' Christianity in which people turn to God for eternal life, but resort to amulets, charms, shamans, and alternate spiritual forces for help with sickness.²¹

¹⁸ James I. Packer, 'The Empowered Christian Life,' in *The Kingdom and the Power*, ed. Gary Greig and Kevin Springer (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 211.

¹⁹ Stanley M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit: Medieval Roman Catholic and Reformation Traditions* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 151–52, 167.

²⁰ Miroslav Volf, 'The Materiality of Salvation: An Investigation in the Soteriologies of Liberation and Pentecostal Theologies,' *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26 (1989): 453.

²¹ Kraft, *Worldview for Christian Witness*, 336;

Filipina anthropologist and theologian Melba Maggay describes such dual-allegiance Christianity in the Philippines. She attributes this partly to the failure of early Protestant missionaries to relate the gospel to illness and healing. Maggay cites a mid-1990s study which found that more than half of Filipino Catholics interviewed performed rituals of penitence during Holy Week with the aim of warding off illness and maintaining good health.²²

According to her analysis, Filipino culture has an 'intense longing for a spirituality that integrates all of life' and a 'vast subterranean tradition of healing' that strongly emphasises spiritual sources of health and healing.²³ But many early missionaries taught people to divide reality into physical and spiritual realms and their message did not address deeper Filipino worldview assumptions concerning sickness and health. Filipinos therefore could not see how one of their deepest needs—health and healing—was addressed by the good news of the gospel.

III Expectations of Divine Healing

The expectations of Christian workers about divine healing influence their responses to the sick. Linguist Jacob Loewen relates a poignant story from his ministry among the Choco in Colombia: 'I suddenly realised that my

western naturalistic and materialistic view of germs and illness actually made it impossible for me to "believe" sufficiently for faith to heal,' he explains. His Choco brothers were praying that God would heal a woman with pneumonia, but they felt they could not invite Loewen or his fellow missionary to join in those prayers. They said, 'I'm sorry ... but we couldn't invite you. You two fellows really don't believe, and you cannot heal by God's power when you have unbelievers in the circle.'²⁴

Regarding expectations of divine healing, Christians can be categorised into three broad groups. Those with low to nil expectation could be termed 'closed.' They may believe that such healing is theoretically possible but have not consciously experienced or witnessed it themselves. Accordingly, this group holds that God in his sovereignty usually does not grant requests for healing by performing a miracle.²⁵ Their God is, in Gordon Fee's words, the God of 'standard-brand evangelicalism,' who 'is very much a God of the ordinary.'²⁶ This expectation is well represented in Kelly Hilderbrand's experience of praying for a Lisu child who had been deaf in one ear since birth.

Honestly, I was not expecting any result. Being a Western Christian, I believe in the power of God, but

Paul Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008), 15.

²² Maggay, 'Persistence of the Old Gods,' 25.

²³ Maggay, 'Persistence of the Old Gods,' 25, 27.

²⁴ Jacob Loewen, 'Evangelism and Culture,' in *The New Face of Evangelicalism*, ed. Rene Padilla (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1976), 182.

²⁵ Kate Bowler, *Blessed: A History of The American Prosperity Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), loc 229-239, doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199827695.001.0001.

²⁶ Gordon Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2006), 26.

my worldview does not expect the miraculous to be a daily occurrence. As things were being translated, the little girl spoke to her mother and her mother began screaming and dancing. The translator told me that the girl could now hear in her previously deaf ear. I, of course, assumed that something had been lost in translation, and I asked again if the little girl could hear. I was assured that the little girl could now hear from both her ears.²⁷

A second group may be classed as 'open'. They have a significantly higher expectation that God heals people in response to prayer, an anticipation that is often heightened through ministry experience in which healing occurred. Missionaries like C.T. Studd, Stanley Smith, and other members of the Cambridge Seven, for example, came to believe that divine healing is an ongoing phenomenon in missions because of their own experiences of praying for people and seeing them healed.²⁸

Some of the first Presbyterian missionaries to Korea arrived with the view that miracles ceased with the completion of the canon. Nevertheless, they came to believe that divine healing was a valid part of missionary work as they saw Korean evangelists praying for the sick and people being healed.²⁹ Similarly, a British mission-

ary doctor working in East Malaysia explains that his expectation of divine healing increased markedly as a result of his ministry among young, dynamic, and growing churches. These Malaysian Christians assumed they should pray for the sick and expected God to intervene.³⁰

Christian workers in a third group could be categorised as 'expectant.' With high-level expectations about divine healing, members of this group frequently pray for the sick. Their anticipation is partly a result of experience—they have witnessed healing in the past—and partly a result of their theology. Many believe that Christ's work on the cross not only brings salvation for the soul but also secures healing for the body for everyone who (truly) believes.³¹ Others hold that Jesus empowered his followers not only to proclaim God's kingdom but also to demonstrate its coming through signs and wonders.³² While a subset of this group believes and proclaims that God has obligated himself to heal every sickness for those who have faith, others are cautious not to presume that

costal and Charismatic Healing, ed. Cathy Gunter Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 268–69.

30 Bill Lees, 'Hesitations about Expectancy,' in *Signs, Wonders, and Healing*, ed. John Goldingay (Leicester: IVP, 1989), 123.

31 Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 227; Guy Duffield and Nathaniel Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E Bible College, 1983), 412–13.

32 This forms the underlying thesis of John Wimber and Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2009).

27 Kelly Hilderbrand, 'What led Thai Buddhist background believers to become Christians: A study of one church in Bangkok,' *Missiology: An International Review*, 44 (2016): 411.

28 McGee, 'Miracles and Mission Revisited,' 152.

29 Sean C. Kim, 'Reenchanted: Divine Healing in Korean Pentecostalism,' in *Global Pente-*

healing is always guaranteed.³³

IV Divine Healing in Conversion and the Growth of Millet Churches

Miracles of divine healing are reported in many parts of the world where the church is relatively new and the gospel is being encountered by people for the first time. The question is how to work with God in such situations. Understanding how healing helps people in their journey towards faith in Christ can help Christians to work with God more effectively. One way to deepen understanding of how God uses divine healing to draw people to himself is to analyse the role that healing has played in the birth and growth of a particular group of churches—the Millet churches of Bulgaria.³⁴

Most Millet are pre-occupied with the problems of the here-and-now—

getting enough money to feed their families, staying healthy or finding a cure for sickness, and being protected from evil spirits. Beginning in the late 1980s and accelerating with the fall of communism, thousands of previously Muslim Millet came to faith in Christ and formed Turkish-speaking churches. The number of churches in this previously unreached people group grew rapidly from about five at the end of the 1980s to around one hundred in 1995, with an estimated 10,000 church attendees.³⁵ The majority of those who came to faith in Christ experienced miraculous healing or had a family member who was miraculously healed. One Millet church leader, Richard, interviewed, highlighted the role of healing when he stated, 'Healthy people never start coming to church'.³⁶

To investigate the role of illness and divine healing in Millet Christians' journey towards faith in Christ, conversion narratives and hymns written by believers were analysed. Interviews were conducted in 2008 with thirty-eight Millet Christians concerning how they came to faith in Christ. An experience of divine healing was a significant factor in the conversion narratives of sixteen (42 per cent).³⁷ Indigenous songs written by Christian Millet that mentioned sickness and/or healing were also examined. Of the 221 Mil-

³³ Fee, *Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels*, 20; Frank Macchia, 'Pentecostal Theology,' in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Movements*, ed. Stanley Burgess (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 1135.

³⁴ The Millet are a Turkish-speaking, traditionally Muslim sub-group of Roma who live in Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Greece, and increasingly across the countries of the European Union where many have gone to work. Nevertheless, the largest Millet population still lives in Bulgaria where they number about 300,000. Marginalised in Bulgarian society, the majority live in segregated ghetto-like neighbourhoods on the edges of towns and cities. More detail can be found in Richard Y. Hibbert, 'Why Do They Leave? An Ethnographic Investigation of Defection from Turkish-Speaking Roma Churches in Bulgaria,' *Missiology: An International Review* 41 (2013): 315–16.

³⁵ Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk, *Operation World: 21st Century Edition* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 129.

³⁶ Richard Y. Hibbert, 'Stagnation and Decline Following Rapid Growth in Turkish-Speaking Roma Churches in Bulgaria' (PhD diss.; Trinity International University, 2008), 80.

³⁷ Hibbert, 'Stagnation and Decline', 117.

let songs published in a late-1990s Bulgarian Turkish songbook, forty-two mention sickness and/or healing. Several common themes are evident.

1. Fervent prayer and testimonies of healing by believers as a group

Every conversion narrative involving sickness and healing is unique, but a basic pattern is nevertheless discernible. Illness drives sick people and their families to find help, often initially from the medical system or from Muslim teachers. Next, the person or family seeks God's help through Christians, who pray fervently for them and invite them to a church meeting to be prayed for by the whole group. A woman whose daughter developed a mental illness that the family believed was caused by an evil spirit illustrates this pattern and highlights the role that Christians and churches played in healing:

Because we weren't believers, we took her to the *hoca* [Muslim teacher]. We paid people to do all kinds of *babishki raboti* [folk religious healing rituals]... . When we didn't see any cure, I took her to the doctor, and he sent her to Sofia to the hospital. She stayed there one and a half months, but she didn't get better. She was the same. During that time, faith in the *mahalle* [Millet neighbourhood] started and began to grow. The believers said to me, 'God comes into our dreams and says you should come to faith, and your child will be healed by God.' ... I said, 'I don't know how to pray.' They said, 'We will tell you how to pray.'

The Millet Christians played a key

role in mediating healing by praying for it with conviction and passion, confidently testifying to God's healing power, and praying for the sick in church meetings. One interviewee tells everyone he meets, 'Jesus has power. Whoever has a problem only needs to ask him, and he will heal him.'

Testimonies like this act as a catalyst for people turning to Christians and then to the church for healing. When they get to the church, they are fervently prayed for by the gathered believers. This is reflected in several hymns in phrases such as, 'I came to your house and you healed me' (in which the believer is the speaker), and, 'Come, come to my house and I will heal you' (in which Jesus is the speaker).

2. Being drawn to faith in Jesus through healing

For most of the sixteen interviewees, being healed was a turning point in their journey of faith. Bomann's comment that, 'healing plays a pivotal role in drawing nonbelievers to church services—perhaps more than the idea of salvation, at least as this notion is commonly understood by North American and European interpreters of religion', is as true for the Millet as it is for the residents of Bogota she interviewed.³⁸ Experiencing God as healer led many Millet interviewees to put their faith in Jesus. One man who had been paralysed explains, '[The Christians] prayed for me and I was immediately healed. I began to believe at that moment.'

³⁸ Bomann, 'The Salve of Divine Healing,' 194.

Healing seems to act as a window through which people see something of God's nature and character. Those healed see beyond the cure to what it communicates: God's power and mercy. Experiencing God's power and love leads some to put their faith in Christ.³⁹ A few lines of a song express how many Millet encounter God through experiencing healing:

Jesus Christ, my Lord ... I cannot
see your face ...

[But] by faith I have seen you; You
healed me.

I have believed in you, my God,
without seeing your face.

Being healed is a tangible experience of God's power that gives those healed 'the sense of being tenderly cared for by a loving God'.⁴⁰ Several Millet hymns praise God for his love and power expressed through healing; phrases include, 'You healed me, my mighty Father!' and, 'You give us healing; you give us love'. Some interviewees recalled that they also felt peace and 'warmth' when they were healed. One said, 'A peace entered me. A newness came into me.' Another was healed as she listened to a Christian in the hospital bed next to hers singing hymns and reading from the Bible. She recalls, 'Those words the sister was saying and the hymns she was singing worked in my heart and made me warm.'

³⁹ Elizabeth S. Sanzana, "'Silver and Gold Have I None,'" in *Pentecostal Mission and Global Christianity*, ed. Wonsuk Ma, Veli-Matti Karkkainen, and Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 132–33.

⁴⁰ Bomann, 'The Salve of Divine Healing', 201–202.

Through healing not only the person healed but also their family members are often drawn to the church and to faith in Christ. Many interviewees immediately began telling their family and neighbours what had happened to them.

Not every person who is prayed for is healed, however. Several interviewees spoke of ongoing sickness or pain, but also of their hope of complete healing one day. One woman told Richard, 'My legs hurt, every part of me hurts, but God says, "I am with you. I am going to raise you from the dead. I am going you heal you. I am not going to leave you."' A pastor and hymn writer, who suffered for many years from spinal tuberculosis and eventually died from it, emphasises the need to keep praying because God helps his people in their suffering:

Everyone has problems. Everyone
suffers.

I am giving you endurance. That is
sufficient for you.

