

# Scripture's Distinctives and Dynamic

Towards an Asia-Pacific Hermeneutic of Holiness



Papers and Relections from the 2003  
Asia-Pacific Regional Theology Conference  
October 7-9 2003Korea Nazarene University

Edited by David A. Ackerman

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Ortigas Ave. Ext., Kaytikling, Taytay, 1920 Rizal, Philippines

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Printed in the Philippines by Faithful Servant Marketing Printers, Inc.

ISBN 971-92521-1-1

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## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to the memory of Mark Hatcher who went to meet his Savior on January 28, 2004, due to cancer. Mark was a key participant in the theology conference, and offered important insights into the issues of discussion. Mark and his wife Rovina served as Nazarene missionaries to Korea from 1986 to 1996 and planned to return to the region soon to serve at Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary. Mark was completing his doctorate at Asbury Theological Seminary where he was also teaching. May this book and the dialogue it creates continue the mission, of which Mark was a part, of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ.



## Acknowledgments

Special appreciation goes to those who participated in this theology conference and those who provided financial assistance to make this conference and book a reality.

*Korea Nazarene University* hosted the conference and generously provided room and board for the participants.

The *International Board of Education* provided a generous grant to assist developing theologians from many countries to attend this conference—something that would be impossible for them to do without this assistance.

The *Asia-Pacific Region* and *World Mission Literature* made printing of this book possible.





## Introduction

A group of over 35 theological educators and church leaders gathered at Korea Nazarene University on October 7-9, 2003, to explore together a most critical topic. The international makeup of this group, representing over ten countries of the Asia-Pacific Region as well as the U.S.A. and United Kingdom, brought a richness to the discussion of how to make Scripture relevant to the peoples of these lands.

The conscious, driving force of our conference was to progress towards our goal as disciples of Jesus Christ of guiding people into transforming relationship with God. Theological dialogue provides a solid foundation for the evangelistic mission of the church. One of the significant challenges we face today is taking the message of this relationship as described in the Bible and making it relevant and understandable to cultures and contexts far removed from the cultures of the Bible. Our task as theologians is to find the inner reality and transformative message of Scripture and articulate it to our own contexts without altering that message. We must be faithful to both text and context while preserving the message of Scripture as interpreted by our Wesleyan tradition.

Hermeneutics is one essential if not primary step in the process of doing theology. Our theology (and thus preaching and teaching) is determined to some degree by our hermeneutic, and our hermeneutic is guided by theological presuppositions. With the new challenges and opportunities facing the church, a careful look at how we formulate and apply our doctrines is much needed. In an area as diverse as the Asia-Pacific Region, contextualized theology is mandatory, but in this contextualization lies the threat of factionalism or regional theologies that become separated from the larger, global church. The call for world evangelization urges fresh and relevant approaches, but the unity and theological integrity of the church calls for mindful interpretation.

This book contains the papers and sermons presented at the conference. The planning committee structured the presentations to come to the topic from a number of disciplines, thus the divisions of this book: historical theology, society and culture, ethics and theology, Bible, missiology, and evangelism and church growth. In this regards, we were attempting to be “Wesleyan” in our method, realizing that the various

disciplines will help us see the bigger picture of the application of scriptural truths.

The title of the conference carries significance. The distinct (as in clear and obvious) message of the Bible, we believe, is the desire of the holy God to be in a love relationship with His creatures whom He makes holy through Jesus Christ in response to their faith and obedience. As a denomination, we believe we have been “called unto holiness,” that is, called to remind the global Church about and invite the world to this deeper relationship with God in Christ. If we are to be truly a people of holiness, we must be people of the Word. Even though this is such an important thought, it contains a bit of ambiguity because of the dynamic of interpreting the Bible. The words of Scripture do not change, but their understanding, translation, and application change from one person, language, time, and location to another. The Holy Spirit inspired the original authors but also inspires those who read the sacred Scriptures today. The critical question is this: in the range of interpretations and applications within our Nazarene movement, is there a danger of losing Scripture’s dynamic of holiness? In our efforts to be relevant and contextual, could we also be diminishing our message? All Nazarene ministers, scholars, professors, and missionaries should be concerned about this danger.

A number of questions were posed to the presenters at the conference which the reader of this book might also consider.

1. What does an Asian or a Pacific hermeneutic look like if it also comes from the Wesleyan tradition? Is there such a thing as a Wesleyan Asian hermeneutic or a Wesleyan Pacific hermeneutic? Should there be one?
2. Is there one agreed approach to interpreting the Bible? How diverse can theologians in the Church of the Nazarene be in their approach to the Bible? Is it possible to be a global denomination unified by one message? How will both the internationalization and maturation of the global church challenge our core doctrines?
3. What are the cultural, historical, or biblical models for doing hermeneutics that are relevant and useful for pastors and teachers on our region? Does John Wesley or any other figure in church history (perhaps an Asian or Pacific person) provide a model for us?
4. How can we base our doctrine of holiness on Scripture without sacrificing the need for cultural relevancy? How much should culture influence our hermeneutics?

5. What can Asian and Pacific preachers do to make their preaching not only intelligible, meaningful, applicable, and “relevant,” but also dynamic, powerful, and life-transforming?
6. How much does culture influence our use and interpretation of Scripture?

All who participated in the making of this book hope that our dialogue with each other will contribute to the global work of the Church of the Nazarene and other similar groups. We invite those from other parts of the world to join with us in seeking answers to our questions. We also hope that a bit of our passion for God and the spreading of His Gospel will rub off on those who read our papers.

David A. Ackerman, *Editor*



## Scripture, Theology, and the Church

Dwight D. Swanson

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Let me begin with a modern parable. In Britain the schedule of church services on Sunday traditionally begins with the worship service, followed by Sunday School. Such is the case in my home church in Manchester, where it has also been a long-standing custom for the adult class—rather than following a lesson-plan—to use the morning’s sermon as the focus of discussion. This is a valuable and useful exercise: first of all, it reinforces the sermon by making us think about the sermon text for at least an another hour after the benediction; and, secondly, it allows time to follow-up parts of a sermon that cannot be dealt with at length during the sermon.

For a number of years it was my responsibility to lead this class. Because we are situated near the University of Manchester, we have always had a high number of overseas students in the church, and they were always full of questions.

Our pastor began a sermon series on the Beatitudes. I remember vividly the week he preached from the fourth beatitude, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” I do not recall much about the sermon itself, other than its passion to encourage us all to thirst after righteousness. As the Sunday School class began, I asked my customary first question: “Does anyone have a question they wish to begin with?” A young Korean who had only recently arrived in England to do PhD studies, and had never been in a Christian church before, immediately responded, saying: “Excuse me, but, what is ‘righteousness’?”

My pastor, whom I love dearly, had preached for half an hour *about* righteousness, but had never explained what righteousness is!

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Dr. Swanson teaches Old Testament at Nazarene Theological College in Manchester, England.

<sup>1</sup>This paper will be sparing of quotations, so there will be few footnotes. A bibliography of background sources is appended.

This parable reveals the danger of the Church becoming so used to her sacred language that she takes for granted that people will know what we are preaching about. But . . . how many people who hear have no idea what we are talking about? This incident has had a profound effect on my teaching ever since.

*What is righteousness? What is sin? What is salvation? What is holiness?*

These are pertinent questions for Christian theologians in the Asia-Pacific region, where the greatest population concentrations in the world remain largely ignorant of the name of Jesus, let alone of redemption in His name—yet who will equate the name “Christian” with the West. How do we put these life-revealing biblical and theological terms into language that people who have never encountered Christianity or Jesus can understand?

If I understand things properly, we are gathered here to grapple with these questions. These are crucial questions, because the Church’s mission imperative demands they be answered: we have Good News to share, so the whole world may know Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, and may be restored in His likeness. The authority and mandate of this imperative has come to us from Scripture. It is Scripture which reveals Christ; it is Scripture which defines the Church’s purpose.

But, Scripture is an ancient language, not spoken widely in our world. The revelation has to be translated into specific local idiom to become revelation. This is not simply a matter of finding equivalent words for the ancient words. The process of translation is nothing less than doing theology. Whether sharing personal testimony, or teaching a Bible class, or preaching a sermon, or interpreting that sermon—we are always engaged in doing theology as we translate the Good News across cultural and linguistic lines. It may be good, bad, or indifferent theology, but all that we do in presenting the gospel *is* theology.

These three, then, are intertwined: Scripture, the Church, and Theology. Through Scripture Christ has been revealed, and the Church is given a mission; the Church fulfills her mission by passing on the Good News, and the source of that news is Scripture. The Church is engaged in the endlessly renewable challenge of translating the Word, revealed in Scripture, to new peoples and generations; the Church is endlessly engaged in doing theology, or to put it another way, in “sharing the Good News.”

This conference is called to focus on the Scriptures as the basis for theology in the Church of the Nazarene. I wish to draw our attention to this task by considering each of these three intertwined components in turn: Scripture, theology, and the Church.

## Scripture's Dynamic

The conference title, “Scripture’s Distinctives and Dynamic,” suggests that the path towards a hermeneutic of holiness will be found in recognising two complementary aspects of the way Scripture reaches us: Scripture as a whole is dynamic—so people in every generation and every nation find in it life and meaning; at the same time, there are distinctives within Scripture which may and must be drawn—that is, some parts of revelation are more important than others, and need to be emphasised. The conference sub-title would suggest that “holiness” is one of these distinctives.

I wish to suggest that these descriptive terms may also be seen to refer to the first two components of my triad: Scripture’s *dynamic* refers to the very nature of Scripture, itself; Scripture’s *distinctives* relate to the task of theology/mission.

I would suggest that it is in the very *dynamic* of Scripture that we may find the hermeneutical key for doing theology in the diverse contexts in which we live.<sup>2</sup>

As an example, consider the first chapters of the Bible—Genesis 1-11. This account, spanning from creation to the arrival of Abraham in the pre-history of Israel, is the beginning of a “meta-narrative” which does not reach its conclusion until 2 Kings 25. The last event of this long story of Israel gives us our most significant clue to the time of the publishing of this history: some time after the 37<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiachin’s exile in Babylon (2 Kgs 25:27). This places the publication date after 560 BC—in the midst of the Babylonian exile.

This factor helps us to understand the remarkable similarities of the Genesis creation and flood accounts to Babylonian accounts which had been in circulation for hundreds of years. Comparison to the *Enuma Elish* shows that both begin with chaos/desolation, and focus on light, firmament, dry land, the heavenly lights, creation of the human being, and the final rest of God/the gods. But, the differences are distinct. God creates by His word, and is independent of His creation; the sun, moon, and stars are not gods, but are created things; the human being is not created as a slave to the gods, but in God’s image, and for fellowship with Him. The Babylonian Flood Story, *The Gilgamesh Epic*, begins with the same determination to destroy humanity for going astray—basically for annoying the gods—and with the provision by god of a boat covered with pitch, into which every species of animal goes; as the flood subsides, a

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<sup>2</sup>This is a “Wesleyan” way of stating this, with which we deal below.



dove and raven are sent out to search for dry land; the boat comes to rest on top of a mountain, and the gods are appeased. But, Utnapishtim (the boat builder) is primarily interested in gaining immortality, and not with repopulating the earth. The biblical account once again shows a God who is deeply committed to His people, and seeks to redeem the earth.