Whether I am sick, or am in pain, or
dying, always pray to God.

3. Healing, forgiveness, and heaven

As Millet Christians reflect on their experiences of being healed and coming to faith in Christ, they express a close link between healing and forgiveness. Their hymns frequently portray this close connection through juxtaposition; for example, 'You forgive us our sins; you heal us.' Forgiveness and physical healing are both aspects of salvation for the Christian Millet, as expressed in this hymn:

I was very sinful, my Father
I was very sick

Jesus my Lord found me
And healed me

While Millet Christians keenly seek physical healing, they also believe that people need a healing of the heart in order for them to enter heaven. This is highlighted in several hymns. In one, a sick person prays for physical healing, and Jesus responds:

Let me come into your heart.
Let me wash your heart clean with
my blood...
In the end I will heal you and give
you heaven.

V Biblical Perspectives on Divine Healing

As with Millet hymns, the Bible has much to say about divine healing. Yet, even attempting to catalogue all the relevant passages is beyond what we can accomplish here. In this article, we focus on the psalmists' perspectives regarding divine healing.

Like most people in today's world, the psalmists do not separate the spiritual from the physical, and they recognise the influence of sin and the demonic in illness. They resist dualistic conceptions of sickness that exclude God from the sick person's experience. This recognition that God is involved in their illness results in fervent prayer. The psalms therefore present examples of how to pray for and give testimony about God's healing. They also model how to respond when believers' prayers do not result in healing and stress the role of the community in the experience of sickness and healing.

Before focusing on the Psalms, however, it is worth considering the broader biblical-theological sweep of

the Scriptures with respect to healing. The apostle John paints a poignant eschatological picture: '[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away' (Rev 21:4 NIV). The certainty of final restoration and the swallowing up of death in victory (1 Cor 15:54) are made possible by Christ's death and resurrection, which inaugurate a new world as well as pointing forward to its full realisation.⁴¹

Thus Christ overcomes the full effects of Genesis 3 and makes possible the transformation of the cosmos. Sickness is part of the 'old order of things' and is a consequence of the decay of the human body towards death. Sickness brings pain and grief to individuals and their communities. The promise of a new heavens and earth includes the certain hope shared by all believers that their bodies will be released from inevitable disease and decay and will be restored to physical wholeness.

However, questions remain. What should believers do in the present age, while still in 'bondage to decay' (Rom 8:21), or when confronted with the ravages of sickness in their family and friends? How should Christians think biblically and theologically about divine healing? The psalms provide some answers to these questions.

⁴¹ In the Gospels, Jesus's healing miracles function as signs of the inbreaking Kingdom of God (e.g., Mt 11:2-5; Jn 4:54), a kingdom that is both 'now' (Mt 12:28; Lk 4:17-21) and 'not yet' (Mt 25:31-34; Mk 1:15).

1. Causes and outcomes of sickness

The psalmists challenge reductionist views of the world, advocating instead a holistic conception that upholds divine sovereignty even in illness.⁴² For example, the writer of Psalm 88 complains:

You have put me in the depths of the pit,
in the regions dark and deep.

Your wrath lies heavy upon me,
and *you* overwhelm me with all
your waves. *Selah*

You have caused my companions to
shun me;
you have made me a horror to
them.

...

Afflicted and close to death from my
youth up,
I suffer *your* terrors; I am help-
less.

Your wrath has swept over me;
your dreadful assaults destroy
me. (Ps 88:6–8, 15–16 ESV
[emphasis added])

The second person language reveals an understanding that YHWH is responsible for both blessing *and* calamity (cf. Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6–7), calamity that, in the context of Psalm 88, includes extreme illness.⁴³ Barry

Webb outlines the necessity of such language:

Here we make contact with an angst which is at the very heart of Israelite religion with its uncompromising monotheism. For if there is but one God, who is sovereign over all things, no final explanation for anything is possible other than that he is behind it, and there is nowhere else to run but into [God's] arms.⁴⁴

Yet, while YHWH is uncontestedly sovereign, there is scope for a degree of asymmetry with respect to causation—that is, YHWH stands directly behind what is good; indirectly behind what is not good.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the language used by the psalmists emphasises that the appropriate response to calamity, including sickness, is to seek God for help, regardless of its cause.

The Psalms also illustrate that there can be a connection between lack of physical wellbeing and sin. This correlates with the wider testimony of the Scriptures (e.g., Num 12:9–12; Acts

⁴² For further discussion, see G. Geoffrey Harper, 'Lament and the Sovereignty of God: Theological Reflections on Psalm 88,' in *Finding Lost Words: The Church's Right to Lament* (ed. G. Geoffrey Harper and Kit Barker; ACTMS Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2017).

⁴³ The causes of lament in Psalm 88 have been variously construed. Certainly, physical symptoms are mentioned (vv. 4, 9) and are at least part of the problem. Thus, for Dahood,

Psalm 88 is the 'lament of a desolate man in mortal illness'—Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II. 51–100: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 17; Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), 302. See, similarly, H. D. Preuss, 'Psalm 88 als Beispiel alttestamentlichen Redens vom Tod,' in *Der Tod—ungelöstes Rätsel oder überwindener Feind* (ed. August Strobel; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1974), 71.

⁴⁴ Barry G. Webb, *Five Festal Garments: Christian Reflections on the Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther* (NSBT 10; Leicester: Apollos, 2000), 64.

⁴⁵ The language of asymmetry is borrowed from D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord?: Reflections on Suffering and Evil* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990). Such asymmetry is demonstrated, for example, by the role of 'the satan' in Job 1–2.

12:21–23; Rev 16:10–11), even while recognising that sin is not necessarily the cause of illness (e.g., Job 1–2; Jn 9:1–3). When there is a connection, however, confession and repentance are required (cf. Jas 5:15–16). The penitential psalms (Pss 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143) demonstrate this dynamic.⁴⁶ Psalm 38 makes a sin-illness nexus explicit:

Because of your wrath there is no health in my body;
 there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin.
 My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear.
 My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly.
 I am bowed down and brought very low;
 all day long I go about mourning.
 My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body.
 I am feeble and utterly crushed;
 I groan in anguish of heart. (vv. 3–8 NIV)

The psalmist accordingly declares, ‘I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin’ (v. 18 ESV). Psalm 32 evidences a similar movement: ‘when I kept silent, my bones wasted away ... I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin’ (vv. 3, 5 ESV). As with the recognition of God’s sovereignty in illness, recognition of sin’s part in illness drives the sinner to God to seek forgiveness and physical restoration.

Also acknowledged by the psalmists

⁴⁶ Elements of physical distress appear in five of these psalms (6:2, 6–7; 32:3–5; 38:3–8; 51:8; 102:3–5).

is the possibility of demonic oppression as a reason for illness. With respect to Psalm 91, for instance, Qumran evidence (11Q11) reveals that parts of the psalm were used for exorcisms in the first century AD.⁴⁷ Particularly important were verses 5–6, where several key terms had demonic associations in an Ancient Near East context. The ‘arrow that flies by day’ (v. 5) may denote one of the sickness-bearing arrows of Reshef, the god of pestilence.⁴⁸ Similarly, the LXX translates v. 6b (‘the plague that destroys at midday’ [NIV]), as the ‘noonday demon’.⁴⁹ Accordingly, Meir Malul argues that Psalm 91 ‘abounds with names of ... demons’.⁵⁰

Nevertheless, the point of the psalm is clear: even when endangered by the demonic, YHWH is a refuge and fortress (v. 2; cf. vv. 4, 9). Those who make the Most High their dwelling will be delivered from harm and disaster (v. 9–10). YHWH vows to rescue, protect, answer, deliver, and satisfy those who love and call upon him (vv. 14–16). As Andrew Schmutzer concludes, ‘God

⁴⁷ Andrew J. Schmutzer, ‘Psalm 91: Refuge, Protection, and Their Use in the New Testament,’ in *The Psalms: Language for All Seasons of the Soul* (ed. Andrew J. Schmutzer and David M. Howard; Chicago: Moody, 2013), 98–99. This section is indebted to Schmutzer’s insights.

⁴⁸ Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (trans. Timothy J. Hallett; London: SPCK, 1978), 85.

⁴⁹ δαιμονίου μεσημβρινοῦ. See Schmutzer, ‘Psalm 91,’ 97.

⁵⁰ Meir Malul, ‘Terror of the Night לילה פחד,’ in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 852.

... pledges his self-involvement to believers.⁵¹ Psalm 91 therefore urges readers to actively seek refuge in God, even when faced with demonic oppression.

Jesus likewise saw a connection between healing and overcoming Satan's power. When he sent out his disciples in Luke 10 and commanded them to 'heal the sick' (v. 9), they returned with joy declaring that even the demons submitted to them (v. 17). Jesus's response adapts the wording of Psalm 91:13. 'I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you' (Luke 10:19 NIV).⁵²

2. Praying for healing

The psalms provide a model of what prayer for healing ought to look like. The sovereignty of God over all things, taken as granted by the psalmists, evokes fervent petition. Voices of complaint and lament in the psalms do not reflect crises of faith, or theological vacillation; on the contrary, it is unmoved confidence in YHWH's rule that provokes such appeal.

Psalms 1 and 2, functioning as an introduction to the Psalter, set the expectation clearly: the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked but meditates on *torah* will be blessed (Ps 1:1–2); that blessing is secured by taking refuge in the king YHWH has installed on his throne (Ps 2:6, 12). It is the non-realisation of this blessing that provokes the cries of the psalmists. Their pained use of 'Why?' and 'How long?' is thus an appeal for God

to bring about the fullness of what he has promised:

Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am faint;

heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.

My soul is in deep anguish.

How long, LORD, how long? (Ps 6:2–3 NIV)

Moreover, fervent prayer is maintained over time, even in the absence of response, because the psalmist knows there is no one else to turn to: 'Day and night I cry out before you ... I call out to you, O LORD, every day; ... Why do you hide your face from me?' (Ps 88:2, 9, 14 [auth. trans.]). Their knowledge of God—his promises and his character—drive the psalmists to persistent, fervent prayer fuelled by an unshaken belief that God is bringing about the restoration of all things.

The psalms thus provide a model for how believers can cry out to God for the not-yet in the midst of their pain. They can express doubts and fears, yet still remain steadfast in their confidence in God's sovereignty. When God delays the restoration that his character commits him to, the righteous response is to lament. The godly should cry out 'Why?'; they ought to complain to God and demand to know 'How long?'⁵³

Indeed, rather than such questioning being merely *permitted*, the psalms go further by suggesting this is the way the people of God *must* respond, for all the psalms are presented as virtuous responses—lament just as much as

51 Schmutzer, 'Psalm 91,' 107.

52 Schmutzer, 'Psalm 91,' 106.

53 As in all theological discourse, correct grammar is essential. There is a world of difference between complaining *to* God and complaining *about* God.

praise. God offers his people a variety of expressions to use, depending on circumstances. Thus, lament gives followers of Christ a voice which enables them to express faith even in the absence of sought-for healing.⁵⁴

3. Testifying about healing

Many psalms are testimonies to God's healings that proclaim to the world what God has done and encourage others to seek the same. Thus, the psalmists instruct pray-ers regarding the rightful place of thanksgiving. It is here that insights derived from form criticism, particularly the identification of multiple genres within the Psalter, prove beneficial.⁵⁵

Psalmic types are not only identifiable, but can be seen to work in concert. Walter Brueggemann demonstrates this by charting a flow from praise (his 'Psalms of Orientation') through lament ('Psalms of Disorientation') to thanksgiving ('Psalms of Re-Orientation').⁵⁶ Important to note

⁵⁴ For an exploration of how lament might be recovered in corporate Christian spirituality, see G. Geoffrey Harper and Kit Barker, eds., *Finding Lost Words: The Church's Right to Lament* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2017).

⁵⁵ The classic work remains Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel* (trans. James D. Nogalski; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998 [orig. 1933]). See also, Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen; Atlanta: John Knox, 1981 [orig. 1965]).

⁵⁶ Walter Brueggemann, 'Psalms and the Life of Faith: A Suggested Typology of Function', *JSOT* 17 (1980), 3-32: 6-10. Brueggemann also refers to 'Psalms of Disorientation' as 'Psalms of Dislocation' (7).

is that thanksgiving psalms derive increased force when seen as responses to situations of lament. These psalms accordingly reflect on a time of past trial, acknowledge God's deliverance, and then move to praise. Psalm 40 illustrates the movement:

I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God. (vv. 1-3 NIV.)

This, then, provides a template to instruct believers on how to communicate what God has done for them.