These similarities have troubled many Christians. How can we reconcile the biblical narrative, revealed directly to inspired Israelites, most likely Moses in about the 13<sup>th</sup> C BC, with this pagan literature, even though they date to a period as much as a thousand years prior to Moses?

The answer is that the biblical writers were contextualising the revelation from Yahweh for a generation of Israelites who were living in the shadow of the great temples to Marduk—the Babylonian creator god—whose story was repeated at least annually at the New Year celebrations. A captive people, from an insignificant nation, were in danger of losing their faith, or of the peril of syncretism, and it was the task of now anonymous men<sup>3</sup> of God to teach their people the reality of Yahweh's place in the face of this superpower.

What language do they use to convey the revelation? What images and metaphors? In this time, as in all the history of God's dealing with His people throughout Scripture, God revealed Himself in language people understood. He did not create a special language; but used Hebrew, a small sub-group of Aramaic. He did not use images that would not draw pictures in people's minds; rather, he inspired humans in the midst of their world to write and speak with words and metaphors that were readily at hand.<sup>4</sup> If everyone knew the creation imagery of Babylon, then the metaphors were already there. But, the revelation came through the profoundly theological re-use of those words and metaphors—There are not many gods, but only one, and all the rest is part of the created order; therefore, all the gods of Babylon are but human creation. Humanity is not created for slavery, especially of Marduk; rather, we are the crowning event of creation, given a role in God's work in this world.

*The purpose of revelation is to make plain. This means God uses that which is already known in order to reveal what is not yet known.*

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<sup>3</sup>Using the masculine advisedly, as most likely the case.

<sup>4</sup>One of the biggest misunderstandings of apocalyptic literature, such as Revelation, is to think that, because they make little or no sense to us, they must also have been opaque to the original audience. Thus, the prophecy market peddles interpretations even more fantastic than the original. We would believe fewer ridiculous interpretations if we would start from the assumption that the symbols were perfectly sensible to those who read of them.

The story is no different when we come to the New Testament. For hundreds of years, right up to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, it was believed that the Greek of the New Testament was, indeed, a holy language. The reason for this was that much of the vocabulary of the NT had no direct parallels with the vocabulary of classical Greek. The explanation for this was that these words must be the speech of the angels.<sup>5</sup>

But, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> C a series of discoveries in Egypt changed everything. The rubbish tip (garbage dump) of Alexandria was excavated, uncovering thousands of papyrus documents: letters, bills and receipts, notes. In this every-day sort of scribbling was found the vocabulary of the Greek NT. Suddenly, instead of being seen as the language of the angels, the NT was found to be “street-Greek”—the sort of Greek written by Greek-as-a-second-language students (albeit, advanced students)!

The importance of this cannot be overstated. The Good News of Jesus was written in the common dialect of the Roman empire—the equivalent of the use of English across the world today. In contrast to the Muslim conception of revelation, which takes great pride in the faultless classical Arabic of the Quran, even though only a small minority of Muslims can read or understand it, that the NT is written in the speech of everyday people highlights the importance of availability of revelation for all:

*The purpose of revelation is to be understood. This means that God uses vocabulary that people already know!*

God takes extreme risks in revealing Himself in this manner, for language is always open to misunderstanding. Even so, he seems to have decided that the risk is worth it all. A prime example of this risk struck me as I began to teach Johannine literature this term. It is seen in the opening lines of the Gospel of John. “In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God.”<sup>6</sup>

It is not to our purpose to relate the whole discussion regarding the authorship of the Gospel. If the author is not the apostle John, he is certainly a Jew who knows his Old Testament well and is steeped in Hebrew ways of thinking. At the same time, he also clearly knows the Greek-speaking world well. There are word-plays throughout this book

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<sup>5</sup>The rise of this belief coincides with the “Dark Ages,” when much knowledge of Greek was lost in Europe.

<sup>6</sup>I have purposely avoided translating in order to allow this point to work its way through each of our languages.

that are possible in Greek, but could not be translated back into Hebrew or Aramaic, as well as the opposite.

The opening verse shows both of these aspects well. A good Jew reading this verse—though, admittedly, a Hellenistic Jew who read his Bible in Greek—would immediately think of Genesis 1:1. Here, however, the *Word* God speaks at creation is no less than that of His son! The same reader will also likely think of Proverbs 8, and would make the connection of *logos* and wisdom. Equating wisdom or *logos* with God would be startling!

A Hellenist—Roman or Greek—would hear the word *logos* and immediately fill it with meaning from philosophy. The 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC philosopher, Heraclitus, born in Ephesus (the likely city of the Evangelist) seems to have been the first to use the term, as “omnipresent wisdom by which all things are steered.” For 5<sup>th</sup> Century Plato *logos* was “Reason.” 4<sup>th</sup> C Zeno of Citium expounded Plato’s concept, teaching that *logos* is the divine spark of the soul. His followers, the Stoics, would have been among John’s cultured readers in late 1<sup>st</sup> C AD Ephesus. They would be able to follow this until John speaks of the *Logos* becoming *flesh*—which would be startling, and even distasteful to them.

What is John doing? He begins with a thoroughly biblical (read “OT”) image and uses it to show that the ultimate incarnation of wisdom is Jesus Christ—who is not merely *with* God, but is God. He then takes this image and connects it with a central Greek concept to show that Jesus Christ is the divine *Logos*, the Reason which steers the *kosmos*. He then leads both Jew and Greek to read on to learn how the man Jesus, made flesh, fulfils both of their expectations.

It is breathtaking, and it is risky. Church history shows us that the Gnostics seized upon this idea to fuse Hellenistic religion and the Gospel together in a syncretic aberration which nearly derailed the Good News. It is dangerous to contextualise!

But this is exactly what Scripture, itself, does. The biblical writers are “God-breathing” people (cf 2 Tim 3:16), taking the revelation given them and translating it into language and imagery that the readers/hearers can understand readily.

What is more, this is precisely what God has done in Christ! John says as much in the same Prologue to his Gospel. “No one has ever seen God, but the only son, who is in the bosom of the Father, that one has made Him known.” The Greek for “made Him known” is, literally, “exegeted Him.” Jesus’ life is an exegesis of the Father. He is the Word

of God made flesh. God takes the risk, and the Son is crucified. But in this God is glorified!

The Word incarnates the Father; the Gospel incarnates the Word in words. This is our very task. The work of contextualisation can only be done through incarnation—*the one who will translate the Good News has to come from the bosom of the Word and make it flesh in the world.*

This is the dynamic of Scripture.

### Scripture's Distinctives

When we engage the task of incarnational translation, we are doing theology. We take the image of “creation out of a void” (Gen 1:2), and express it in words and imagery that we understand in our own languages and cultures. But, every choice of a word or image is a theological decision. How do we make these decisions? We move now to the matter of the *distinctives* of Scripture. By this, I suggest, we begin to speak of our own relationship to Scripture as we seek to interpret it faithfully. It is at this point that we are affected by a multitude of influences: our language and culture, nationality, experiential background, theological conviction, and so on.<sup>7</sup> There are only two of these effects on interpretation of Scripture that we have time to consider just now: the Asia/Pacific context, and the Wesleyan/Holiness context.

### Towards an Asia-Pacific Hermeneutic

In Europe, our two theological colleges (yes, just two for the whole region . . .) have an ongoing series of theology conferences with the expressed purpose of developing theologians and writing theology that both comes from and speaks to the diverse cultures of Europe. This may seem strange, considering the long history of Christian theology in Europe. But, for the Church of the Nazarene, that history is neither long, nor has it developed theologians for each nation where the church exists.

This conference today, the second of its kind, shares that purpose, but for an exponentially more diverse region. It might be fair to ask what this phenomenon of regional conferences is saying.

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<sup>7</sup>We will all by now be aware that none of us can be wholly objective in our approach to Scripture. There is not time to go into the areas of phenomenology, semiotics, etc., streaming from the schools of Derrida, Foucault and Ricoeur. These need only be acknowledged for now as one of the West's contributions in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to factors to be taken into consideration as we go about our incarnational task.

On the one hand, it might be seen as a declaration of independence, whereby local theologies seek to develop by themselves without the hegemony of the global church. Behind such a development might be the ideological and economic conflicts of our time: a growing national awareness in the face of globalisation; even some anti-Western feeling in the wake of recent events.

These are, to be sure, part of prevailing world developments. The place of “globalisation” within the Church of the Nazarene was a hot topic of discussion at the Global Theology Conference in Guatemala last year. On the one hand, our Church desires to maintain a distinctiveness which can be recognised in any part of the world where people called Nazarenes gather. That which is paramount is our distinctive doctrine, that of holiness of heart and life. This doctrine is our heritage, which we are commissioned to hand on safely to the next generations. On the other hand, local churches fear the erasure of local identity which goes with globalisation in the economic sphere. When Coca Cola arrives, indigenous fruit drinks disappear. We all drink the same Coke, wherever we go. When the global church arrives, we all sing the same songs; we all preach from the same texts.

In other parts of the non-Western Christian world *postcolonialism* goes hand-in-hand with anti-globalism, and the Bible must be read *against* Western readings which are seen to have been used to keep the colonised subservient.

If this were to be the reason for our conferences, they would be purely reactionary rather than positive, and it is questionable whether anything of value would come from them.

On the other hand, and I believe this is the reason, the purpose of this sort of conference may be seen as a step of maturity for our Church, as each region and nation takes upon itself the responsibility to incarnate the Good News into its own languages and cultures. This is a task which cannot possibly be done by missionaries. But, it is a task which missionaries must encourage. If the global Church is mature enough, she will embrace this enterprise as an opportunity to be more effective in her mission—and to learn more of the manifold grace of God. An Asian, or a Pacific, or a European, or an African theology will reveal to the larger Church new insights into the Good News that have not been dreamed before, as more of the myriad of peoples created in God’s image refract the light of the Gospel. Our theology will not, then, be a one-way enterprise

where teaching is received and passed on, but it will be a mutual enterprise where we grow together into the full measure of the stature of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

This implies that we are not talking about creating a multitude of local theologies with limited reference to the rest of our Church. Rather, we rejoice in local manifestations while also rejoicing in relation to the whole. This comes close to a recent definition of globalisation: “In its simplest sense globalization refers to the widening, deepening, and speeding up of global interconnectedness.”<sup>9</sup>

This leads to the second context:

### **A Hermeneutic of Holiness**

I have to confess that it is a thing most curious to contemplate people in 21<sup>st</sup> Century China, Indonesia, or Fiji doing theology on the basis of the life-work of an 18<sup>th</sup> Century Englishman as preached by 19<sup>th</sup> Century American revivalists! What sort of hermeneutic is this?

First of all, I would suggest, it has a dynamic view of Scripture (as discussed above); and is grounded firmly in Scripture.

Secondly, our hermeneutic is one which affirms that it is part of a global network of faith. Just as there can be no solitary Christian, so there can be no solitary Church. None of us theologises on our own, but as part of a family conversation. Thus, “special-pleading” theologies (Asia-Pacific versions of liberation, black, feminist, ecological theologies) are not the goal.

Thirdly, this hermeneutic takes captive every philosophy for Christ. It demands academic rigour and honesty as it searches out the root and branch of every world-view around it in order to translate the Good News accurately. No human system or religion is to be ignored in this pursuit.

Fourthly, it undergoes the test of culture: Does this hermeneutic communicate Christ to our own cultures? Does our hermeneutic provide adequate cultural-critique for the sake of the Church’s life? Then, does it stand the test of the wider community of faith?

Perhaps by now you have recognised my attempt to translate the renowned “Wesleyan quadrilateral” (Scripture/tradition/reason/experience)

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<sup>8</sup>Kwame Bediako, a Ghanaian theologian, has shown how this is being done in Africa in *Theology and Identity* (Carlisle: Regnum Books, 1999). This book is a must-read for all engaged in this task.

<sup>9</sup>David Held, *Global Transformations: Politics, Economic & Culture*, eds. David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldbatt and Jonathan Perratui (Oxford: Polity Press, 1999), 14.

into contemporary terms. In the end, our hermeneutic is not very different from what we might conclude in a similar setting in Europe or the US.<sup>10</sup> What remains is to consider what makes “holiness” essential to our theologising.

### Theology and the Church

This is, to be sure, our primary context for theology. We are doing our theology/incarnational translation in the context of the Church of the Nazarene. We have committed ourselves to the urgency of the message of holiness. We do not do theology for its own sake; we do not do our work in a vacuum. Our theology flows out of and back into our community of faith.

It is the purpose of this conference to nuzzle at what this means in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Asia and the Pacific. I hope to add something to this later on in a paper focused specifically on “holiness” from a scriptural standpoint. For now, and in closing, I wish to address some implications of our work:

1. The relation of our theological work to our heritage, and to other local theological outworkings will need to be one of grace and dialogue.

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<sup>10</sup>Having said this, the question as to what *sort* of Wesleyans we might be raises a whole new host of questions. Here is a very recent description of the possibilities that exist today in the US:

“What does it mean to be Wesleyan?” Or, put a different way, the question is: “What is the central, defining essence of the Wesleyan tradition?”

There are already multiple answers to that question on the table. (1) One camp, working within a self-consciously Wesleyan theological tradition, insists that the most crucial element of the Wesleyan tradition is social justice/concern for the poor, even (for some in this camp) liberation theology. (2) A different camp, also working within a self-consciously Wesleyan theological tradition, insists that what is most central to the Wesleyan tradition is an insistence upon ecumenicity, or a “catholic spirit.” (3) Yet another school of thought within the Wesleyan tradition argues that what it means to be Wesleyan is to appropriate a certain theological method (the “quadrilateral”), and that it is simply doing theology using that method itself, regardless of where it leads one, that constitutes being “Wesleyan.” (4) Another party, also claiming self-consciously to be Wesleyan, argues that a central, definitive essence of the Wesleyan tradition is Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection/holiness. (5) I even heard someone say once that they thought that what it meant to be Wesleyan was to use small groups. And there are other potential answers to that question of what is essential to “being Wesleyan.”

Certainly those answers are not mutually exclusive—one could easily insist that two or more of them are necessary in order faithfully to claim to be part of the Wesleyan tradition.

What are the parameters of our efforts? Our global church leaders have voiced their concerns that core values of our denomination may be eroded if not safe-guarded; and so they speak of certain “non-negotiables” of our beliefs. Thus far the chief focus of concern has been on “crisis” and “second-ness.”<sup>11</sup> If, in submitting these terms to the cultural test they become translated in ways that differ from the current recognisable formulations, how shall we proceed? Does one part of the family invalidate the integrity of another part of the family? Or, can these translations strengthen the whole family? We have to go about this process in humility and grace; but the process must be a mutual conversation.

2. The relation of theology to evangelism has to be seen as integral and complementary.

To emphasise the need of doing theology does not take attention away from our mission mandate. It rather focuses attention upon it. This says that theology does not replace sharing the Good News, but that it is the necessary *preparation for* evangelism, and that evangelism itself must be seen as a theological activity. Nor does this emphasis mean that everyone must become academic theologians. But, it *does* say that we *must* make the commitment to produce such theologians at the beginning of the evangelistic effort in any new culture. To be more specific, our church needs more biblical scholars, immersed in the biblical world-view *and* in their own world so that what has been “translation” (from one culture and language to another) becomes “incarnation” (within the culture and language).

3. Finally, regarding our enterprise here this week, the conference title indicates we are laying foundations for an Asia/Pacific hermeneutic of holiness teaching and theology. The word “towards” is the clue to this.

When reading Asian evangelical theologies, I have often seen titles like this. Much is written about the need to contextualise Christian theology into Asian contexts. But, I have read very little developed theology from evangelicals in Asia.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps this is the nature of Asian theology, although I am not convinced this is the case.

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<sup>11</sup>For this, see the proceeds of the Guatemala conference.

<sup>12</sup>This does not mean, of course, that it does not exist! But, evangelical theologies by Asians are dispersed in a variety of publications that do not reach the West, or remain untranslated for a wider audience.



My challenge to this conference is to work diligently this week on the laying of this foundation, so that the work of doing holiness theology can go on from this point. Let us not just head “towards” the goal; let us plan to reach the goal!

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## A Dialogue between Wesley and Confucius on the Theme of Sanctification

Im, Seung-An

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

How can a man live a holy life in this world? This seemingly simple question was a supreme interest to John Wesley (1703-91) who was a “*homo unius libri*”(a man of one Book) and an Anglican priest in the eighteenth century. The theme of sanctification is the consistent teaching of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, and naturally, it was the grand teaching of Wesley, for the Bible is the “*sola*” authority of his life and ministry as well as theology.

It has been also one of the prime goals of the education and ethics in Confucian school and society since Confucius (551-479 B.C.). The Confucian culture has remained predominant not only in China, which is the cradle of Confucianism, but also many other countries in Asia like Japan and Korea which socially and economically have been rapidly Westernized. While these countries have changed in the various dimensions of life in modern times more than in any period in their history, the people are still accustomed to think, speak and behave in the Confucian way of life.

How, then, can Wesley’s “gospel” of holiness be preached to the Asian people who live in a culture which has been dominantly influenced by Confucian “ethics” of holiness? This question is existential to an Asian Christian minister who regards John Wesley as a theological and spiritual mentor. Thus, the present paper has been prepared primarily as a way to meet this need in the context of Christian ministry and mission.

This short paper mainly relies on primary references both from Wesley and Confucius, even though using secondary sources sometimes. The theme of sanctification in this paper is approached from an

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<sup>1</sup>Most of the First and the Second Chapter of this paper was read in “The World Methodist Historical Society”(Rome, Italy, in July, 1994), and the Third Chapter and Conclusion are newly formulated for this conference.

anthropological perspective rather than a theological, social or cultural one, for a Confucian idea of sanctification is primarily interested in humanity, and the first concern of this paper is to attempt to make a dialogue between Wesley and Confucius on the theme of sanctification.

## I. Wesley's Teachings on Sanctification

The biblical metaphor of the image of God is central to understanding Wesley's ideas about holiness and humanity as well as salvation.<sup>2</sup> In this light, we employ the metaphor of the "image of God" to explore Wesley's concept of sanctification from an anthropological point of view rather than from a hamartological perspective, which usually focuses "personal holiness" as indicated in *John Wesley's Concept of Perfection*, by Leo George Cox,<sup>3</sup> and *Wesley and Sanctification*, by Harald Lindstrom,<sup>4</sup> or from a socio-ethical perspective which normally stresses "social holiness" as manifested in *Sanctification and Liberation*, edited by Theodore Rynyon.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, in this section, Wesley's ideas about sanctification will be briefly reviewed under three stages—the primitive, fallen and restored one, for each of them shows its distinctive nature respectively, and we can gain a holistic picture about the thematic issue on sanctification.

### A. Sanctification in the Primitive Stage

In his sermon, "On the Fall of Men" (WJW, II, 6), Wesley analogized the necessity of "holiness" in humanity as "the stock of a tree." In the same sermon, he affirmed that holiness in humanity is God's enthusiasm toward humanity so that He endowed the first humans, Adam and Eve, with the three faculties of the natural image—understanding, will,

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<sup>2</sup>Albert Outler makes this point clear when he gives a comment on the phrase, the image of God, in Wesley's Sermon, "Salvation by Faith," by saying that "This metaphor from Gen. 1: 27 is the basic one on Wesley's anthropology. . . . The restoration of our corrupted and disabled 'image' to its pristine capacity is, indeed, the goal of Wesley's *ordo salutis*." WJW, I, 117-18. According to Wesley, the image of God consists of three dimensions—the natural, moral and political image, and among these three, this paper will deal with only the first two in this paper, for when the particular issue of sanctification is examined from an anthropological perspective, the political aspect seems not essential in comparison with other two images.

<sup>3</sup>Leo George Cox, *John Wesley's Concept of Perfection* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1964).

<sup>4</sup>Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup>Theodore Runyon, *Sanctification and Liberation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981).

and, especially, liberty.<sup>6</sup> When God created the first humans, He intended them to be capable of “virtue or holiness.” The uniqueness of humanity, for Wesley, is not seen in the simple fact that humanity is endowed with the three faculties, for they are given even to the rest of creatures to some degree.<sup>7</sup> Instead, the dignity of humanity is found in the very fact that it is only humanity that is capable of God who is Holy.<sup>8</sup> Adam and Eve rightly exercised the three faculties to have perfect relationship with God so that they were holy and happy.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Wesley made it clear that the final reason why God endowed these three faculties to Adam and Eve is to help them retain their holy state: “God did not make him mere matter, a piece of senseless, unintelligent clay, but a spirit like Himself (although clothed with a material vehicle). As such he was endued with understanding, with a will, including various affections, and with liberty, a power of using them in a right or wrong manner, of choosing will would have been to any purpose; for he must have been as incapable of virtue or holiness as the stock of a tree.” “On the Fall of Man,” WJW, II.6.

At this moment, it is worth noting that Wesley distinguished between the two faculties, “liberty” and “will,” unlike most of Christian thinkers on theological anthropology like Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa who are the first Christian anthropologists in the Latin Western and in the Greek Eastern Christian tradition respectively. For Wesley, “will” is basically related to the attributes of emotion rather than the conventional understanding of “free-will.” By “will” Wesley primarily meant a faculty of “exerting itself in various affections and passions,” rather than “a power of choice” which is the typical function of liberty. “The General Deliverance,” WJW, I.1 & I.4. If, for Wesley “will” is a power of self-disposition of the human affections or heart, “liberty” is “a power of self-determination” of the human mind. “What is Man? Psalm 8:4,” WJW, 11. Cf. “The Repentance of Believers,” WJW, I.4.