4. The importance of community

The psalms reveal the importance of community for matters of life and faith, including the issue of dealing with sickness. Although psalms are often utilised for *individual* spirituality, this appropriation is somewhat at odds with the collection as a whole.⁵⁷ Even granting that psalms were written by single authors, they have nevertheless been collected for communal use. This is true even for psalms which use first person language.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ The historical development of individual piety vis-à-vis the psalms is charted by Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms. Volume 1* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 26-30.

⁵⁸ The rhetorical function of first-person voicing is helpfully explored by Andrew Sloane, 'Weeping with the Afflicted: The Self-Involving Language of the Laments', in *Find-*

The famous words of Psalm 22:1, for instance, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ seem best suited to individual use. Yet, the superscription— ‘For the director of music’—reveals that even this language has been adopted for corporate expression. Psalm 88 illustrates the point. The psalmist is afflicted (physically and perhaps even spiritually), a distress compounded by social isolation (vv. 5, 8, 18). Yet the *corporate* vocalisation of the psalm (note ‘For the director of music’), undoes the author’s sense of isolation and so begins to address the seemingly unheard cries of the psalmist.

This corporate dimension is no less important for followers of Jesus. Christian communities can help to mediate healing as they, together with the sick person, seek God’s presence, power, forgiveness, restoration, and refuge.

In summary, then, while the Bible has more to say on the topic of divine healing, the psalms provide several helpful (and needed) perspectives. They remind us that the appropriate reaction to illness is to petition God in fervent prayer with other Christians. When divine healing occurs, there should be public testimony and thanksgiving. If healing is withheld, ongoing lament is the righteous response. The next section teases out several implications for Christian workers.

VI Conclusion and Implications

1. Recognise that God uses healing to drive people to himself

The role that divine healing has played across history and in the birth and growth of the church among the Millet highlights that sickness and divine healing are often used by God as invitations to turn to him. Despite this, western Christian expectations of seeing the power and love of God expressed through healing are often not as high as they should be.⁵⁹ Yet, if missionaries and other Christian workers ignore a felt need for healing, people will be left on their own to find solutions. They may feel they have no option except to live out a double allegiance—to Christ and to other spiritual powers which can help them with sickness.

Christians should be wary of western cultural assumptions that dismiss other-than-physical dimensions in illness. The psalms indicate that God is sovereign over illness even if sometimes it is caused by sin or demonic activity. Yet, whatever the cause, the appropriate response is to seek God. Like the psalmists, we need to recognise that humans are integrated wholes; spiritual concerns cannot neatly be excised from physical ones, or vice versa. Our aim in engaging with people who are ill, whether or not they are Christians, should be to help them to turn to God. In order to do this, we should, in our Christian communities, pray

ing Lost Words: The Church’s Right to Lament (ed. G. Geoffrey Harper and Kit Barker; Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2017).

⁵⁹ Packer, ‘The Empowered Christian Life,’ 211.

ferently and encourage testimonies about healing.

2. Pray fervently for divine healing

Christians play a key role in mediating healing. When Christians pray for sick people who are searching for a supernatural source of healing, the sick are sometimes healed. Healing is a tangible experience of God's love and power through which many begin to believe in Jesus. Christians can pray fervently for healing, following the example of the psalmists, confident in God's commitment to restore creation to wholeness and to bring about blessing for his people. Divine healing is a God-given foretaste of the complete restoration to come. Those who fervently pray for healing are more likely to see people healed and turning to God than those who ignore this pathway to salvation.

The psalms are mimetic—that is, they invite conformity to their words and modes of expression as models of virtuous response. Yet differing circumstances require differing responses. Accordingly, instances of healing should be met with thanksgiving; periods of protracted or even terminal illness should evoke ongoing lament. Both are faithful acts. Both are rightly carried out by individuals and communities. Christians must learn to 'rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep' (Rom 12:15 ESV).

3. Encourage testimonies about healing

Just as the psalmists declared God's work in their bodies, so we also should encourage Christians to declare how God has healed and delivered them. Testimonies are public declarations of human helplessness and despair that have been addressed by the God who heals and restores his creation. As in the psalms, testimonies should culminate in thanksgiving to God for what he has done. Public testimonies continue God's work through calamity to draw others to himself, as hearers are encouraged to seek God in their own pain, mourning, crying, and need.

4. Do all this as a community

Divine healing is a corporate affair. Although healing occurs in individual bodies, it occurs as believers, together, pray for the person who is afflicted. Testimonies of healing draw more people into the community of faith, and the community of people among whom Christ dwells, in itself, can provide restoration and relief for sufferers. At the same time, when people are not healed, their lament does not have to be an individual cry. Together, believers can express their pain to God and support each other, just as the psalms were sung together by the community of Israel. Corporate lament and thanksgiving are both expressions of faith in the sovereign, healing God.

For the Sake of Christian Marriage, Abolish Church Weddings in Africa

Klaus Fiedler

I Introduction

As a pastor and theologian, I am convinced that marriage is one of the basic human institutions of abiding value for all time. As such, it deserves the loving care of the church, a fact emphasized by the special attention Jesus Christ devoted to marriage in his teaching (Mt 19:1–12; Mk 10:1–12).

I am deeply concerned that aspects of the interaction between African traditional culture and Christianity have blocked the application of the biblical message with regard to marriage and have thereby caused significant spiritual and emotional harm to many people. Although my original research on this topic took place in northeast Congo and Kenya, I draw also on information from evangelical churches in East Africa and Malawi as well as from the Roman Catholic Church.

This study¹ examines the interac-

tion between two cultures (and, to some extent, two religions) as they crystallize around the wedding ceremony. Although I do not directly address other family-related issues such as polygamy or divorce, I contend that the discussion of issues surrounding wedding ceremonies in Africa offers important insight into a larger cultural conflict.

The ethnic groups originally dealt with in this essay are all patrilineal. When I moved to Malawi in 1992, I found a country with mostly matrilineal cultures, but much of the argumen-

been updated from the version published as 'For the Sake of Christian Marriage, Abolish Church Weddings' in James L. Cox, ed., *Rites of Passage in Contemporary Africa: Interaction between Christian and African Traditional Religions* (Cardiff: Cardiff University Press, 1998), 46–60 and under the same title in *Religion in Malawi* 5 (1995), 22–7. My original research on this topic, in 1986–87, was made possible by a grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Bonn, and much of the original research is reflected in Klaus Fiedler, *Ganz auf Vertrauen. Geschichte und Kirchenverständnis der Glaubensmissionen* (Giessen and Basel: Brunnen, 1992), 493–9.

¹ An earlier version of this essay appeared in 2015 as chapter 1 of Klaus Fiedler, *Conflicted Power in Malawian Christianity: Essays Missionary and Evangelical from Malawi* (Mzuzu, Malawi: Mzuni Press, 2015), 6–21). It had

tation fits patri- and matrilineal societies equally.²

In this essay, I repeatedly make a distinction between theology *talked* and theology *acted*. This differentiation is crucial, and I consider theology *acted* as reality.

II Historical and Theological Background

1. History

The Congolese and Kenyan churches in my case study are the result of the work of interdenominational faith missions, beginning with the China Inland Mission, founded in 1865 by Hudson and Maria Taylor. The Taylors' pressing concern was to reach 'inland' areas of the globe that were still unreached by the gospel. To achieve this end, they were very innovative: ordination was of no importance, lengthy theological training was not required, and women were seen as equal to men and therefore as qualified for independent pioneer missionary work.

Money was not a major obstacle either since the missionaries would trust God that by prayer and faith (hence the nickname 'faith missions') he would supply all their needs. Ecclesiastical differences were downplayed, with the result that Protestant Christians of any denomination could become faith missionaries, provided that they displayed evidence of spirituality and could sign

a basic evangelical creed.³

The first faith mission in Africa was the Livingstone Inland Mission, founded in 1878 by Fanny Guinness in London for pioneer work in the Congo, starting from the mouth of the Congo River.⁴ The major faith missions relevant to this study are the Africa Inland Mission (AIM), founded by Peter Cameron Scott in Philadelphia in 1895, and WEC International, founded by C. T. Studd in Congo in 1913 with his wife Priscilla managing the home base in London.⁵

The main churches resulting from these missions were the Africa Inland Church in Kenya and, in Congo, CECA20 (Communauté Évangélique au Centre de l'Afrique) and CECCA16 (Communauté Évangélique du Christ au Coeur d'Afrique).⁶ These were the pioneer Protestant churches in their respective areas, and their combined

³ I differentiate the faith missions from what I call the 'classical missions'. The classical missions (from 1792 onwards) have their spiritual roots in the Great Awakening, whereas the faith missions have their roots in the Holiness Revival of 1859 (with Grattan Guinness as one of the central figures) and a second wave starting in 1873, in which Dwight L. Moody was the central figure.

⁴ For more details on the faith missions, see Klaus Fiedler, *The Story of Faith Missions from Hudson Taylor to Present-Day Africa* (Oxford: Regnum, 1994). A revised edition is planned for 2017.

⁵ Eileen Vincent, *C. T. Studd and Priscilla: United to Fight for Jesus* (Bromley: STL), 1988.

⁶ During Mobutu's rule, all Protestant churches had, by law, to be part of the Église du Christ au Zaïre. So the mission-founded denominations became *Communautés* of the Église du Christ au Zaïre, and each one had a number, which became part of the commonly used abbreviation.

² Southern Malawi is matrilineal; with the exception of the Sena, the country's central region is matrilineal, whereas the less populated north is mostly patrilineal.

membership can be conservatively estimated as two million people. Their creeds are broadly evangelical, and both missions developed a church polity that is somewhat Presbyterian in administration and somewhat Baptist in sacramental theology.

These churches do not teach any doctrine of the sacraments, but they do have baptisms, communion and weddings. In line with general Protestant conviction, marriage is not officially classified as a sacrament, and in line with Baptist practice, baptism and communion are generally described as divine ordinances rather than sacraments. Although many faith missionaries came from Protestant churches that practised infant baptism, the three churches described here have opted for believers' baptism.

2. The number of sacraments

The faith missionaries were quite clear in recognizing only two sacraments, baptism and communion. Members of the modern churches that have descended from these faith missions are not as clear on this point, however. Members often name marriage and sometimes the dedication of children as sacraments alongside baptism and communion. This increase in popular perception of the number of sacraments was facilitated by the fact that the faith missions rarely taught what a sacrament was and often even did not use the term, referring simply to baptism and communion or the Lord's table.⁷

⁷ In some languages, such as in Kipsigi in Kenya, there is no word for *sacrament* (Bill Reinchell, interview, 16 December 1986).

To many African laypeople, sacraments are solemn rites of the church to which one has to be admitted first and which grant a certain status. According to this yardstick, marriage is a sacrament, and perhaps the highest of all sacraments.

The evangelical churches *teach* that marriage is a civil affair and not a sacrament, but they *behave* in a very different way, according to the initiation of marriage (i.e. the wedding) the highest religious status. This means that there are two different theologies, one *talked* and the other *acted*. I take theology acted as the real one, since it matters in the life of the people.

III Marriage and Wedding Practices in Africa

1. The crucial role of the 'bride price'

Many early missionaries opposed the practice of transferring money or goods to the bride's family as implying the selling of women, but they soon came to acknowledge that this was the established African way of constituting a legal marriage. Therefore, just as many European wedding ceremonies involved the fulfilment of civil requirements (as embodied in the ceremonial question, 'Who giveth away this woman?'), so in (patrilineal) Africa the fulfilment of a civil requirement—the bride price—was expected.

This requirement was not integrated into the liturgy as some European requirements had been, but the bride price was seen as necessary and useful. Within less than a generation of missionary work, a considerable adap-

tation of the Christian theology of marriage to the African cultural context had taken place.

But African culture did not remain static, and changes occurred not only in the amount of bride price expected, but also in its social role and function. Whereas at the turn of the century, in most African societies, the bride price was paid in full (or almost so) in either livestock or labour before the couple began married life, this changed in many societies with the constant rise of the bride price. Many churches attempted to reduce the bride price or at least to slow down its rise, but with very limited success.

Neither in northeast Congo, where I did my initial research in the 1980s, nor in southwest Tanzania, where I lived for seven years, was the man's family expected to pay the full bride price before the marriage. Payment of maybe one-quarter of the total amount would allow them to live together. Completing the payments ten years after the (traditional) wedding was considered a fast performance, and should the wife die before the payments had been completed, the wife's relatives would retain one or more of the children according to the completion rate.

Even more significantly from a cultural and theological perspective, paying the full price before the marriage was neither expected nor desired, because full payment would to some extent free the couple from control by the parents' generation, whereas partial non-payment would extend it.