Thus, Wesley said, these two faculties, “liberty” and “will,” were conventionally misunderstood as interchangeable synonyms: “This liberty is very frequently confounded with the *will*, but is of a very different nature. Neither is it a property of the will, but a distinct property of the soul, . . .” “What is Man? Psalm 8:4,” WJW, 11.

<sup>7</sup>Wesley described the original state of the brute creatures as having the three faculties as follows: “Again: they [the brute creatures] were endued with a degree of *understanding* . . . They had also a *will*, including various passions . . . And they had *liberty*, a power of choice, a degree of which is still found in every living creatures.” “The General Deliverance,” WJW, I.4.

<sup>8</sup>Wesley found the specific difference of humanity from the brute in its unique relationship with God on the basis of its unique capability of Him: “What then makes the barrier between men and brutes? . . . it is this: man is capable of God, the inferior creatures are not. . . . This gulf which they cannot pass over. And as a loving obedience to God was the perfection of men, so a loving obedience to man was the perfection of brutes.” “The General Deliverance,” WJW, I.5.

<sup>9</sup>In his sermon, “The End of Christ’s Coming” (WJW, I.7), Wesley wrote as follows: “As his [Adam’s] understanding was without blemish, perfect in its kind, so were all his affections. They were all set right, and duly exercised on their proper objects. And as a free agent he steadily chose whatever was good, according to the direction of his understanding. In so doing he was unspeakably happy, dwelling in God and God in him, having an uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son through the eternal spirit;

However, Wesley said, the ground of the holiness in humanity was not because of the natural image of God, which was implanted in it, for the ground of moral character of humanity is found in the moral image or “righteousness and holiness.”<sup>10</sup> If the natural image by which humanity is a spiritual being consists of a triple faculty of the human spirit to “do”—to understand, to will, and to choose God, the moral image by which humanity is a moral being is nothing other than the substance of the human spirit to “be”—to be holy and righteous.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the original humanity was substantially holy, not because of “doing” the three faculties of the natural image, but because of “being” full of the moral image of God who is Holy by Nature.<sup>12</sup>

## B. Sanctification in the Fallen Stage

According to Wesley, Adam, unlike Eve,<sup>13</sup> deliberately misused his liberty through his disposition of pride which is the “root of that grand work of the devil.”<sup>14</sup> Adam freely preferred evil to good and attempted to

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and the continual testimony of his conscience that all his ways were good and acceptable to God.” As indicated above, for Wesley, holiness and happiness are twin sisters which cannot be separated as an ultimate goal of God’s creation of humanity or a final purpose of the existence of humanity in this world.

<sup>10</sup>For Wesley, the moral image is nothing other than “righteousness and holiness”: “God created Adam not only in His natural but likewise in His own moral image. He created him not only in knowledge, but also in righteousness and true holiness.” “The End of Christ’s Coming,” WJW, I.7.

<sup>11</sup>Precisely speaking, for Wesley, the moral image is not a faculty, or power in itself, but a moral substance of humanity. By this moral image implanted in humanity, the spiritual relationship between God and humanity is possible. In this light, the prime meaning of the moral image of God seems to be substantial rather than relational.

<sup>12</sup>However, it does not mean that the moral image is independent from the natural image. Instead, for Wesley, the holiness of the moral image is inseparably related to the faculties of the natural image, just as the fruit is related to the tree. Thus, he affirmed that Adam and Eve were created in the moral image of God because of which humanity is a moral being, and exercised the three faculties of the natural image because of which humanity is spiritual being, so that they remained a “little lower than the angels,” and “perfect, angelical, divine.” “The One Thing Needful,” WJW, I.2.

<sup>13</sup>“The End of Christ’s Coming,” WJW, I.9.

<sup>14</sup>“The End of Christ’s Coming,” WJW, III.2. According to Wesley’s description of Eve’s Fall, the Fall was a consequence of a series of inner dispositions against God through unbelief, self-will, pride, and worldly pleasure. “The One Thing Needful,” WJW, I.9. While Wesley, like Augustine, regarded pride as the primary root of the Fall, the other three parts appear throughout his sermons as poison to the holy life. And, according to Wesley, entire sanctification is nothing other than being entirely free from these four dispositions against God.

find happiness apart from God.<sup>15</sup> Immediately after Adam fell into evil, he completely lost the moral image of God and became no more righteous and holy.<sup>16</sup> By his disobedience against the “positive law” and the “law of love,”<sup>17</sup> Adam became completely corrupted and sinful. He lost both his holiness and, consequently, his happiness.<sup>18</sup>

By the Fall, Wesley affirmed, Adam lost also the three faculties of the natural image of God. The “understanding” of fallen humanity is too darkened to discern the spiritual aspects about God and the sinful condition of humanity.<sup>19</sup> The faculty of the “will” of the natural image is so

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<sup>15</sup>“On the Fall of Man,” II.6.

<sup>16</sup>Here is a brief description concerning the cause and the effect of Wesley’s loss of the moral image: “She [Eve] then ‘gave to her husband, and he did eat.’ And ‘in that day’ yea, that moment, he ‘died.’ The life of God was extinguished in his soul. The glory departed from him. He lost the whole moral image of God, righteousness and true holiness. He was unholy; he was unhappy; he was full of sin, full of guilt and tormenting fears.” “The End of Christ’s Coming,” WJW, I.10.

<sup>17</sup>It is worth noting that these two kinds of laws are important to understanding Wesley’s account of the Fall as well as such several theological issues like God’s nature, the biblical concept of the first law, the goal of human existence, etc. According to Wesley, God gave Adam a “positive law” to prohibit him from eating the fruits of the tree in the midst of the garden. “Justification by Faith,” WJW, I.3. The primary reason for God to give Adam the “positive law,” however, was not to establish a juridical ground to punish him when he disobeyed the law of love, Wesley said. Instead, it was given to Adam “To secure him from transgressing this sole command.” “The image of God,” WJW, II. His interpretation of this first law of God not as a “negative” but a “positive” law implies not only his positive view of the divine commandment, but also his emphasis on the mercy of God, without losing His justice, which is central to his ideas about the restoration of fallen humanity.

With respect to the nature of the “law of love,” i.e., the obligation of humanity to obey and love God, Wesley emphasized that its final goal is the fulfillment of “holiness and happiness” which are twin themes central to the whole system of his ideas about sanctification: “God required an obedience perfect in all its parts, entire and wanting nothing, as the condition of his eternal continuance in the holiness and happiness wherein he was created.” “The Righteousness of Faith,” WJW, I.1; Cf. “Justification by Faith,” WJW, I.3; “The Love of God,” WJW, 2.

<sup>18</sup>Stressing the fact that Adam willfully broke God’s “positive law” not to eat the fruit of good and evil, Wesley interpreted Adam’s Fall as moral evil. “The Promise of Understanding,” WJW, II.1. He went on to say that Adam could not but bring “penal evil, or punishment” which cannot possibly befall anyone unless one willingly embrace sin by choosing it.

<sup>19</sup>Wesley described the faculty of understanding in the fallen stage as completely blind so far as its spiritual condition is concerned: “His [Adam’s] spiritual senses are not awake; they discern neither spiritually good nor evil. The eyes of his understanding are closed; . . . Hence, having no inlets for the knowledge of spiritual things, all the avenues of his soul being shut up, he is in gross, stupid ignorance of whatever he is most concerned to know.” “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” WJW, I.1; Cf. I.4.

perverted that it is full of the pleasures of the world.<sup>20</sup> Fallen humanity is unable to will to love God and pursue the heavenly affections. Since the faculties of “understanding” and “will” are perverted, the faculty of liberty is too powerless to choose what is true and good.<sup>21</sup> Fallen humanity is still free, and yet, it is free from holiness.

All of these radical changes took place not only in Adam and Eve but also in the entire human race, for they were “in” Adam when he preferred evil to good.<sup>22</sup> “Natural humanity”<sup>23</sup> or humanity in the fallen stage is no longer holy because of the inherited sin.<sup>24</sup> Fallen humanity which has lost the image of God must be sanctified to recover the primitive holiness.

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<sup>20</sup>“The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” WJW, I.5.

<sup>21</sup>Wesley regarded as dreams the freedom that the natural humanity believes to have: “It is not surprising if one in such circumstances as these, dozed with the opiates of flattery and sin, should, imagine, among his other waking dreams, that he walk in great liberty.” “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” WJW, I.6.

<sup>22</sup>Wesley is Pauline in his affirmation of universal sinfulness of humanity “in” Adam: “Adam, in whom all mankind were then contained, freely preferred evil to good. . . . And, ‘in Adam all died.’ He entitled all his posterity to error, guilt, sorrow, fear, pain, diseases, and death [bold mine].” “On the Fall of Man,” WJW, II.6. For Wesley’s brief and yet clear account of the origin of sin, see his sermon, “The End of Christ’s Coming,” WJW, I.8.

How, then, did such a thing take place, which is completely contradictory to the intention of God that Adam and Eve had been originally created to be like God? In responding to this question, Wesley admitted that this problem of evil cannot be searched out with certainty by human understanding: “And first, we cannot say why God suffered evil to have a place in His creation: why He, who is so infinitely good Himself, who made all things ‘very good,’ and who rejoices in the good of all His creatures, permitted what is so entirely contrary to His own nature, and so destructive of his noblest work. ‘Why are sin and its attendant pain in the world?’ has been a question ever since the world began; and the world will probably end before human understandings have answered it with any certainty.” “The Promise of Understanding,” WJW, II.1. But he attempted to answer that question in terms of the “positive law” and the “law of love” as briefly mentioned above.

<sup>23</sup>Wesley classified humankind after the Fall into three categories—the natural humanity, the legal humanity, and the evangelical humanity. “The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption,” WJW, I-IV, 4. This triple categorization of humanity in this life is central to understanding Wesley’s account of the process for fallen humanity to be sanctified or to be perfect. However, it is worth noting that even though he classified humanity in this way, each of the three stages is not totally independent but intermingled (that is, between the natural and the legal stages, and the legal and the restored stages).

<sup>24</sup>“The Imperfection of Human Knowledge,” WJW, III.1. Here Wesley rhetorically declared the doctrine of original sin as follows: “Why is it then that so cast a majority of mankind are, so far we can judge, cut off from all means, all possibility of holiness, even from their mother’s womb?”



### C. Sanctification in the Restored Stage

For Wesley, there is only “one thing now needful” for fallen humanity, that is, “to re-exchange the image of Satan for the image of God.”<sup>25</sup> While strongly affirming the “universal wickedness” of fallen humanity, Wesley argued that fallen humanity may now attain both a higher degree of holiness and a greater happiness than it would have been possible if Adam had not sinned.<sup>26</sup> With respect to the possibility of the restoration of the image of God lost, Wesley firmly taught “universal holiness.”<sup>27</sup> Wesley was so convinced on the trinitarian works of God that he was never pessimistic but optimistic to the possibility of the restoration of the primitive holiness.<sup>28</sup>

Then, first, how can “natural humanity” be sanctified? Wesley, most of all, emphasized that restoration of the image of God is possible only by grace. Salvation “begins” with “prevenient grace,”<sup>29</sup> which is universal in the sense that it is given “free in all” and “free for all.”<sup>30</sup> It is carried on by

<sup>25</sup>“The One Thing Needful,” WJW, I.5.

<sup>26</sup>“On the Fall of Man,” WJW, II.10. In another place, Wesley stressed this positive aspect of the Fall as follows: “And, first, mankind in general have gained by the fall of Adam a capacity of attaining more holiness and happiness on earth than it would have been possible for them to attain if Adam had not fallen.” “God’s Love to Fallen Man,” WJW, I.1

Furthermore, Wesley described the Fall from a positive view in terms of God’s attributes and humanity’s holiness and happiness: “This (Adam’s abusing liberty and the entrance of pain and death into the world) God permitted in mercy, by bestowing on all who would receive it an infinitely greater happiness than they could possibly have attained if Adam had not fallen.” “God’s Love to Fallen Man,” WJW, II.15.

<sup>27</sup>“Dives and Lazarus,” WJW, III.1.

<sup>28</sup>As well indicated in his early sermon, “The One Thing Needful” (1734), Wesley’s emphasis on the necessity of restoration of the original humanity is grounded on the trinitarian works of God. In this sermon, he stressed such three divine works as foundation of the restoration of the primitive holiness: God’s creation of humanity which cannot be in vain; the atonement of Jesus Christ for the entire humankind which is designed after the Fall; and the works of the Holy Spirit which are united with the external and internal dispensations of God for the recovery of the image of God.

<sup>29</sup>“On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” WJW, II.1.

<sup>30</sup>Wesley affirmed that this prevenient or preventing grace is universal: “No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called ‘natural conscience’. But this is not natural; it is more properly termed ‘prevenient grace.’” “On working Out Our Own Salvation,” III.4. Cf. “Free Grace” in which Wesley affirmed that grace is “free in all” in the sense that “It does not depend upon on any power or merit in man,” and that grace is “free for all” by refuting the doctrine of “predestination.”

“convincing grace,”<sup>31</sup> and the image of God once lost is fully restored by “sanctifying grace” by which God’s children are enabled to give Him “their whole heart.”<sup>32</sup> According to Wesley, there must take place the second instantaneous change in humanity, by which spiritually regenerated humanity can be sanctified.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the grace of God is the unique ground of the restoration of the primitive holiness, “inward holiness” or “entire sanctification”<sup>34</sup> (or the full restoration of the image of God), which is fulfilled both gradually and instantaneously by the works of preventing, justifying and sanctifying grace.

What, then, is the nature of sanctification restored? From the standpoint of the biblical metaphor of the image, the first distinguishing mark of sanctification is the restoration of the moral image in terms of the perfect purity of the human heart.<sup>35</sup> For Wesley, sanctification, in a broad sense, begins with regeneration, and the spiritually new-born humanity grows to be “wholly” cleansed even from “inward sin” which remains in

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<sup>31</sup>“On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” WJW, II.1. Wesley employed the biblical term “repentance” in order to explain the nature and function of his own theological term “convincing grace.” If “natural man” becomes “legal man” by “prevenient grace,” the “legal man” becomes “man under grace” or “babies in Christ” by “convincing grace,” through repentance of his past sins. For Wesley, the first transformation of humanity is a “partial change,” by which he meant the inner change of fallen humanity or traditionally speaking, regeneration, new birth, new life, etc. “On Living Without God,” WJW, 12. Wesley taught the second transformation of humanity which takes place after the first one, which is the crucial point of the understanding to Wesley’s teaching on sanctification, It is theologically called “entire sanctification” which brings out “entire change” or “universal change” of fallen humanity by the second blessing of God.

<sup>32</sup>“The Imperfection of Human Knowledge,” WJW, III.5.

<sup>33</sup>The necessity of the second instantaneous change is stressed by Wesley as follows: “But if there be no such second change, if there be no instantaneous deliverance after justification, if there be none but a gradual work of God(that there is a gradual work none denies) then we must be content, as well as we can, to remain full of sin till death.” “The Repentance of Believers,” WJW, I.20.

<sup>34</sup>“On Patience,” WJW, 9-10.

<sup>35</sup>From the standpoint of the image of God, Wesley pointed out two things as the most distinctive marks of the restored humanity: the perfect purity of the human heart as the full restoration of the moral image of God, and the perfect love of God and neighbors as the full restoration of the natural image of God. While perfect happiness of humanity is of importance as the consequence of the full restoration of the moral and natural image of God, here we will focus only on the first two notable marks—perfect purity and perfect love, for the third one—perfect happiness—seems not immediately related to our present issue.

the heart of the regenerated.<sup>36</sup> While admitting that when fallen humanity is regenerated and delivered from the “dominion of outward sin” and the “power of inward sin,” Wesley affirmed that “entire sanctification,” by which fallen humanity is “wholly transformed” from “the image of the brute” into “the moral image of God,” is fulfilled only when the human heart is fully purified or when “inward sin” is “entirely extirpated.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, from the standpoint of the moral image of God, “entire sanctification” or “full sanctification”<sup>38</sup> means the whole restoration of the moral image which was once “totally” lost, and this indicates the new condition of the human heart, the perfect purity of the heart which is “full” of “righteousness and holiness” or the moral image of God.

The restoration of the faculties of the natural image, for Wesley, is the second mark of the holiness, even though that restoration of the faculties is not full but partial even in the state of the whole restoration of the moral image. If sanctification means the state of the divine holiness re-implanted in humanity, this moral condition of new humanity is to be retained only by the right exercise of the three faculties of the natural image. And, for Wesley, this is best expressed in terms of loving God and neighbor.<sup>39</sup>

For Wesley, love is the perfect goal of the faculties of reason, will, and liberty: “Love is the health of the soul, the full exertion of all its

<sup>36</sup>According to Wesley, the regenerated humans are sanctified in the sense that their past sins are forgiven and they are enabled to overcome the power of sin. However, he said, the regenerated humans are not yet “wholly” sanctified, for “inward sin” still remains in their heart. From this perspective, for Wesley, the doctrine of “the remain of inward sin” or “the dwelling sin” is important because those who are not convinced of the deep corruption of their hearts have little concern about “entire sanctification” and no great hunger or thirst after it. “The Repentance of Believers,” WJW, III.2. The “entire sanctification,” thus, is Wesley’s own theological expression of the biblical terms like the “circumcision of the heart” which he thought emphasizes the heart totally cleansed from all filthiness and sin.

<sup>37</sup>“The Repentance of Believers,” WJW, III.1-2.

<sup>38</sup>For Wesley, the doctrine of “entire sanctification” or “full sanctification” is more than his theoretical articulation of the biblical teaching of Christian perfection. For him, “full sanctification” is a crucial foundation, a departing point and a final goal of his ministry for the Methodists, as clearly indicated in a letter of his to “brother D (1790): “I am glad Brother D \_\_\_ has more light with regard to full sanctification. This doctrine is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly he appeared to have raised up.” *Letter* (September 15, 1790), ed., Telford, Vol. VIII, 238.

<sup>39</sup>“On Zeal,” WJW, II.11.

powers, the perfection of all its faculties.<sup>40</sup> For Wesley, love is the synthesis of the three faculties of the natural image. Understanding, willing, and choosing God is a distinctive task of humanity which is not given to other creatures, and unique condition of maintaining the moral image or holiness, and an ultimate goal of human existence. Perfect love is “the sum and perfection of religion.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, for Wesley, “perfect love” is the crown of the natural image and represents the second mark of “entire sanctification” or “full sanctification” which is restored by “perfect purity” of the heart of fallen humanity.

## II. Confucian Teachings of Sanctification

As reviewed thus far, it is central to Wesley’s ideas about sanctification from an anthropological perspective that his concept of holiness is fully oriented to the restored condition of the moral image and to the right exercise of the three faculties of the natural image. The first human beings were perfectly holy because they were created in the moral image of God, and remained holy by their right exercising the three faculties of the natural image of God. The holiness which was lost by the Fall can be restored in all mankind by grace through the restoration of the moral image or perfect purity of the heart. The restored humanity can remain holy and enjoy happiness in God through the restoration of the

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<sup>40</sup> “The One Thing Needful,” WJW, II.2. When Wesley described the marks of Methodists who are raised up by God to spread the biblical holiness or full sanctification, he expressed these in terms of love: “The distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not his opinions of any sort. . . . ‘What then is the mark? Who is a Methodist, according to your account?’ A Methodist is one who has the love of God. . . . God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul; . . . He is therefore happy in God, yea, always happy, . . . ‘Perfect love having now ‘cast out fear’, he ‘rejoices evermore.’ . . . he loves every man as his own soul. His heart is full of love to all mankind, . . . the love of God has purified his heart from all revengeful passions, . . . from every unkind temper or malign affection. . . . so are the principles and practices of our sect; these are the marks of a true Methodist.” *The Character of a Methodist* (1739), ed. Jackson, WW, 340-46.

<sup>41</sup> “On Zeal,” WJW, III.7. In another place, Wesley described the supremacy of love as follows: “. . . it [love] is the essence, the spirit, the life of all virtue. It is not only the first and great command, but it is all the commandments in one. Whatever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are admirable or honourable; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, they are all comprised in this one word—love.” “The Circumcision of the Heart,” WJW, I.11.

The dominance of love over the power of sin, according to Wesley, begins when the “legal man” changes into the “man under grace.” All passions like malice and wrath begin to be replaced in the mind of the regenerated by the willing or loving God and neighbor. The perfect love, nevertheless, comes to be full when the heart is cleansed from inward sin by sanctifying grace. Immediately after describing the cleansing of the heart and the “habitual disposition of soul” of the “fathers in Christ” in terms of virtues, Wesley regarded love as the most honorable one among them.

natural image or the perfect love of God and neighbors. Then, what is the Confucian thought of holiness?

### A. The Concept of Sheng

If Wesley's concept of holiness is expressed in terms of the perfect state of humanity as a human being created in the image of God, the most literally appropriate Chinese term for it is "sheng" (聖; holiness or sanctification). "Qadosh" in the Old Testament and "hagios" in the New Testament, which are the most representative words for the biblical term "holiness," can be translated in this Chinese character, "sheng" (聖; holiness or sanctification). However, the Confucian concept of "sheng" (聖; holiness or sanctification) does not essentially connote any religious idea like the biblical term "holiness." Instead, the term "sheng" (聖; holiness or sanctification) is basically related to an ethical dimension, and "the highest exemplification of virtue."<sup>42</sup> The terms "sheng" (聖; holiness or sanctification) and "sheng-jen" (聖人, literally meaning "a holy person" or a sage) occur eight times in Confucius' *Analects*, and all of them contain only ethical meanings.<sup>43</sup> As Mencius (371-289 B.C.), the most notable disciple of Confucius, said that "The Sage is the apogee of the human relationships," the Confucian concept of perfection is based on the virtues of the individual, the family and society in general.<sup>44</sup> For Confucius, "chun-tzu" (君子, literally meaning "son of the ruler") represents the example of a sage and he is characterized by his moral superiority.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Tu Wei-ming, "The Confucian Sage: Exemplar of Personal Knowledge," in *Saints and Virtues*, ed. J. S. Hawley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 75-86, qtd. from Rodney L. Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 39.