Since the church insists that the civil requirements of a marriage must be fulfilled, and since the church recognized the payment of the bride price as representing fulfilment of the civil re-

quirements, the church got itself into a fix. Without payment of the bride price, there could be no Christian marriage, but since the bride price would not be fully paid until after the birth of several children, the oldest children of a marriage would be born out of wedlock. Moreover, their parents would live in concubinage and would, as such, be excluded from the sacraments of the church (and thus from divine grace, too, since the sacraments are to convey divine grace).

This situation has occurred in various churches, including both the Roman Catholic Church in south Tanzania and the Africa Inland Church in Kenya, which makes having a church wedding a prerequisite for receiving communion. It explains in part why, when communion is celebrated in the Africa Inland Church, up to 70 percent of the church members and faithful church attenders leave as they are not qualified to participate in the sacrament. CECCA16, on the other hand, does accept a marriage as valid even without the church wedding, as other evangelical churches do, like the Baptists in Malawi.⁸

It is sad that some churches, which in their early days managed so well to adapt to African marriage culture, lost this ability when African culture changed. The Roman Catholic Church does not tie the performance of the sacrament of marriage to the full payment of the bride price, but that is theology

⁸ In CECCA16, participation in communion is also low, because many people who are regular church attenders and (for all practical purposes) good Christians postpone baptism until they consider themselves or are considered by the local church leadership to be worthy of baptism.

talked, not theology *acted*. Even if the priest correctly interprets canon law as not requiring the payment of the bride price (theology *talked*), by agreeing to 'marry' couples who have already been married for 20 years he *teaches* otherwise (theology *acted*).

In popular theology, Christian marriage is understood to be binding for life. Therefore, delaying church weddings gives the impression that the couple is not really married and could still choose to separate. On the other hand, if the church ceremony took place earlier, the husband's family might see no reason to complete the bride price payments. No church *teaches* this, but many churches *live* it. This situation can be remedied only if the church, which was initially successful in incorporating Christian marriage into African culture, manages to disconnect its sacrament of marriage from the full payment of the bride price, since the role of the bride price in African society has changed considerably.

2. The situation in Malawi

When I moved to Malawi in 1992, I found two different family systems: patrilineal (similar to what I observed in Congo and in Kenya, and where the man is the centre of the family structure) and matrilineal, where the woman is at the centre.⁹

The name for a traditional (matrilineal) wedding is *chinkhoswe*, indicating that it is a union of two families. It can take place anywhere, and the crucial moment is the exchange of chicken be-

tween the bridegroom's and the bride's families.¹⁰

In patrilineal northern Malawi, the marriage is constituted by the payment of *lobola* (the bride price), and for the wedding the bride is brought ceremoniously to the homestead of the husband's family.

Both forms of weddings have all the necessary ingredients: the couple's consent, the public event and recognition, and the sexual consummation of the marriage after that.¹¹

Among the matrilineal Chewa, Yawo and others, there is no bride price, as the husband moves into the wife's village, and land; house and children are controlled by the wife (and the mother's brother). In matrilineal marriages, women have greater influence and the divorce rate is much higher than in the patrilineal societies of the north. Still, church weddings are usually scarce here as well.

When I married my wife, Rachel NyaGondwe (patrilineal Tumbuka from northern Malawi), in 2001, I checked the marriage register of our Zomba Baptist Church and found that for at least 10 years there had not been a church wedding at the beginning of a marriage, except for one other in which a foreigner was involved. When I checked again 15 years later, I could still hardly find such a wedding. The

¹⁰ The couple's consent is required, but at the *chinkhoswe* of my secretary, that consent was expressed not by the couple, but by the marriage guardians.

¹¹ If such a couple shares a Christian commitment, those elements constitute a Christian marriage, but traditional African ceremonies do not contain a vow of indissolubility, and the church should make provision for one to be included.

⁹ Both systems are nevertheless *patriarchal*, as in *matrilineal* societies the authority of the husband is replaced by the authority of the mother's brother.

cost of the bride price presents the obstacle. In matrilineal societies with no bride price, the expectations for a wedding feast pose a similar financial hurdle.

After Zomba Baptist, we belonged to a semi-urban congregation. Our pastor and his wife had been married properly in a traditional ceremony that was duly announced in and recognized by the church. But he had no church wedding and felt that he could not conduct church weddings without having had one himself. I offered to fix that deficiency by holding a simple ceremony, but he developed it into a big event. I decided that from that time onwards I would not get involved in such 'afterthought' weddings.

One of my students examined a Roman Catholic parish in southern Malawi, finding that among couples who engage in a sacramental marriage, each partner has been in an average of three traditional marriages before that.

The situation is partly different in the middle and upper classes, who have money. Here, weddings at the beginning of a marriage are more frequent, and they offer social recognition and prestige worth the investment. If the church ceremony has a hundred participants, at the reception in the afternoon you may expect six hundred. Those figures show the overwhelmingly social character of a church wedding.

There are a number of pastors (and even sheikhs) who try to shepherd their faithful into large church weddings, which always make nice reading

in the newspapers,¹² but the enthusiasm for such events is limited.

There are differences from church to church, but the overall picture is that weddings at the beginning of a marriage are not the rule, and that their frequency depends heavily on the members' social status and the availability of money.

3. Changing patterns of African marriage: 'marriage by eloping'

The churches require—in good inculturationist style—that civil requirements must be fulfilled for a marriage to be complete. But what constitutes a valid civil marriage in changing African societies?

Because of the high bride prices in many areas (including northeast Congo and Kenya), 'marriage by eloping' has become frequent or even the rule. The churches do not accept this as a form of civil marriage but instead look at it as concubinage, to be punished by exclusion from holy communion. Nevertheless, in actual practice, elopement has become a thoroughly accepted form of civil marriage in northeast Congo. The young man finds his bride by using the traditional go-betweens, then he talks to her. She makes inquiries about the suitor, and when she finally agrees, an evening is fixed for her elopement from home. She is duly received with all honour by the bridegroom's family, and sometimes good food is served too.

¹² In one extreme case, a couple's children arranged, with great pomp, a Presbyterian church wedding for their parents, who were around 90 years old at the time. At the man's funeral, which I attended, this 'wedding' was cited as an important step in his Christian life.

They start to live together. Immediately the bride's family is informed ('don't look for your daughter, she is with us'), so that a date for the bride price negotiations can be set.

This new (and nevertheless thoroughly African) way of getting married could appeal to the churches in at least one aspect, because the consent of the marriage partners plays a prominent role. Such free and voluntary consent, according to the churches' teaching, is one of the most basic components of a proper marriage. But the churches usually view elopement as a sin, to be remedied by a proper wedding (though only low-key since it is a second ceremony), preceded by due repentance from the young couple.

In contrast to the churches' position, neither the young couple nor society sees this new style of getting married as sin, but rather as an efficient way to cut short overly long negotiations and push forward those who are slow to act. The 'repentance' that takes place afterwards is thus largely staged, as people repent of a sin that they don't acknowledge. Here I feel that the churches should react to such marriages with disapproval and counselling, but not with church discipline.

4. The implications of the church wedding (and wedding feast)

The issues described above could be seen as problems resulting from the interaction of African culture with Christianity. But with Christianity came European culture, too. Sometimes Christianity consciously opposed European culture in Africa, sometimes it consciously cooperated with it, and perhaps most often there was an un-

questioned and somewhat naive intermingling between the two.

This intermixing applies to many conceptions connected with Christian weddings in Africa. They have to be in church and in style. And in a young church, isn't it a joy when the first Christian couple is to get married? What male missionary would not take care to ensure that the ceremony is suitably dignified? And what female missionary would not care to ensure that the church's first-ever bride is dressed properly (a bridal veil can easily be made from some curtain material!) and that there is a little reception after the ceremony (which must be a bit impressive too)?

As for the solemnity of the rite, the missionaries themselves set the example. Here is one from the early Congo Balolo Mission:

Christmas Eve dawned a glorious summer day for the wedding of Mr. Fred Gardner and Miss Elizabeth Henson. Preparations began in early morning. The native boys themselves decorated the church most beautifully. After the official State ceremony in French at Basankusu, the Bride and Bridegroom returned to the prettily decorated church at Ikan. Here in Lomongo, English and Lingala¹³ an impressive service was conducted by Mr. F. Anstice before a large congregation. Much interest was aroused amongst the natives when the bridegroom endowed his bride with 'all his worldly goods'. The happy couple left the church

¹³ Lomongo was the local language, Lingala the lingua franca of that part of the Congo, and English the missionaries' language.

amid scenes of rejoicing. A reception was given at Mr. and Mrs Anstice's house later in the day. After four days, the bride and bridegroom returned to Bongandanga. We wish them every blessing in their service for the King.¹⁴

This ceremony was not theology *talked* but theology *acted*, and therefore real and effective theology, which the nascent African church could not help but accept and imitate. In the actual teaching of the faith mission churches, of course, there is no connection whatsoever between the church wedding and the (expensive) feast. However, folk church practice seems to allow no other option. For a church wedding, not only is excellent food required, but also the bridal dress and the bridegroom's suit must be of high quality. In accordance with the solemnity required, special clothes for the bridesmaids, best men, parents and relatives, and maybe transport for all the guests are obligatory as well.

In northeast Congo, such a church wedding could easily cost a quarter or more of the bride price of eight cows, so that one to two years of work were required just to finance the event.¹⁵

Church weddings have become even more a difficult problem for Christian marriage because of another process of change in African society: the grow-

ing extent of social stratification. Most people remain quite poor, but not all. Even in Kenya, where there is much more wealth than in northeast Congo, most people cannot afford a church wedding. Others can, and for them it is a major status symbol, as anyone who looks at the wedding pages in Kenyan newspapers will realize.

Thus, the wedding ceremony has become subject to a naive transfer of western customs to Africa under the guise of a Christian ceremony. Africans usually do not object to the mixing of cultures, and in the church's doctrine there is nothing to oppose it either. So there is no objection to the bridal veil, bridesmaids, special dresses and suits, etc. Nor is there any objection to the church requiring the fulfilment of civil obligations like paying the bride price. The problem is that the church did not treat the wedding ceremony as the blessing of an existing marriage, but as the real thing. Therefore, a marriage without the church ceremony could not be a real marriage, or at least not a real Christian marriage.

The consequence of all this is that, because of either the high bride price or the expensive wedding feast or both, a Christian marriage is out of reach for most Christians, however faithful they might be (unless they are rich in material things).

5. Weddings as a means of religious stratification

The wide variation in ability to afford a church wedding is the result of social stratification, combined with the high cost of what tradition has defined as an appropriate wedding ceremony. But a perhaps more important proc-

¹⁴ Congo Mission News/Nouvelles Missionnaires du Congo 98 (an internal newsletter of the Protestant missions in the Congo), about 1908.

¹⁵ David Langford, 'Areas of Pastoral Concern: Marriage' (unpublished manuscript, 1985), 8; another interviewee estimated that a year of work would be required (Donald Muchmore, interview, 30 December 1986).

ess of stratification takes place within the church in those cases where the church requires a church wedding as a precondition either for full membership or for the acquisition of special graces.

The Africa Inland Church, Roman Catholic Church and others make the church wedding a precondition for receiving the sacraments. This includes, for Catholics, even the sacrament of confession. In the Catholic Church, baptism is easy to obtain. Most people receive it without even asking for it. In CECCA16, CECA20 and the Africa Inland Church, all of which do not baptize infants, baptism also is easy to obtain, though the precondition is the experience of a genuine conversion. The reason is that this requirement is theology *talked*, not theology *acted*. In practice, the profession of a conversion is sufficient to gain admittance for baptismal instruction. Regular attendance then qualifies one for baptism, which is being administered to ever younger children.¹⁶ This is a definite change from the earlier practice of making admission to baptism difficult.¹⁷

Admission to communion is more difficult to obtain. Here again the Roman Catholic Church is the leader, seeming content to have the vast majority of young and middle-aged adults

barred from the sacrament. In some faith mission churches, admission to communion is proof of a 'proper' married life (though the specific conditions for a proper married life vary greatly between churches). On the other hand, even church members in good standing often do not partake in communion, because of what I call 'fear of the sacrament'.¹⁸

Ironically, as noted previously, the highest sacrament of all for many in Africa is the church wedding, though in Protestant theology it is no sacrament at all. It is far more solemn than baptism and more difficult to attain than communion. Its preconditions include not only baptism and the right to share in the Lord's table, but also the fulfilment of all civil requirements for a marriage. Those who can achieve or afford it are in the upper strata of religious society.

This distinction is made clear in CECCA16, for example. There you don't need a church wedding for communion, but you need it for ordination. In the Africa Inland Church in western Kenya, an experienced Sunday school leader was nominated to become a church elder but could not accept the position because he had never had a church wedding. A Baptist pastor told me of a similar case from the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian in Malawi:

My cousin, a Presbyterian, wanted

¹⁶ In theology *talked*, the youngest age for baptism was always around 12 years, quite in conformity with Baptist practice in many Western countries, but in theology *acted*, the baptized can be as young as 6 years.