<sup>43</sup>Rodney Taylor, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*, 40. For the comments on these usages of "sheng" and "sheng-jin," see the references like 6:28, 7:25, 7:33, 9:6, 16:8, and 19:12 in William Edward Soothill, ed., *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1968).

<sup>44</sup>Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), Vol. I, 125.

<sup>45</sup>According to Wing-tsit Chan, Confucius radically modified a traditional concept of the "chun-tzu." Wing tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 15. According to Chan, the concept of the quality of "chun-tzu" before Confucius had been determined by status, more particularly a hereditary position. To Confucius, however, nobility was no longer a matter of blood, but of a moral character. The term, "chun-tzu," appears 107 times in *Analects*: in some cases it refers to the ruler, but in most cases, Confucius used it to denote a "morally superior man." Ibid.

## B. The Concept of Jen

With regard to the virtues of the individual, Confucius especially emphasized “jen” (仁, all-around virtues).<sup>46</sup> For Confucius, “jen” (仁, all-around virtues) is the display of the most important moral character of a sage, and he said that the one of “jen” (仁, all-around virtues) is the perfect one.<sup>47</sup> Then, what is “jen”(仁, all-around virtues)? According to Confucius, “jen” (仁, all-around virtues) is nothing other than loving other: “Fan Chih [a disciple of Confucius] asked about ‘jen’ (仁, all-around virtues). The Master [Confucius] said, ‘Love your fellow men.’”<sup>48</sup>

For Confucius, the practices of “jen” (仁, all-around virtues) consist mainly in two virtues: “chung” (忠; conscientiousness to others) and “shu” (施; altruism). The first is a positive aspect of “jen” (仁, all-around virtues) in terms of doing for others what they need; the other one of “jen” (仁, all-around virtues) is the one who sustains and develops others.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, the second implies a negative aspect in terms of not doing what they do not want. For instance, when a disciple of Confucius asked about “jen” (仁, all-around virtues), he replied, “Do not do to others what you would not like yourself.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, “jen” becomes synonymous with all-

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<sup>46</sup>The term, “jen”(仁), according to Arthur Waley, means “members of the tribe” in the earliest Chinese, and just as the Latin “gens,” ‘clan’ gave rise the English word ‘gentle,’ so “jen”(仁) in chinese came to mean ‘kind,’ ‘gentle,’ ‘humane.’ Arthur Waley, “Introduction,” in *The Analects of Confucius*, ed. Arthur Waley (New York: Vintage Books, 1938), 28. He goes on to say that the confucian concept of the uniqueness of humanity is based on this character, for it teaches that this is not found in mere beasts. Even though he insists that “Goodness” is the most appropriate term for “jen”(仁), many other terms—for instance, humanity, benevolence, gentleness, kindness, etc,—have been used by other scholars.

<sup>47</sup>In *Analects*, fifty-eight of 499 chapters are devoted to the discussion of “jen,” and the word appears 105 times. Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 16.

<sup>48</sup>D. C. Lau, ed., *Confucius: The Analects* (London: the Penguin Group, 1979), XII: 22.

<sup>49</sup>D. C. Lau, ed., *Analects*, VI: 30. For instance, we find a positive aspect of “jen”(仁, benevolence) in the following passage: “Now, on the other hand, a benevolent man helps others to take their stand in so far as he himself wishes to take his stand, and gets others there in so far as he himself wishes to get there. The ability to take as analogy what is near at hand can be called the method of benevolence(jen).”

<sup>50</sup>Arthur Waley, *Analects*, XII: 2.

around virtue, and, in such contexts, “jen”(仁) can be translated as “perfect virtue.”<sup>51</sup>

### C. The Way to be a Sheng-jen

Then, how does a person become a “sheng-jen,” a sage or a holy person? For Confucius, self-cultivation is essential for humanity to be holy or perfectly virtuous, and the human capability to be “sheng-jen”(sage) is concentrated.<sup>52</sup> Confucius gave much attention to humanity rather than talking about spiritual beings or even about life after death.<sup>53</sup> For Confucius, humanity can make “tao”(道; the Way) great, and not that “tao”(道; the Way) can make humanity great. Based on this optimistic humanism, he emphasized the necessity of self-cultivation for humanity to be a sage: however good humanity is, if it does not cultivate itself, it cannot be evil.

From this Confucian perspective of self-cultivation which is based on an optimistic humanism, the daily task of dealing with social affairs in human relations is not something alien to the concept of “sheng”(聖; holiness or sanctification).<sup>54</sup> For instance, filial piety for the family and proper conduct for society in general is regarded as the character of an ideal humanity.<sup>55</sup> Carrying on this task is “the very essence of the development of the perfection of his personality.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, the

<sup>51</sup>Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History in Chinese Philosophy*, 42-43. For instance, the virtue of “jen” contains the virtue of “yi”(Righteousness) which means the “oughtness” of a situation as a categorical imperative. Confucius said that a sage ought to do certain things not for “li”(profit) but for their own sake: “‘chun-tzu’ takes as much as trouble to discover what is right as lesser men take to discover what will pay.” Arthur Maley, ed., *Analects*, IV: 16.

<sup>52</sup>Confucius wrote: “It is Man who is cable of broadening the way. It is not the way that is capable of broadening Man.” Arthur Waley, ed., *The Analects*, XV: 29.

<sup>53</sup>Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 15. Chan said that humanism is of importance in Chinese thought and it reached its climax in Confucianism: “If one word could characterize the entire history of Chinese philosophy, that word would be humanism. . . . In this sense, humanism has dominated Chinese thought from the dawn of its history. . . . Humanism, in gradual ascendance, reached its climax in Confucius.” Ibid., 3.

<sup>54</sup>Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*, 9.

<sup>55</sup>Master Yu, a disciple of Confucius, said that “proper behavior towards parents and elder brothers is the trunk of Goodness.” Arthur Waley, ed., *Analects*, I:2.

<sup>56</sup>According to Chan, with respect to the role of spiritual being, there was marked a radical development from the Shang (1751-1112 B.C.) to the Chou (1111-249 B.C.). Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 3-4. During the Shang, the influence of spiritual beings on man had been almost total, but from the Chou, humans and their activities

Confucianists believed that the way to be “sheng” (聖; holiness or sanctification) does not depend on some mysterious, spiritual power, but on humanity itself. As implied above, this is derived from both the Confucian conviction on an optimistic human nature and the Confucian stress on the self-actualization of “sheng” (聖; holiness or sanctification) through education and practice.

At this moment, it is worth noting that Confucius himself did not clearly teach concerning the human nature, but his disciples have shaped a theory that humanity is originally good.<sup>57</sup> Mencius is the first disciple of Confucius to introduce into the Confucian school the definite doctrine that humanity is by nature good.<sup>58</sup> According to Mencius, evil or failure is not innate but due to the undevelopment of one’s original endowment. While Hsun Tzu (298-38 B.C.) opposed this optimistic theory and affirmed the original corruption of humanity, this pessimistic theory has been regarded as heresy by the Confucian orthodox tradition. Later Confucianists, especially Neo-Confucianists, devoted much of their deliberations to these

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were given greater importance. This transformation was an outgrowth, not of speculation, but of historical and social changes. That is, the founders of the Chou had to justify their right to rule the people after having overthrown the Shang, and developed the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven in terms of virtue rather than spiritual force.

<sup>57</sup>While Confucius can be truly said to have molded Chinese civilization in general, he had nothing to do with the nature of humanity and things, Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 14. Tzu-kung, a Confucius’ disciple, said that “Our master’s views concerning culture and the outward insignia of goodness, we are permitted to hear; but about Man’s nature and the ways of Heaven he will not tell us anything at all.” Arthur Waley, ed., *Analects*, V: 12.

Confucius did not talk about human nature except once, when he said that “men are close to one another by nature. They diverge as a result of repeated practice.” D.C. Lau, ed., *Analects*, XVII:2. Here, Confucius firmly emphasized that humanity has become far apart through practice, but he did not clearly notify whether humanity is by nature good or evil. However, this Confucian theory of human nature has been interpreted by the later orthodox doctrine of the Confucian school that human nature is originally good.

<sup>58</sup>This doctrine is clearly manifested in the following dialogue between Kung-tu tau and Mencius: “Kung-tu Tzu said, Kao Tzu said that man’s nature is neither good or evil. Some say that man’s nature may be made good or evil, therefore when King Wen and Wu [sage-kings who founded the Chou dynasty in twelfth century B.C.] were in power people loved virtue, and Kings Yu and Li [wicked kings in eighth and ninth century B.C.] were in power people loved violence. . . . Now you say that human nature is good. Mencius said, If you let people follow their feelings (original nature), they will be able to do good. This is what is meant by saying that human nature is good. This is what is meant by saying that human nature is good. If man does evil, it is not the fault of his natural endowment. . . . This is not due to any difference in the natural capacity endowed by Heaven. The abandonment is due to the fact that the min is allowed to fall into evil.” Mencius, 6A:6-7, qtd. from Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 54.



subjects, but they have never deviated from the general direction laid down by Mencius.<sup>59</sup>

### **III. Dialogue between Wesley and Confucius on the Theme of Sanctification**

We have briefly reviewed the ideas about holiness from the perspectives of Wesley and Confucius and his disciples. Then, how can the Wesley's "gospel of holiness" be viewed from the standpoint of the Confucian "ethics of holiness"?

#### **A. Incompatibility between Wesley and Confucius**

When we examine Wesley's ideas about holiness, there can be found several points in them which are incompatible with Confucianism. Then, what are the issues from which Wesleyans and Confucians differ mutually?

##### **1. The Ground of Sanctification: Theological or Humanistic?**

While both Wesley and Confucius emphasized the importance of sanctification of humanity in this life, they differed regarding its sources. From the Confucian perspective of "sheng" (聖, holiness or sanctification), Wesley's account of the holiness in humanity is basically religiously oriented. Wesley's approach to the concept of the holiness in humanity is essentially theological in the sense that it is grounded on the nature of God: humanity is holy, for it is created in the moral image of God who is Holy. In contrast to this, the Confucianists' account of "sheng" (聖, holiness or sanctification) is fundamentally innate in the sense that it is firmly grounded on the optimistic human nature. From this point of view, if Wesley is an Augustinian who stresses on divine initiative and human passive, Confucius a Pelagian who does human active more than divine interruption. While Confucianism does not deny a Supreme Power, it does not relate the divine nature to "sheng" (聖, holiness or sanctification) of humanity. However, for Wesley, the essence of holiness in humanity is not innate but derivative from God: He is "the fountain of all holiness."<sup>60</sup> Holiness in humanity, for Wesley, cannot be thinkable without the Holiness of God.

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<sup>59</sup>Mencius, thus, is the most important philosopher on the question of human nature in the Confucian tradition, for he is the first one who established the orthodox theory of human nature, i.e., the original goodness of human nature. Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 54-55.

<sup>60</sup>In "Sermon on the Mount, VIII," Wesley said, "While thou seekest God in all things thou shalt find Him in all, the fountain of all holiness, continually filling thee with his own likeness, with justice, mercy, and truth."

## 2. The Way to be Sanctified: By Divine Grace or By Human Discipline?

For Wesley, the rationale that fallen humanity can and must be holy cannot be understood apart from a Christian concept of the gracious works of the trinitarian God: God's creation of humanity in His image, the atonement of His begotten Son, and the works of the Holy Spirit. That is, God created humanity in His image and has intended it to be righteous and holy, Jesus Christ prepared for the foundation of the restoration of the primitive sanctification, and the Holy Spirit fulfills the divine providence. For Wesley, faith is the immediate "condition," and the triple grace—preventing, convincing, and sanctifying grace—is the fundamental "source" for the restoration of holiness once lost. These theologically oriented teachings concerning the way for humanity to be sanctified may be inaccessible to Confucianism.

For the Confucianists, unlike for Wesley, the justification that humanity must become "sheng" is derived from "a self-existent moral law," which is the "Mandate of Heaven."<sup>61</sup> From this Confucian perspective of the "moral law," Wesley's theologically oriented ideas about holiness are not humanistic but "supernatural." Becoming a sage, for the Confucianists, does not depend upon any power other than that innate one in humanity. Confucianists teach that the essence of "sheng" (聖, holiness or sanctification) is found both in the ethical disciplines of the individual and in the moral practices in the society. For them, human relationships in the family and society are criteria for "sheng" (聖, holiness or sanctification). Thus, Wesley's predominantly "supernatural" account of holiness cannot be compatible with Confucius, the first Chinese "Socrates" who advocates virtuous life which is grounded on an optimistic humanism, self-cultivated virtues, and the human relationships.

## 3. Is the Sanctification Instantaneous or Gradual?

When Wesley taught the necessity of the restoration of sanctification, it implied the traditional teachings of Christianity on human nature—total depravity of fallen humanity, original sin inherited by birth and nature, sinful tendency, etc. Consequently, according to Wesley, this Christian view of human nature requires a radical transformation of fallen humanity to be holy. Fallen humanity, Wesley said, both must and can be transformed instantaneously as well as gradually to become "entirely" sanctified. From the Confucian optimistic view of human nature, the Confucianists may not be interested in such a teaching concerning the

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<sup>61</sup>Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 3.

necessity of a radical change of humanity like Wesley taught. Instead, the Confucianists stress only the gradual transformation towards “sheng” (聖; holiness or sanctification) through educational learning and ethical practices. Even Hsun tzu, who affirmed the natural corruption of humanity, insisted the importance of a continuing practice of self-discipline to become a sage. The Confucianists believe that humanity becomes “sheng” (聖, holiness or sanctification) gradually by practicing “chung” (忠, conscientiousness to others) and “shu” (施, altruism) which are grounded on the spirit of “jen” (仁, all-round virtues). This Confucian theory of graduality by self-discipline and self-actualization is basically hard to be compatible with Wesley who taught the necessity of the radical transformation of fallen humanity by the divine grace. While Wesley, like the Confucianists, emphasized the importance of gradual growing, he taught that the consistent growing is possible only after radical transformation of humanity, for all humanity without its radical experience of divine grace is totally corrupted and incapable to remain ethically right. Thus, Wesley, unlike the Confucianists, stressed the radical inward transformation from the “image of the brutes” of fallen humanity into the “image of God” through faith by grace.

## **B. The Compatibility between Wesley and Confucius**

With respect to the problems concerning “sheng” (聖) or sanctification, there are several unbridgeable points between Wesley and Confucius as examined thus far. However, we could find something compatible between them. And what are they?

### **1. Optimistic Potentiality of Humanity**

It is worth noting that while Wesley was in the authentic Western tradition centered on Augustine in his stress on the total depravity by the Fall, he was at the same time faithful to the Eastern tradition centered on Gregory of Nyssa in his stress on positive potentiality even in fallen humanity. Wesley believed that since God’s prevenient grace is implanted “in all” and given “for all,” they are enabled to seek not only to be born again but also to be holy.

Furthermore, it is also important noting that while Wesley insisted that the moral image is “totally” lost by the Fall, the natural image is lost “in part.”<sup>62</sup> Even though the spiritual condition of fallen humanity is no

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<sup>62</sup>“On the Fall of Man,” WJW, II.6. When Wesley talked about Adam’s “partial loss” of the natural image, his view is basically related to the three faculties of the natural image, and not to the substance of the image itself, i.e., the existence of the soul. However much the soul is morally corrupted and spiritually dead in terms of its relationship with God, the soul itself still remains in fallen humanity: fallen humanity is still immortal and spiritual.

more moral but sinful, blind to truth, and enslaved to sin, fallen humanity still holds the “natural conscience” with the abilities of understanding, willing, and choosing. Wesley strongly argued that no one is “entirely without knowledge and independently on our choice!”<sup>63</sup> While Wesley theoretically classified humanity after the Fall into three categories—natural, legal, and evangelical humanity, he clearly affirmed that there is no “natural man” practically in this life from the viewpoint of the prevenient grace which is “free in all” and “free for all.”

Thus, the Confucianists may be interested in Wesley’s stress on the possibility for fallen humanity to be sanctified: in these Wesleyan ideas, they could find to some extent the optimistic views of humanity as Confucianism teaches. For instance, when the Confucianists read Wesley’s ideas about prevenient grace by which “natural conscience” is implanted in “natural” mankind and by which all fallen humans are able to respond to the universal calling of God for their holiness, they may see an optimistic view of humanity as Confucianism teaches.

## **2. Human Responsibility**

Convinced on his belief in prevenient grace, Wesley taught that since God works in the heart and mind of all human beings, fallen humanity not only “can” and but also “must” work out their own salvation.<sup>64</sup> When Mencius said that “Seek and you will find it, neglect and you will lose it”(6A:6), it may sound that he is a faithful Wesleyan who quotes both Jesus (Matt.7:7) and Wesley who rejected the Moravian “quietism” and stressed the Anglican teachings of “means of grace.” Thus, so long as Wesley remains Gregorian in his stress on human responsibility, his followers may find a bridge to reach out to the Confucianists who teach an optimistic humanism and self-discipline to become “sheng” (holy).

## **3. Actualization of Perfection in this World**

Wesley, who had a strong, positive view of humanity, advocated “going unto perfection,” and the Confucianists may be interested in these

Thus, it is worth noting that Wesley distinguished the substance and the faculty of the natural image. By the natural image Wesley meant two things: the spiritual and immortal substance of humanity, and its three faculties. For him, while the moral image simply indicates that humanity is moral being, the natural image signifies that humanity is capable of knowing, willing, and choosing God. By the Fall, Adam wholly lost the moral image or moral state of holiness, but still retained the spiritual substance of the natural image which is immortal even though it may be in dead condition in terms of its relationship with God.

<sup>63</sup>“Wandering Thoughts,” WJW, II.6.

<sup>64</sup>“On Working Out Own Salvation,” WJW, III.2.

Wesleyan teachings. At this moment, the comparison of Wesley both with Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa can be helpful to understanding this argument. For instance, While Gregory taught both the possibility and actualization of perfection in this world, Augustine had a radically pessimistic view of human nature and rejected the actualization of perfection in this world. Augustine had a static view of the “perfected perfection,” i.e., “*perfectus* perfection” and denied the “actuality of perfection” in this life: Christian perfection is possible only after death. While Wesley, like Augustine, accepted that there is no “perfected (*perfectus*) perfection” in this life, he, like Gregory, interpreted the biblical teaching on perfection as continually growing perfection toward finality, i.e., “*teleiosis* perfection.” And “Wesley’s stress on the gradual renewal of humanity is to some extent compatible with Confucians, for they also focus on the continuing transformation of “hsing” (性; human nature).

#### 4. The Necessity of Inward Transformation of Humanity

The Confucianists are usually misunderstood as if they taught only the Augustinian “perfected perfection” focusing the outward behaviors of humanity. They are easily misjudged as giving less attention to the inner motivation of the human heart like the Gregorian “perfecting perfection.” Naturally, such kinds of misunderstandings can be considered as incompatible with the Wesleyan teaching of holiness which focuses on the inwardly oriented perfection.

However, it is worth noting that for the Confucianists, the inner disciplines of “hsing” (性; human nature) are of great significance. It is why they emphasize the importance of learning “tao” (道, way or truth) before doing outward ethical behaviors. It is by learning “tao” (道, way or truth), they believe, that human beings practice “jen” or all-around virtues to become “sheng” or a sage. “Sheng-jen” is not the one who has perfectly fulfilled “jen” (all-around virtues) but the one who has practiced it continually through learning “tao” (道, way or truth). They teach that human behaviors are the fruits of inner change by learning tao(道, truth).

#### 5. The Universality of Human Transformation

Wesley, like the Confucianists, taught the “universal holiness,” that is, universal possibility of humanity’s becoming “sheng” (聖, holiness or sanctification). This argument can be also illuminated by comparing Wesley with Gregory, Pelagius and Augustine. For instance, while Wesley stressed the Augustinian or the Latin Western tradition of the “total depravity” of fallen humanity, he did not forget to emphasize the Gregorian or the Greek Eastern tradition of the “universal” endowment of God’s grace. For Augustine, God’s grace to transform humanity is not

given to all of mankind but only to the elect. Furthermore, unlike Augustine who taught “predestination” in which the theology of the limited election is presupposed, Wesley emphasized a message of holiness which is not limited to the elect but is “universal” to all. In this light, Wesley differed also from Pelagius, for while he, like Wesley and the Confucianists, advocated the Gregorian view of positive humanity and rejected the Augustinian’s negative perspective of humanity, his stress on the actuality of perfection is addressed only to the limited spiritual elites.

As reviewed above, Wesley’s “universal holiness” can be of interest to the Confucianists, for they teach the universal possibility of “sheng” (聖, holiness or sanctification). For instance, in saying that one is of the same kind as the sage, Mencius was pronouncing two principles of utmost significance: one is that every person can be perfect, and the other is that all people are basically equal.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the Confucian teaching of perfection is not Augustinian but Gregorian and Wesleyan in terms of the emphasis on the universal possibility of “sheng” or “holiness.” In this light, the Wesleyans who teach the universal possibility of holiness in this world may be able to build a bridge to reach out to the Confucianists.

## 6. The Praxis of Love

Finally, and most of all, the Wesleyans and the Confucianists may find the common ground between them in terms of their stress on ethical behaviors. For both Wesley and Confucius, holiness is not only the continuous inward renovation but also active outward behaviors. Inward transformation of humanity by faith through or learning tao (道, truth) must be proved by its ethical fruits in personal and social life. Sheng (聖, holiness) must be expressed in terms of the practice of “jen” or loving others, “chung” or conscientiousness to others, and “shu” or altruism. The one of “sheng” or the holy person is nothing other than the one who loves fellow creatures through “chung” and “shu” according to “tao.” For Wesley, among many synonymous with “Christian Perfection,” “perfect love” is one of his most favorite terms. The moral image of God is holiness, and holiness is nothing other than love. The natural image of God consists of the three faculties of the natural image, and loving God and fellow is the crown of the faculties. Thus, “Love your neighbors” is the essence of Wesley’s “biblical holiness” and Confucius’ “ethical holiness.” Love is the Great Commandment of Jesus Christ, in whom there is a solid bridge between John Wesley in the West and Confucius in the East.