¹⁷ This was clearly the case in the early Africa Inland Mission, but not in the very early WEC missionary work in Congo. Even in that instance, though, the practice of baptism very soon after conversion (or 'baptism on demand') was soon changed because of bad experiences with quick baptism.

¹⁸ This fear is not clearly defined, but it may be expressed as a feeling of not being 'worthy'. In Malawi, in both Presbyterian and Baptist contexts, women frequently do not participate in communion because they are menstruating. For a Presbyterian treatment of the issue, see Felix L. Chingota, 'Sacraments and Sexuality', *Religion in Malawi* 8 (1998), 34–40.

to become a church deacon. But he had to have a church wedding first. To have a church wedding without the appropriate wedding feast would have been a shame. The wedding feast finally would cost 5,000 Kwachas [about 17 months' pay for a civil servant at that time]. He had to postpone having it because he could not find the money in time. Now he is a deacon, after having had a church wedding.

The attitude that a church wedding is needed for certain offices in the church creates religious stratification. It is not easy to afford a church wedding, so there must be a reward, like the office of deacon or elder. The highest reward is ordination, and there can be no ordination without a church wedding in most churches.

Another way in which religious stratification is effected by church weddings involves the right to perform them. In the Africa Inland Church in Kenya, there is a distinction between licensed and ordained pastors. Licensing, usually a temporary measure, has become a permanent feature in the Africa Inland Church, with at least two-thirds of the pastors never achieving ordination. Both licensed and ordained ministers are allowed to administer baptism and communion, but only an ordained minister can conduct a church wedding.¹⁹ For many years a whole district of the AIC with 18 congregations was without a single ordained pastor,

and if anyone wanted to have a church wedding, he also had to pay for the cost of importing an ordained pastor into this somewhat remote district.

Stratification through church weddings permits differentiation between a higher and a lower set of clergy.²⁰ This differentiation is very much at variance with the earlier practice of the faith mission churches, which paid scant attention to ordination.²¹ The missions had introduced this differentiation by employing large numbers of 'evangelists' and later by granting ordination to a very small number among them. The independent Africa Inland Church simply carried this differentiation into the ranks of the ministers. It can be argued that the AIC just followed the mission's *acted* theology.

Similar distinctions have been made by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, which in its Northern Diocese permitted senior evangelists (who were de facto pastors of a congregation) to administer the sacraments. When I inquired as to the difference between such an 'evangelist of the synod' and a minister, the reply was that 'the evangelists of the synod are not allowed to perform marriages'. In the Assemblies of God in Malawi, ordained ministers 'are permitted to perform all ordinances and ceremonies of the church', whereas licensed ministers may 'perform all ordinances and ceremonies of the church except the

¹⁹ Sometimes it is claimed that this must be so since only ordained ministers can be registered as 'marriage officers' of the government. This view is not correct. Government does not look for ordination, but only for endorsement by the church.

²⁰ It also seems to reduce the number of claimants on the material benefits that derive from performing weddings.

²¹ In the Africa Inland Mission, for example, every male missionary, ordained or not, was accorded full sacramental rights.

marriage ceremony'.²²

All this tells me that in these Protestant churches, in theology *acted*, the church wedding is the highest sacrament.

If the church wedding can be likened to the source of the river of Christian marriage, then this source is speedily drying up. Many years ago, the church wedding was the norm in northeast Congo; by the 1980s it had become a rare event. In Kisangani Congregation (formerly Unevangelized Fields Mission, an offshoot of WEC) there had not been a church wedding for 10 years,²³ and in the northern CECA20 territory there were practically none.²⁴ The southern area around Oicha had church weddings in about half of all cases, but even there the frequency was declining.²⁵ In CECCA16, the number of church weddings was low, but a church wedding is not required there. The same is the case with the Baptists in Malawi.²⁶

22 Assemblies of God in Malawi, Constitution and By-Laws, revised August 1990, Article 5, Section 1.

23 Even a legend helps to legitimize the neglect of church weddings. The legend claims that many years ago there was a church wedding, and the bride ran away from her husband that very night. After that, no church wedding ever took place, because it was regarded as a bad omen for the success of a marriage (Hilde Moro, interview, 5 January 1987).

24 Langford, 'Areas of Pastoral Concern', 8; Rev Ang'apoza Etsea Kila, interview, 30 December 1986.

25 Rev Musangura Mbafefe-Mussamba, interview, 3 January 1987.

26 I asked a Baptist pastor from Blantyre if in his church a church wedding was required. 'No', he said, 'but then it's not a Christian marriage.' 'How frequent are church weddings?' I asked. 'There are a few—not in my church

The need today is even greater today than when I first wrote this essay. Over the last 20 years, many have referred to my views, but I am not aware that they have had any positive influence on church practice. Meanwhile, the cleavage between marriage and weddings has grown wider, church weddings have become more expensive (at least for the middle class) and bridal showers (or 'marriage send-offs') have become more elaborate and an almost compulsory part of church weddings, making them even more expensive (and probably less Christian).²⁷

Does this mean that all those who have had no church wedding do not lead a Christian married life? Protestant theology *talked* would not agree to this conclusion, nor would honest observation support it. Having a church wedding these days is less a matter of Christian quality than of secular Kwachas (or shillings, Meticais or Rands, depending on the country).

This scarcity of church weddings has resulted from the fateful interaction of three cultures (Christian, European, African) and the churches' decision to link their moral standards to waning aspects of African culture like the payment of the bride price *before* marriage. If it is the church's duty to adapt to African culture, it must also be willing to adapt to changes in that same African culture. Therefore, the churches should take new forms of

alone, but a few in all the churches in Blantyre.'

27 For a study of bridal showers and related practices, see Towera Mwase, 'The Marriage Instructions for Girls and Women in Mzuzu Churches', M.A. thesis, Mzuzu University, 2012.

African marriage as seriously as they took the old forms.

Inculturation cannot be achieved once and forever. It must be a dynamic process by which the churches continually seek to connect the eternal gospel in a meaningful way to the processes of social change.

6. The loss of Christian values

The churches' marriage policies have led to the loss of several Christian values. First, the value of Christian marriage was lost. By placing a high value on Christian marriage (through an emphasis on the need for a church wedding) in theology *talked*, the churches kept many (often most) of the marriages of their members out of the reach of Christian influence. This situation is not in accord with the New Testament's view of Christian marriage or of the important role of marriage in African culture.

The Christian value of honesty has also been lost. A church's emphasis on something that is hard to achieve (the wedding ceremony after payment of the full bride price) causes people to repent of sins that they do not feel they have committed. Furthermore, there is good reason to accuse the churches of materialism, since they make an expensive enterprise a cornerstone of spiritual achievement. The conveyance of spiritual graces is conditional on material achievements.

The different churches, to varying degrees, have accepted the fact that their rite or sacrament of marriage has been turned from a means to convey God's grace at the beginning of the marital journey into a reward for high achievers. Having a church

wedding has become a status symbol for the laity, and for the clergy it is a major element in ecclesiastical power structures. The theology *talked* is very spiritual, but the theology *acted* is very secular.

This contradiction, though not unknown in America or Europe, has been greatly aggravated by interaction (on different levels) between Christianity and the changing African culture. I deeply regret that the churches have been either unable or unwilling to remedy this confused situation.

IV A Proposal for a New Process of Inculturation

When the early missionaries accepted the bride price as an institution compatible with the values of Christian marriage, they adapted church practice to African culture effectively in this regard (in contrast to other areas, beyond the scope of this paper, where they were less successful). But many churches stopped the process of inculturation when the social situation affecting marriages changed. The present situation has become a process of adverse inculturation. The church wedding as an exquisite event has been absorbed into the wealthy segments of secular African culture.²⁸

I claim that a new process of inculturation is needed, one that takes

²⁸ This situation can be compared with that in Germany, where the church wedding has become part of secular society in the same way as confirmation and Christmas Eve church attendance. Churches otherwise quite empty are full on Christmas Eve, not because of a sudden upsurge of spiritual desires but 'because it's so romantic'.

African marriage as seriously today as was done a hundred years ago with the then-current African marriage patterns.

Such a process of inculturation must consciously make room for social change. Christianity cannot just relate to African culture at one point in time, but at *any* point in time.

Inculturation of the gospel does not mean giving in to African culture (or any culture) in all things; on the contrary, it may mean conflict for the sake of the gospel.

I am convinced that, for the sake of Christian marriage, and for the sake of millions of Christian Africans who want to live a Christian married life, something must be done, and quickly. I would like to propose the following steps.

1. Since the New Testament says a great amount about Christian marriage but shows no concern whatsoever for church weddings, I conclude that a church wedding is not needed to make a Christian marriage.²⁹
2. The church must take folk theology seriously and must accept that, although in theology *talked* there is no need for a feast to follow the church wedding, in *practice* the feast has become an integral part of the ceremony.
3. The churches must admit that attempts to keep the bride price low

by means of church legislation have met with no success.

4. Therefore, the churches should accept any genuine African marriage as a valid marriage. This would be real inculturation.
5. The church wedding is not a constituent part of the Christian faith, nor was it an integral part of African culture. Therefore, the church should abolish the church wedding.

If abolishing church weddings completely is perceived as too rigid, two things at least should be implemented: no 'weddings' after years of marriage, and no connection between having a church wedding and admission to the sacraments or to ordination.

In the process of realistic inculturation, the church must not shy away from conflict for the sake of the gospel. There will be a loud outcry from a few elite members of society, but should the church, with its 'preferential option for the poor', give preference to the few wealthy achievers and provide them with a semi-secular ceremony to crown their achievements, or should it be more concerned with the many poor people who already had to abolish church weddings for financial reasons? In keeping the church wedding as the standard, the church pleases the few and burdens the many.

Some might argue that abolishing church weddings would have two less desirable side effects: the young couple would be given no chance to make their commitment to Christian marriage public, nor would there be any possibility of publicly asking God to bless the marriage. But even if church weddings are abolished, these provisions could be made, perhaps along the lines of the 'marriage prayer' (*malombi ya mar-*

²⁹ This is in conformity with general Protestant dogmatics. Even for Catholics, for whom marriage is a sacrament, there is no need for a church wedding, since it is not the priest who administers the sacrament of marriage, but the bride and bridegroom administer it to each other.

riage) practised in CECA20 (as stated in its constitution) and some other churches. It is usually applied to couples who have eloped but who want, after having settled their marriage with the families concerned, to return into the full fellowship of their church.³⁰

For this marriage prayer, the pastor visits the couple, reads the relevant Scripture passages to them, and prays for them. Then usually some food is served. In theological terms, such a blessing of a marriage contains everything required, and the cost factor is negligible. But the fact that this marriage prayer takes place only in the house, not in the church, shows that it is second-class. And it will remain second-class as long as 'real' marriages are celebrated in church, as infrequently as that may be.

Actually, there is no need for the pastor to come to the house for the marriage prayer. Two or four elders

could be chosen for this ceremony. Possibly half of these should be female elders, so that they would not only act as prayer leaders but also play a role similar to that of the marriage guardians present in some African societies, such as the Chagga on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro.

I am looking forward to that day when no African man will refer to his wife of more than 20 years as his fiancée (*mchumba*) because they have not yet 'been married' (in church).

I am looking forward to the day when no pastor will be asked to 'marry' a couple with their five grown children present.

I am looking forward to the day when no one will have to spend thousands of Kwachas to become a deacon.

And I am looking forward to the day when the church does everything in its power to help married couples to *live* Christian marriages, through teaching, seminars, counselling, preaching and other means.

30 Langford, 'Areas of Pastoral Concern', 10.

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ERT (2017) 41:3, 369-371

**What Does it Mean to be
Catholic?**

Jack Mulder Jr.

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015
ISBN 978-0-8028-7266-1
Pb, pp238, indices

*Reviewed by Ronald T. Michener,
Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven,
Belgium.*

Jack Mulder Jr., associate professor of
philosophy at Hope College, Holland,
MI, has provided us with a splendidly

concise, charitable, and thought-pro-
voking introduction to Catholic faith,
doctrine and spirituality. Although
Mulder's primary intent is not apolo-
getic, he nevertheless makes a coherent
and convincing case for the vibrancy of
Catholicism deeply rooted in both Scrip-
ture and tradition yet extremely relevant
for contemporary society. Mulder begins
by charting his own journey out of the
Reformed tradition into full communion
with the Catholic Church. While seeking
common ground with other believers,
he forthrightly acknowledges problem-
atic issues and misconceptions that

have divided non-Catholic Christians and Catholics, expressing his goal 'to enhance dialogue within the Christian community, not to convert anyone' (3).

The first chapter tackles the subject of Scripture in relation to tradition. Mulder contrasts the worry of many American evangelicals over biblical inerrancy with a Catholic approach that emphasizes the historical, cultural, and theological context of Scripture within its various genres interpreted with the 'guidance of the church' (16). For Mulder, this makes Scripture no less inspired, but actually gets more to the heart of the Holy Spirit's intended revelation. He raises this key point: the formation of the canon occurred within the complex context of tradition, an issue often ill-considered in Protestant circles. Mulder observes that both Protestants and Catholics discern the meaning of Scripture within their respective traditions. The primary differences, however, concern the scope and method of this discernment and whether or not the interdependency of Scripture and tradition are acknowledged explicitly or implicitly (28-32).

In successive chapters Mulder enthusiastically explains the major contours of Catholicism, covering such topics as the origins and role of the papacy, councils, bishops, God, Christ, veneration of Mary, sacramentology, heaven, hell, purgatory, and humanity.

Mulder addresses some key issues that may be particularly helpful to those with a background in the Reformed tradition. For example, he explains that the Catholic Church allows an intellectual openness to both Calvinism and Arminianism, while maintaining that God is omniscient and works providentially in the world (81). Additionally, he affirms the compatibility of faith and science, emphasizing the important role of 'God's

gift of reason' while understanding that the 'truths of faith' may 'surprise us with their mystery and wonder' (84).

Mulder also insightfully navigates the controversial issue of the nature of justification between evangelicals and Catholics. He insists, as do Protestants, that Catholics believe our redemption and justification comes via Christ. But Protestants tend to see justification as one event of God's act of forgiveness, whereas Catholics see it both as an event *and* a process of ongoing holiness (which Protestants would reserve for the term 'sanctification'). However, Mulder does not reduce this to a semantic dispute; he is careful to articulate that this is clearly a theological difference in perspective on how we receive justification and the process by which we receive it (100-103).

Protestants often avoid a Catholic perspective of Mary. For Mulder, Catholics do not worship Mary; they give veneration to her, as they also do other saints. And Mary is not exalted due to her own abilities. As Mulder puts it, 'Mary is honoured because of her obedience and the holy life that God enables her to live' (124). Mulder capably describes the difference between worship or adoration (reserved for God alone) and veneration—something that most of us do when we exalt or honour those worthy of our highest respect.

On most points throughout the book Mulder provides a lucid, concise exposition of Catholic doctrine. There are two points, however, on which I believe Mulder is a bit hasty. The first pertains to the Catholic priesthood and its primary restriction to celibate males, and accordingly, its refusal to ordain women. Mulder argues that the Catholic position stems in part from Jesus' encouragement of celibacy to those who

are particularly called to display the coming kingdom of heaven. He admits that the apostle Peter was married, and 'it was no doubt the best state of life for him' (italics original, 164). It seems unclear then why celibacy is mandatory for the Catholic priesthood if one is called to such an office, and if celibacy is not necessarily 'the best state of life' for the one called (as it was clearly not for Peter).

In response to the idea that women in the Bible may have served as apostles (such as Junia), Mulder submits that it is unclear that Junia would have attained the same type of apostleship as the twelve (165). Additionally, he argues that Jesus himself did not ordain women as apostles (166). In this reviewer's opinion, these are not strong arguments. It is possible that each of the twelve disciples themselves would not have been considered for the title of presbyter or elder in the early church (considering the financial misdeeds of Judas Iscariot, or for that matter, the impetuosity of Peter). We may not have records of Jesus ordaining women as apostles; but Jesus did not ordain anyone, male or female, in the sense to which ordination refers today, especially in the sacramental sense of Catholic theology.

The second issue that I believe requires further clarity is that of the doctrine of purgatory. Mulder is careful to dispel several popular misunderstandings of purgatory that are embedded in popular culture. It is not a rest stop along the way to heaven, nor a place at all, but it is a 'cleansing process' (173-74) where Christ continues his work of burning 'away the dross from our souls' (178). But saying what generally happens during purgatory does not provide the reader with a clear description of what purgatory actually *is*. If it is not a place or location in any sense, then where

does the human soul abide prior to the resurrection? Understandably, there are many issues for which we have only limited capacities to speak lucidly, much less comprehensively. But this doctrine is one of the major points of contention between Protestants and Catholics, so it seems warranted to expect Mulder to provide a more extensive reflection.

These final critical remarks in no way undermine my enthusiastic recommendation of this book. It will prove a useful, irenic, and conversational guide for lay readers, pastors, seminary students, and professors, whether Catholic or Protestant, for understanding the basics of Catholicism—in both heart and practice.

ERT (2017) 41:3, 371-373

Theology and the Mirror of Scripture: A Mere Evangelical Account

Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Daniel J. Treier

Downers Grove, USA: IVP Academic, 2015

ISBN 978-0-8308-4076-2
Pb., pp 298, bibliog., indices

Review by Nicholas G. Piotrowski, Crossroads Bible College, Indianapolis, USA

Is the term 'evangelical' worth preserving? If so, what does it mean? These questions are perennial and the answers are legion. In this first instalment of the new Studies in Christian Doctrine and Scripture series, Vanhoozer and Treier have answered the first question in the affirmative, and provided a sophisticated definition to answer the second.

They insist that evangelicalism needs to be defined along *theological* lines (not historical or social) that are both

Trinity-centric and crucicentric, reflected in the Scriptures (the apostolic, and thus the magisterial, authority) and learned through/within the communion of saints (the universal church's, and thus the ministerial, authority). This makes evangelicalism 'an anchored set' of doctrines with a fixed point around which a range of mobility is allowable—even encouraged—for the church. To Vanhoozer and Treier this is a 'mere' evangelicalism, 'the *greatest* common denominator, that which ought to unify the denominations' (12), 'what it believes *with the whole church* about the gospel of God and the God of the gospel' (116).

Vanhoozer and Treier begin with two 'presenting problems'. First, Evangelicalism seems to have no doctrinal backbone. What ultimately holds evangelical distinctives together (if anything) and gives them their shape? To say 'the gospel' is not enough, for the gospel is a reflection of something more: the life of the Trinity. The economic Trinity ultimately gives the gospel its logic and is itself reflected in the gospel. God's being is, then, that anchor. '*The substance of mere evangelical theology is the God presupposed and implied in the gospel... [and] depends on God's self-communication in Christ and Scriptures*' (57). The Father is faithful to his promises in sending the Son. The Son is crucified and raised for sinners. The Spirit inspires the Scriptures through which these truths are known. '*The gospel is thus grounded in, and an expression of, God's triune being... The good news of what God has done in history thus has a counterpart in the way God has always been disposed toward humanity*' (57–58). This is a *strong* Trinitarianism and *strong* crucicentrism that provide the material (ontological) principles of 'mere evangelicalism'.

But then interpretive anarchy threatens to nullify biblical authority. What or

who can provide the needed interpretive stability to prevent the vessel (the church) from becoming unhinged from the anchor and drifting off into disparate doctrinal waters? Vanhoozer and Treier argue for a wise reading of the Bible that is done *along the lines of* the canon's literary contours, as 'the ministry of the church...serves and embodies *sola Scriptura* rightly understood' (110): that is, not a *solo Scriptura*. Such an articulation allows the church to develop and value diversity while still staying 'merely' evangelical. The aim here is a 'plurality' without 'pluralism' where the church can stay moored to the ocean floor at the fixed point of Trinitarian and gospel truth, having a line long enough to glide within charitable limits on the surface of doctrinal variety. 'Tradition plays the role of moon to the Scripture's sun: what light (and authority) tradition bears is derivative, ministerial, a true if dim reflection of the light of Christ that shines forth from the canon that cradles him' (117). Thus, a *critical* biblicism and an *authentic sola Scriptura* provide the formal (epistemological) principles of 'mere evangelicalism'.

Vanhoozer and Treier then turn to explore how the above 'agenda would reshape "evangelical" theology's current forms' (131). First, the distance between theory and practice must be closed, as theology is viewed as *wisdom* resulting in thorough integration into every fabric of life (instead of an immediate felt-needs/ piecemeal approach to application). Second, recouping 'theological interpretation of Scripture' provides the path from exegesis to theological *judgments*, where attention to canon, creed and culture shape theology's coherence. (An explanation of 'theological interpretation of Scripture' is beyond the abilities of this review. I point the reader, therefore, to Treier's *Introducing Theological Interpreta-*

tion of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice, Baker Academic, 2008.) Third, churches, parachurches and academies need agreement around the gospel, yet all the while a healthy amount of *division* that multiplies ministries. Here, '[t]he apostolic concern of biblical fidelity intersects with the catholic concern of ecclesial fraternity' (197) with a view to the varied contexts in which the church finds itself today. Fourth, space should be made for scholarly contributions that are: spiritually constructive in accord with the literary diversity in the Scriptures; systematic/coherent with wise appeal to tradition, reason and experience; and creative within biblical theology's purview. Finally, a word should be said on Vanhoozer and Treier's constant insistence that evangelical theology as the pursuit of scriptural wisdom influences the church's unity, piety and witness. 'The church is as essential to evangelical theology as evangelical theology is to the church. *Evangelical theology without the church is disembodied, a mere abstraction; the church without evangelical theology is absent-minded, an impressionable busybody*...subject to sociological critique and the prevailing winds of cultural doctrine—*sola cultura*' (259). The definitive aspiration of evangelical theology remains mirroring Scripture, restated here 'in biblically faithful, theologically fruitful and intellectually and pastorally winsome ways. By God's grace evangelical theology might realize this aspiration more fully, even enhancing its appeal for those outside the conservative Protestant subculture(s)' (252).

If you have persevered so long through this review, then I recommend this book for two reasons. First, you surely care about evangelical theology's nature and expression in the world. Vanhoozer and Treier make insightful observations of

current tendencies and provide wisdom for future paths. In many ways they envision a fifth approach to evangelical identity and fellowship in addition to those in *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism* (Naselli and Hansen eds., Zondervan, 2011). Equally, however, they do *not* propose a *separate* approach (eagerly intent on evangelical unity), but a recognition of evangelicalism as an 'intellectual tradition', distinctive from other philosophical schools with a fruitful diversity. And secondly, this book simply defies summary. All the terms used above are laden with incisively nuanced meanings with which Vanhoozer and Treier make very specific points. Seasoned theologians will benefit from the wisdom—and call to wisdom—in this book. Theological educators will particularly want to put it in the hands of their students.

ERT (2017) 41:3, 373-375

Islambild und Identität— Subjektivierungen von Deutsch- Marokkanern zwischen Diskurs und Disposition

Maïke Didero

Bielefeld: transcript verlag, 2014

(Dissertation RWTH Aachen)

ISBN 978-3-8376-2623-0

Pdf (e-book), pp413, bibliog., illus.

*Reviewed by Heiko Wenzel, Freie
Theologische Hochschule Giessen, Germany*

Islambild und Identität opens a window into an interesting world for reflecting on migration and for understanding the lives of immigrants in Germany. Didero's focus on Moroccans (the second largest Muslim population in Germany besides the Turkish immigrants) with a population of approximately 170,000 people, is well taken and presents different

aspects of and perspectives on the immigrant population from Muslim-majority countries in Germany. She explicitly seeks to offer a 'more detailed perspective' (12) on 'Arab countries and Turkey' which is (frequently) presented as homogenous 'space' in German media.

This RWTH Aachen (Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule Aachen) dissertation addresses very important questions. One important contribution of Didero's dissertation lies in tracing the way these immigrants construct and describe their identity in light of the perspectives on Islam with which they are confronted in their daily lives. This particular focus sheds significant light on the dynamics between these perspectives and the construction/description of identity which is frequently neglected.

After the introduction (11-17), the second chapter discusses and describes the theoretical framework for approaching the crucial ideas and concepts of 'identity' and 'subjects' (19-74). The author specifies 'identity' by distinguishing identification from oneself and from others, self-understanding and belonging. Didero seeks to describe the concept 'subject' along the lines of discourses and a theoretical reflection on the praxis.

The third chapter focuses on the impact of the geographical space for constructing identity (75-101). The author describes the perception of the media and the population of Islam in Germany. The context for the empirical part and the rationale for choosing the interview partners are presented in the fourth chapter (103-133). The empirical part unfolds with two complementary perspectives. The fifth chapter focuses on a detailed presentation of the interviews with the three immigrants (135-216) and the sixth chapter profiles important

topics like the individual positioning in light of multiple locations *or* the place of residence and respective networks *or* language competence and the use of media *or* the various ways of practising religion (217-347).

Didero's introduction exhibits a noteworthy awareness of her own perspective when approaching this study. Her introductory reflections shed some light on the stimulating aspects for starting this study and for reflecting on the relationship between personal experiences and academic research in general; in particular, when questions of identity and perceptions on and of immigrants are the topic.

In addition to the self-evident critical self-awareness and the comprehensible connection of biography and academic study, this introduction invites the reader to enter into a dialogue with Didero and her experience. Moreover, it is an invitation to walk in the shoes of immigrants (for a while) and to reflect on the impact of views from the outside. This is not the only reason that makes this study a worth-while reading; but it is a significant one.

It may not be limited to describing identity in immigrant situations. Perhaps it can be tied to Mikhail Bakhtin's idea that every word is a response and anticipates a response. Bakhtin's dialogical orientation of the word may add to many important aspects that Didero's approach covers with her focus on the construction of identity in light of the view from the outside ('Anrufung').

This study illustrates well how significant the views from the outside are and how individuals in their network and in their connections to other individuals contribute to the construction of identity. It is a response. But in light of Bakhtin's statement this is only one

aspect, though an important one. It also anticipates a response (and in a sense calls for one). This side of the coin is addressed indirectly and briefly in Didero's study. However, the author is hardly responsible for this limitation as every study has its purpose and its limitations. Moreover, every study calls for additional and follow-up studies, or, as Bakhtin would say, for a continuation of the dialogue.

It is my hope that Didero's work and similar ones along these lines may help to stimulate dialogue on these important topics. They may facilitate an increased understanding of immigrants, their position in German society, their impact on German society and the need to discuss the process and the dynamics of how our society is changed thereby. The ongoing change is not a question, but a fact; the question seems only to be whether this change simply 'happens' or whether our society and many individuals creatively and dialogically arrange and mould this change.

This possible stimulation does not depend on an unqualified consent to Didero's theoretical or practical discussions on identity or subject. Her emphasis on the construction of identity provides an illuminating framework for many important dynamics, processes and differences of which immigrants are a part.

In light of this well reflected and nuanced treatment of these important aspects, it is surprising that the other important topic 'the perception and/or presentation of Islam in Germany' falls short of this level of balanced treatment. Conclusions are less nuanced and conclusions are drawn more quickly. This might reflect the situation and the experience of the immigrants; but this can only partially explain this difference.

Regardless of this impression, Didero's dissertation is a stimulating and well-presented study of an important topic.

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Orality and Theological Education

Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts

Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy, eds.

Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2013

ISBN: 978-962-7673-25-0
Pb., pp. 229, index.

Beyond Literate Western Practices: Continuing Conversations in Orality and Theological Education

Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy, eds.

Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2014

ISBN: 978-962-7673-28-6
Pb., pp. 172, index.

Beyond Literate Western Contexts: Honor & Shame and Assessment of Orality Preference

Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy, eds.

Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2015

ISBN: 978-962-7673-30-9
Pb. Pp. 220, index.

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

The International Orality Network (<https://orality.net/>) was an outgrowth in 2005 of the initiative to understand better the missiological dynamics of working in majority world cultures

that converged and culminated at the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization meeting in Pattaya, Thailand, in 2004. The Network's initial efforts led in 2010 to *Orality Breakouts: Using Heart Language to Transform Hearts* (edited by Samuel Chiang and Avery T. Willis, and published by the Lausanne Committee).

From there, meetings in the summers of 2012-2014—at the Billy Graham Centre at Wheaton College, Illinois; at Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary; and at Houston Baptist University—produced the three volumes under review. Each is structured similarly: various parts (see below) include papers presented at the consultations, with each part (except part I of the 2014 book) concluding with helpful reflections on the preceding chapters, and the books themselves ending with the participants' biographies. The initial instalment also includes at the end a glossary and an annotated bibliography on the topics covered. Co-editors Chiang and Lovejoy bookend all three books, with the former in his role as executive director of the International Orality Network (ION) providing the prologues and the latter as a biblical scholar and advisory council member of ION writing the epilogues.

If *Orality Breakouts* was primarily missionologically focused, then the triad of books considered here foreground the role of theological education in the missionary task. To be sure, those approaching these books from a missiological perspective will not be disappointed: each volume includes multiple case studies of theological education and mission in majority world contexts explicated from an out of an orality frame of reference. Yet theological educators of all contexts, even and perhaps especially in the western world, would be well advised to be attentive to what is charted in these works. The truth is that, although

the orality studies of Walter Ong and others was registered in the theological academy more than a generation ago, it would seem that little has changed in Anglo-American seminaries in relationship to the predominantly oral character of human learning.

Hence the initial volume addresses both formal and informal contexts (parts I and II) within which oral preference learners engage in theological education as well as unpacking the andragogy (adult-related, in contrast to pedagogy, child-related) of oral learning styles and the form of oral leadership prevalent around the world (parts III and IV).

The middle volume then includes eleven case studies (in two parts) of andragogical innovations (in Kenya, Uganda, North India, the Philippines, across Latin America, and vis-à-vis the Deaf), and orality strategic implementations (in the areas of leadership training, Bible reading, creative arts, academic scholarship, and worldview studies).

The most recent book then applies the orality perspective by switching toward honour-shame modes of comprehending majority world sensibilities and commitments (part I includes chapters on these themes as worked out in Central Asia, Ethiopia, Latin America, purity notions in ancient Israel, and as found in the New Testament), before turning to the important questions related to assessment of theological education (part II).

The ten chapters in this arena take up the difficult tasks of discerning appropriate modalities of assessment at their various levels, both for theological education purposes and also in relationship to the missiological outcomes which such educational endeavours attempt to cultivate. My one quibble with the organization here has to do with the fact that the first three chapters are focused

on scriptural dynamics and perhaps ought to have been separated off as its own collection of chapters devoted to the hermeneutics of oral cultures.

That the development and maturation of children unfolds within a predominantly oral—i.e., relational-social—environment is obvious. Hence the task of theological education can never be separated from the orality of human communication, but the reality is that this has been marginalized by literacy in the western academy that continues to export its forms worldwide. ION and the editors and contributors to this volume have to be congratulated on challenging this literacy bias that is pervasive especially in Anglo-American evangelical circles. But the turn to orality is not without its challenges for Christians committed to the written Bible as the primary if not sole deposit of the gospel of Jesus Christ since now context, embodiment, imagination, and experience are found to be at the heart of the educational and missiological enterprise.

In that case, affectivity is on a par with cognitivism, narrative equal to discursivity, and testimony as important if not more so than systematicity. In each case, traditional evangelical doctrinal and theological commitments are interrogated by if not subordinated to oral genres and forms of engagement. Hence if the globalization of world Christianity is pressing questions about theological questions in western Evangelicalism, then the missiological concern of intercultural Christianity is similarly prompting pedagogical and related queries in the evangelical theological academy. But thankfully, for those who do not think recoiling from such realities is a viable or plausible option, we have these three books to enable forging paths forward with both theological and missiological promise.

ERT (2017) 41:3, 377-379

The Art and Science of Personality Development

Dan P. McAdams

New York, NY: Guilford Press, 2015

ISBN 9781462519958

Hb, pp368, bibliography, index

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

In the postmodern world, we have a vast range of possible life trajectories to choose from. The self-evident nature of our moral systems has evaporated, leaving us free to make our own moral choices—which can be seen as a gain, loss or mixed blessing depending on your perspective.

In this context, McAdams, a prominent scholar and author in psychology and human development at Northwestern University (USA) whose book *The Person: An Introduction to the Science of Personality Psychology* went through five editions between 1994 and 2008, offers significant insight into how Christian spiritual trajectories might develop over the course of a lifetime and how pastoral leaders can provide the necessary guidance and discernment.

Personality psychology and developmental psychology are different worlds. The former discipline researches how certain personality traits are continuous throughout life, whereas the latter investigates how disposition and temperament change throughout life. McAdams seeks to integrate the two with his theory of human personality development.

McAdams posits the idea that human life is inevitably social life. The first layer of development is the human as *social actor*, which originates at birth and

deals with the establishment of basic temperamental and dispositional traits. Social action is essentially the performance of emotions, influenced by genetics, nurture and culture. Children develop the rudiments of personality as they learn to perform and regulate emotion.

Around middle childhood (age 5–7), the second layer of *motivated agent* emerges, which charts the development of what a person values and wants, of goals and motivation. As children acquire autonomy, the desire to be an agent, or to act in a way that matters, becomes inherent in being human.

The third layer of human development, becoming an *autobiographical author*, emerges in adolescence as people piece together their memories and circumstances into a life story or narrative identity that they use to cope with past events, explain who they are today and reflect on where they might be tomorrow. Later on, generativity or the desire to leave a positive legacy for the next generation becomes a dominant concern.

From adolescence onwards, we develop a sense of life's most significant values: 'What is good?' (morality), 'What is God?' (religion), and 'How should society work?' (politics). Our answers to these questions form an ideology that direct our motivations and goals throughout life and shape our identity.

Life stories generally follow a standard or 'canonical' pattern, such as the shape of redemption (i.e. succeeding despite hardship) or contamination (how success suddenly turns sour). Finally, McAdams discusses life endings, when autobiographical memory decreases or is even erased, the author fades, personality regresses and the self is diminished.

McAdams' perspective offers meaningful insights relevant to the narrative turn in theology. His theory provides a multi-

layered structure for building character (as social actor), values and goals (as motivated agent), and vocation as one's life trajectory (autobiographical author).

McAdams also offers a credible scheme supporting pastoral care and leadership at all stages of life. His attention to the challenges of narrative identity construction beginning in adolescence and to generativity as a key life task provide a framework for intergenerational learning. When churches offer only snippets of theology, principle and significance but no storied patterns of life, differences between the generations flatten out, reducing the potential for intergenerational learning.

A robust Christian identity involves not simply knowing the right things about Christ, the Bible and faith and participating in a Christian community, but also the development of a personal narrative embedded in culturally relevant communities of faith. Without a sense of narrative spirituality, it becomes difficult to construct a recognizably Christian identity. Similarly, narrative Christian discipleship entails not just the development of faith and morality but the art of integrating one's life story with other Christian stories such that the character, goals and mission of Christ become visible in one's life.

McAdams indicates (140, 213–4) that he was raised in an evangelical environment and attends a Lutheran church but is not sure that he would describe himself as a Christian. The mini-case studies he uses to illustrate his theory cover the ideological gamut: Luther, Mother Teresa, Gandhi, Darwin, Barack Obama. Surprisingly, he draws on speculative aspects of evolutionary biology at times, but most of his argumentation relies on a broad base of sound psychological research.

McAdams' significant theoretical work can guide us in the important task of strengthening our existing understanding and practice of spiritual development throughout the life cycle. I recommend it to all who are regularly engaged in leading other believers in paths of Christian discipleship.

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Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels

Richard B. Hays

Waco, TX: Baylor University Press,
2016

ISBN 9781481304917

Hb, pp xx + 504, bibliog., index, illus.

*Reviewed by Boris Paschke, Evangelische
Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium.*

The monograph at hand is a thorough, careful and convincing carrying out of and plea for the so-called 'figural interpretation' (2) of the four canonical Gospels of the New Testament. Richard B. Hays (Duke Divinity School) expressly agrees with Martin Luther's *Preface to the Old Testament* (1523) from which he quotes on the first page of his book. Hays then states: '[F]igural reading—proclaiming that the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection took place "according to the Scriptures"—stands at the heart of the New Testament's message. All four canonical Gospels declare that the Torah and the Prophets and the Psalms mysteriously prefigure Jesus. The author of the Fourth Gospel puts the claim succinctly: in the same passage in John 5 to which Luther pointed, Jesus declares, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me" (John 5:46)' (3).

Hays' goal is to demonstrate that and how 'figural interpretation'—equiva-

lent terms he uses are 'retrospective' reading (3), 'reading backwards' (5), 'rereading' (7) and 'intertextual close reading' (7)—works in each of the four gospels. In doing so, he always answers the following three research questions: 'How does the Evangelist invoke/evoke Scripture to (1) re-narrate Israel's story; (2) narrate the identity of Jesus; and (3) narrate the church's role in relation to the world?' (9).

With regard to his concept of 'Scripture', Hays explains: 'In the present book, I have ... referred with some frequency to the Greek, rather than the Hebrew, text of the Old Testament' (12). What Hays does not expressly mention—but what becomes obvious as one reads through the book—is that for him, 'Scripture' also includes those books of the Septuagint that are not part of the canon of the Hebrew Old Testament (cf., e.g., the references to Sirach on pages 153-158).

In terms of methodology, Hays further states, 'We can roughly categorize the scriptural intertextual references in the Gospels by employing the terms "quotation", "allusion", and "echo". These terms are approximate markers on the spectrum of intertextual linkage, moving from the most to the least explicit forms of reference' (10). Strictly speaking, the title of Hays' monograph is, thus, misleading because it refers only to 'echoes.' Further, Hays is not always consistent in the application of his three categories since the reference to Ezekiel 34:2b-6 in Markk 6:34 is labelled both an 'echo' (49) and an 'allusion' (50).

It is only toward the end of his book that Hays gives his readers an idea of how many references to the Old Testament (here, echoes are apparently not included) the four Gospels exactly contain: 'John contains relatively few citations of the Old Testament. If we tabulate John's

Old Testament references in comparison to those of the Synoptics, including allusions, the totals are striking: Matthew, 124; Mark, 70; Luke, 109; and John, 27' (284).

It is self-explanatory that Hays could not deal with every single one of these references. With regard to the Gospel of Matthew, for instance, he states (note, however, the tension to the just cited tabulation): 'There are at least *sixty* explicit Old Testament quotations ... [a]nd ... hundreds of more indirect Old Testament allusions ... It is of course impossible to survey all this material, but we shall examine a few key passages that shed light on Matthew's strategies for reading Scripture' (109).

The bulk of Hays' book is devoted to the study of the four Gospels so that, roughly speaking, all receive an equal share of the pages: Mark (15-103), Matthew (105-190), Luke (191-280), and John (281-345). Unfortunately, in the limited framework of the present review, it is impossible to summarize, let alone comment on, all findings and insights of Hays' fine and instructive investigation of the four Gospels with regard to their quotations of, allusions to, and echoes of the Old Testament scriptures.

It should be noted, however, that Hays succeeds in shedding new light on passages that have 'baffled' (37, 71) interpreters. Particularly illuminating are Hays' explanations regarding the 'tantalyzing' (223) verse, Lk 24:27, where it is narrated that Jesus teaches the Emmaus disciples what is written about him and his death in the Old Testament. On the basis of his investigation, Hays comes to the following conclusion: 'Luke finds scriptural prefiguration of Jesus' suffering both in the Isaian Servant and in the figure of David' (237).

The monograph is wrapped up by a

short conclusion (347-366), extensive endnotes (367-441), a bibliography (443-469; unfortunately, many of the German titles contain typos), and two indices, i.e., one of Scripture and ancient sources (471-495) and one of names (497-504).

With *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, Richard B. Hays has written a precious book that presents a learned proposal for the figural interpretation of the Synoptics and John. Five hundred years after Martin Luther initiated the Protestant Reformation, Hays has provided us with a fresh and up-to-date argument from the Gospels that underlines the hermeneutical statement Luther made in 1523 with regard to the Old Testament: 'Here you will find the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies ... Simple and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but dear is the treasure, Christ, who lies in them' (1).

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Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology

Darrell L. Guder

Grand Rapids, MI: William B.
Eerdmans 2015
ISBN 978-0-8028-7222-7
Pb., pp 203

*Reviewed by Linda Lee Smith Barkman,
PhD Student, Fuller Theological Seminary,
Pasadena, California, USA*

Darrell L. Guder, a member of the team who made the term 'missional' commonplace by writing the landmark book titled *Missional Church: A Theological Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, now takes the next logical step by examining where this vision is going. This new work, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology*, is a collection

of independent essays tied together by the common thread of what it means to be missional in post-Christendom North America.

Guder is a skilled educator who, with perspicuity, makes his ideas accessible to students of theology and missiology while still challenging the scholar to examine questions in missiology from fresh perspectives. Given that this is a collection of essays written over a ten-year time span, the book maintains a comfortable flow and progression. The first chapter introduces missional theology from its historical genesis as an academic discipline. The last chapter focuses on the trajectory of missional ecumenism. Those in the middle explore from various angles the theology and praxis of what it means to be a missional church. Presented originally at various academic settings, these are thoughtful articulations from a North American evangelical perspective and serve to call readers to participate in the larger conversation regarding the missional church.

Rather than brand new and innovative thoughts, what Guder offers here are his deeper reflections, ruminations, and nuanced understandings of what missional means to the Christian church in North America. One example of this is Guder's interesting and provoking perspective as a result of reexamining basic ecclesiology through the Nicene Creed. He suggests that the Nicene Creed marks be re-read in the following order: 'I believe [in] the apostolic, and therefore the catholic, holy and one Church', where apostolicity refers to the 'sending out' missionary authority of the church, catholic to the global and cross-cultural missionary commission, holy to the 'how' of witness, and oneness to the ecumenical unity of mission.

Another concept addressed at length by Guder is that of 'walking worthily.' In an early chapter, one iteration of Guder's argument for walking worthily is based on Paul's epistle to the Philippians. Later, he devotes two essay-chapters to the topic, which he defines first by what walking worthily is not; not works righteousness, not perfected community, and not institutional success. Instead, he suggests that walking worthily means that the missional church, under missional leadership, is to serve as parabolic witness of the gospel. Here, as elsewhere, Guder relies heavily on Barthian perspectives. (This is not surprising from someone who has co-authored two books on Barth.) Guder thereby provides a solid theological basis from which to refute the western penchant for reductionist ecclesiologies, the temptation to separate the Lordship and Saviour-hood of Jesus.

There are other themes that permeate this work. Guder reminds us that mission was omitted from systematic theological studies prior to the twentieth century and of the importance of missional theology. He remarks more than once on the irony that the increasing consensus regarding the missional nature of the church is occurring simultaneously with the decline in western Christian tradition. He uses missional hermeneutic interpretation of scripture both as a source of grounding and as a way to push forward the conversation.

Unfortunately, because the nature of this book is that of disparate parts joined into a whole, tracing themes is made more difficult than necessary due to the lack of an index of names and/or topics. Nevertheless, while Guder has done an admirable job of turning a decade's worth of academic presentations into a cohesive work, what is truly impressive is the mind that produced these essays.

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**Paul and His Recent Interpreters:
Some Contemporary Debates**

N. T. Wright

London, SPCK, 2016

ISBN 9780281067589

Pb, pp379, bibliog, indices)

Reviewed by Lyndon Drake, Oxford

I was reminded of the scale of Wright's effort in the two-volume *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, by a comment early in *Climax of the Covenant* (1991), a book which Wright described as some extra material for his 'as yet incomplete' Pauline theology. It would take over twenty more years before *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* was published, and despite its monumental size it still included many comments about material which had to be omitted in the interests of space.

The present volume is the second supplementary volume, containing some of that omitted material (the first was *Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul, 1978–2013* [London, SPCK: 2013]). While ploughing through two extra books is an additional challenge for those wishing to understand Wright's reading of Paul, it is a challenge that should be approached with thankfulness: not only because *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* was shorter as a result, but because these two books contain a great deal of vividly presented, helpful content.

In the present volume, Wright presents something of a literature review of modern Pauline studies. As Simon Gathercole has noted, this is not merely a summary of others' opinions, but Wright's critical engagement with each scholar and topic. Simply to gain clarity on Wright's own opinions, therefore, the

book is of general value. It is organised in three major parts:

1. *Paul Among Jews & Gentiles?* summarising the History of Religions approach, and the eventual birth of the 'New Perspectives'.
2. *Re-Enter Apocalyptic* on Käsemann through to Douglas Campbell.
3. *Paul in His World — And Ours?* with more recent social-scientific and philosophical approaches.

Readers of this journal may have the most to gain from the discussion of justification. Wright is—in the eyes of some—at odds with the Reformers' clarity about justification by faith alone. John Piper is perhaps the most high-profile popular critic (*The Future of Justification: A Response to N. T. Wright* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007], for example).

But as Wright notes, "conservative" readers of Paul have often ranged themselves against Bultmann, but they have often been closer to him than they might have cared to acknowledge.' In other words, evangelicals dislike Bultmann's methods, but have (unwittingly) adopted Bultmann's conclusions. And while Baur's picture has 'now been discredited on historical grounds, ... like a not-quite-exorcised ghost it still haunts the libraries and lecture-halls of New Testament scholarship.'

In this regard, Wright argues, most 20th-century Pauline scholarship descends from Luther, in contrast to Calvin. 'The football match many have come to watch is thus played between two teams, two variations within the essentially Reformational heritage...' Wright sees himself in Calvin's team, while the 20th-century Germans are playing for Luther; this is not new in Wright's self-presentation, but this book provides the most careful explanation to

date of why Wright sees himself within the Reformed tradition.

One helpful aspect of Wright's analysis is his desire for readers to appreciate the complexity of Paul's thinking, especially on the relationship between law and grace. If one over-simplifies Paul, he says, 'You might as well try to play Wagner on a tin whistle'.

Briefly touching on other aspects of the book, Wright highlights Edwin Judge's insistence that 'without knowledge of [the] social situation, one cannot be sure what is meant' by Paul's word. He also helpfully engages with Wayne Meeks' work on ancient monotheisms and the distinctiveness of Jewish monotheism—which was then adopted and became a hallmark of Christian belief.

This reviewer particularly appreciated the careful discussion of David Horrell's work in the context of social ethics within Pauline Christian communities. Modern churches often struggle with the tension between tolerance and purity. Wright's discussion helps to show where the competing ideas come from, and offers a framework (compelling, in my view) for understanding why Paul makes certain issues matters of purity (and hence potentially of exclusion), while

on other issues kinship is central (and hence tolerance dominates).

This book's value is in its illumination and clarification of why Wright holds views he has expressed at length elsewhere. It does not introduce novel Wright-ian theology. Those readers who desire critique of its ideas may find that the *Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters* 4.1 (2014) which was devoted to articles about *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* is a useful starting point for exploring the ongoing debate. Readers might also find considerable benefit in reading John Barclay's recent *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), as he also engages critically with Wright.

Whatever one makes of Wright's project, there is no doubt that he stands as one of the giants in modern Pauline studies. Evangelicals can appreciate his warm approach to Scripture, which stands in such stark contrast to so much biblical studies scholarship. While *Paul and His Recent Interpreters* will be of most value to those who have already read *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, any person interested in the history of Pauline studies will find this book an entertaining and insightful guide to the breadth and (sometimes murky) depths of modern Pauline scholarship.

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The People's Book: the Reformation and the Bible, edited by Jennifer Powell McNutt and David Lauber (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2017) Pb, pp245, indices, ISBN 978-0-8308-5163-8 Reviewed by David Parker

This is a valuable if slightly unusual collection of papers from the 2016 Wheaton Theology Conference commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The collection is divided into four parts—(i) Access and Readership, the pick being Bruce Gordon's presentation of the importance of Latin Bibles in the 16th century despite the plethora of vernacular versions and most interesting, D D Morgan on Welsh translations; (ii) Transmission and Worship—the best is Co-editor McNutt on

'Word and Sacrament: The Gordian Knot of Reformation Worship'; (iii) Protestant Catholic Dialogue—read Michael Horton, 'John Calvin's Commentary on the Council of Trent'; (iv) The People's Book Yesterday and Today—a fitting end with both entries being outstanding, Paul Lim on the history of '*Sola Scriptura*' and especially Mark Labberton on 'Perspicuity and the People's Book'. This is an intrinsically useful book because of the range of topics covered and also stimulating because it will provoke all kinds of thoughts about related topics as well as the meaning and consequences of those upon which it focuses. A good example is Randall Zachman's discussion of how and why Erasmus, Luther and Calvin encouraged people to read the Bible for themselves—not only does it present a vivid word picture of these three key persons but also raises vital questions about Bible reading today, as the title itself suggests.

Spirit and Gospel

Roland J. Lowther

Spirit and Gospel enables the reader to see that the Holy Spirit offers not just a fresh vision of salvation, but also the wisdom to understand it, the courage to embrace it, and the power to live it.

Spirit and Gospel offers clarity on the vital subject of Christian salvation. In revisiting Paul's gospel presentation in Romans, this book reveals how Paul uses a sequence of highly-relevant metaphors to frame his holistic message of salvation. Whilst affirming Jesus Christ as the heart of Paul's soteriology, this book advocates that the relationship of the Spirit to the Gospel engenders in Paul's presentation a certain coherency and potency that many Christians fail to capture. For discerning Christians seeking encouragement from a clear presentation of this timeless truth, this book is an indispensable read.

Rowland Lowther's Spirit and Gospel provides a helpful extension of a Reformed reading of Romans. This book's call to focus on the significance of the Holy Spirit in Paul's explanation of the gospel constructively challenges past theological descriptions and invigorates believers to fulfill the living sacrifice for which Paul's letter calls.

Mark Reasoner, Marian University

Roland J. Lowther is the pastor of Eternity Presbyterian Church, Queensland, Australia. He holds a PhD from the University of Queensland on the subject, 'Living by the Spirit'.

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