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<sup>65</sup>Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, 56.

### **Conclusion**

We have briefly reviewed the ideas of sanctification taught by Wesley and Confucius mainly from an anthropological perspective. While Wesley's teachings of sanctification is predominantly religious, theological, and ecclesiastical as well as ethical and moral, Confucianism's ideas of sanctification, comparatively speaking, is ethical, humanistic and social as well as metaphysical and religious to some extent. From this perspective, mutual dialogues between them could have been regarded as basically incompatible. However, as manifested above, we could find some points of agreements as well as disagreements between them. Both of them have stressed the positive aspects of human nature, the potentiality of human transformation in terms of sanctification, human responsibility, ethical obligation for family, society, and country, etc. Even though they differed in dealing with the issues regarding the source and the way for humanity to be sanctified, Christians, especially Wesleyans and Confucianists, could have sit down at the same table to talk about the issue of sanctification. It may be partially because of their theoretical compatibility, but mainly because both of them were faithful to their time and place. They were genuinely historical and cultural. They were sincerely faithful to their people in their time.

Christian theology must be historical and cultural. The first works of the "Spirit of God" were not apart from but in the midst of the "earth," especially when the "earth" was formless and full of vanity and darkness (Gen. 1: 2-3). Life situation must be the womb of Christian theology, for God works in "earth." When Christian ministry and theology are concerned with human life and need, they can be sound, authentic and biblical: they can be means by which the Gospel and the Life of Jesus Christ can be soundly delivered to all humankind whom God loves. The peoples in the Bible and in Christian history have concerned on the situation of their lives and their community.

John Wesley was so concerned with the Church and society of the England in the 18th century that his theology and ministry have been influential to us. He was truly concerned on his people, his country and his time. He first listened to his parents, his fellows, and his mentors before teaching, preaching and healing. He, as an Anglican Churchman, argued "the world is my parish." Confucius was also very concerned with his people, society and nation while he lived in his century. His teachings were so local and provincial that they could be global and permanent like other thinkers in the East and West throughout human history. While his teachings have been generally understood in terms of social and political ethics centered on family system, they have been studied from the

perspective of metaphysical and religious views. Confucianism was with certainty the production of his time and place so that it could produce a culture which has been influential to us in present time.

We, Asia-Pacific Nazarene ministers and theologians, have our own situations and cultures, and God may want us to do the triple ministry of Jesus Christ (teaching, preaching and healing) in our own historical and cultural situation. Wesleyan theology is “now and here” theology as well as “then and there.” The doctrine of sanctification has been approached mainly from theological perspective mainly centered on doctrine of original sin without giving sincere attention to the culture in Korea. We know that it is very dangerous to universalize or characterize one particular people. With recognition of this point, I would dare to say that, generally speaking, Koreans are religious, spiritual, emotional, and outward oriented people as well as philosophical, realistic, reasonable, and inward. That is, in Korea, when we deal with the biblical, Wesleyan, Nazarene teachings on sanctification, we must give great concerns to these four dimensions mentioned above. When we teach Koreans the doctrine of sanctification, it must be thought with the issues of shamanistic, experiential, psychological, and ethical dimensions. And all of these should be approached from Confucianistic cultural background. We Nazarenes in Korea believe that the doctrine of holiness taught by Wesley and our Church is biblical, and yet it may not have been reinterpreted from Korean cultural environment centered on Confucianism. From this perspective, the Nazarene ministers in Korea must be conscious and authentic to the local environment, that is, Confucian culture as well as the global Nazarene tradition, that is, biblical, apostolic, and Wesleyan root as taught in our Manual. At this moment, we may ask a question to ourselves: “Has our theology and ministry been sincere to our local situation and culture as well as authentic to global teachings of the Nazarene Church?”

We Nazarenes have firmly believed that the doctrine of holiness is the cardinal doctrine of both the Bible and so our Church. The Church of the Nazarene has been generous to other theological issues than this doctrine of holiness. This doctrine has been regarded as the core of our identity, or the identity itself of our Church. The triple ministry of Jesus Christ (teaching, preaching and healing) has been worked in our Church in forms of “evangelism, compassion ministry, and education” as found in our Manual. And all of these missional identities must be based on the doctrine of holiness: God wants us to be holy, God wants us to love our neighbors in need, and holiness must be taught as well as experienced and practiced.” This is our vision, mission, and goals. At this moment once again, we may need to ask ourselves: “Have we teachers, educators, theologians and pastors are faithful to our theological, missional, and doctrinal identity?”



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On Living Without God

The Love of God

On the Fall of Man

The One Thing Needful

On Patience

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## Holiness: Beneficial to Asian Religious Practices and Culture

### *A Response to Dr. Im's "A Dialogue Between Wesley and Confucius on the Theme of Sanctification"*

Ben Nacion

#### Introduction

In response to the paper, "A Dialogue Between Wesley and Confucius on the Theme of Sanctification," by Dr. Im, I will try to assimilate some historical views regarding sanctification.

Augustine once said, "Inchoate love, therefore, is inchoate holiness; advanced love is advanced holiness; great love is great holiness; 'perfect love is perfect holiness....'"<sup>1</sup> But reading several treatises of Augustine, I found his view inconsistent on the subject of holiness.<sup>2</sup> In response to heretics of the day, like the Pelagians, Augustine published treatises refuting the possibility of moral holiness. Often said, for Pelagians, because of their belief in free will and the power of humans to choose good, Adam's sin is not posterity but just imitation.<sup>3</sup> Augustine, a *sola gracia* professor who never felt ease on the issue that began to influence

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<sup>1</sup>Augustine, *On Nature and Grace, Against Pelagius*, Chapter 48, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, series 1, volume 1 (Christian Classics Ethereal Library: CD Rom, version 4, Calvin College: Grand Rapids, Michigan).

<sup>2</sup>See for example, Augustine, *Concerning Man's Perfection in Righteousness*, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, series 1, volume 1 (Christian Classics Ethereal Library: CD Rom, Version 4, Calvin College: Grand Rapids, Michigan). Augustine refuted Coelestius of the latter's position that human can live righteously because of free will.

<sup>3</sup>See, W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 652-680; Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 135, 268-277; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 4, trans. Placid Solari (Allen, Texas: Christian Classics, 1995), 462-67; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity: Beginnings to 1500*, vol. 1 (Peabody: Prince Press, 2000), 173-180; E. Glenn Hinson, *The Early Church: Origins to the Dawn of the Middle Ages* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 327-338.

Latin Christians, penned several articles disproving free will and in effect giving negative views on holiness.

Tantamount to the above statement, one of the great advocates of the teaching of holiness is John Wesley to whom we owe our ecclesiastical heritage. Aside from many of his sermons, which discussed the optimistic view of holiness, the well-known *On Plain Account of Christian Perfection* has clearly defined the great possibility of holiness in this life both inwardly and outwardly. However and interestingly, Wesley emphasized perfect or “pure” love to be the mark of holiness or sanctification.<sup>4</sup>

Wesley’s doctrine of holiness is grounded upon the tripartite grace of God: preventing grace, saving or convincing grace and sanctifying grace. In Wesley’s sermon, “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” he dealt with these three graces on the issue of human’s full recovery to the image of God. Never can anyone be convinced prior to the work of God’s preventing grace. Preventing grace, according to Wesley, is synonymous with natural image,<sup>5</sup> which was not totally affected after the fall.<sup>6</sup> However, in relation to the issue of natural image, one cannot separate to deal with the issue of total depravity, which became obvious in Dr. Im’s paper. But, the paper contradicts itself in viewing Wesley’s understanding of total depravity. While Dr. Im emphasized Wesley’s basic position on the total depravity of humanity as Augustinian in his paper, in the part, “Optimistic Potentiality of Humanity,” he dealt with humanity’s unaffected “natural conscience” after the fall, thereby keeping humanity’s capability to understand, will and choose. If this is the case, then Wesley was not Augustinian since Augustine himself taught that everything in human’s image of God was lost after the fall, and that includes natural conscience since conscience itself is given by God and therefore according to His image.<sup>7</sup> According to the author, despite humanity’s fall, still, people are capable of understanding, willing and choosing. When we say total depravity, all of human nature is corrupted, depraved and turned back to its

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<sup>4</sup>John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, chapter 8, (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, CD Rom, version 4, Calvin College: Grand Rapids Michigan).

<sup>5</sup>John Wesley, “Sermon: On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” III:4 (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, CD Rom, version 4, Calvin College: Grand Rapids, Michigan).

<sup>6</sup>John Wesley, “Sermon: On the Fall of Man,” II:6 (Christian Classics Ethereal Library, CD Rom, version 4, Calvin College: Grand Rapids, Michigan).

<sup>7</sup>See Augustine, *On Nature and Grace, Against Pelagius*, Chapter 3, Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, series 1, volume 1 (Christian Classics Ethereal Library: CD Rom, Version 4, Calvin College: Grand Rapids, Michigan).

natural sense of darkness and therefore incapable even of understanding, willing and choosing what is good or bad. In Wesley's sermon, "On the Fall of Man," he mentioned that what was totally lost in man was the moral of image of God. He also added that only "part" of the natural image, which was also an indication of God's image to man, was lost.<sup>8</sup> In this case, I would say that Wesley was semi-Augustinian. Wesley's basic position in dealing with the issue of human depravity is important in relation to understanding moral holiness. As we see, natural image or conscience works to initiate significant steps toward moral holiness.

### **I. Wesley's Position on Sanctification Communicable To Any Culture**

The understanding of sanctification differs according to one's own cultural identity. This is what I see upon reading Dr. Im's paper. In addition, Wesley's view of sanctification has several incompatibilities compared to other's understanding and context. I agree with Dr. Im in some of his points, especially in specifying the compatibilities of Wesley and Confucius's teaching on the subject. However, I beg to disagree with him especially on the major one dealing with "incompatibilities." When we say "incompatible," it would mean something contradictory. Tracing back the history of the church, Augustine dealt against Pelagius in many of his writings because of doctrinal "incompatibilities." Or, Irenaeus against Gnostics. Both parties did not work well together, and as a result, one was the condemnation of the latter. Only one excelled upon the other.

Ideally, it is more appropriate to say that it was just Wesley's "method" in dealing with the context of his day to awaken people spiritually, which of course led to social change, which is different from Confucius. While Wesley taught biblically, Confucius taught practically according to the knowledge he gained and the availability of materials of his day. But as theologians, professors and church leaders of today who acknowledge ecclesiastical heritage from Wesley, let us be careful to emphasize the distinctions of our biblically founded doctrine to our very own culture. It is very dangerous as it may just widen the gap between the cultures that we have and what we believe as biblically relevant. It is not bad to contextualize the gospel or the doctrine like entire sanctification but it is not ideal to treat our own culture superior. As Christian, I firmly believe that the message of the gospel is always and must be above anyone's culture. To this we could say that Wesley's teaching of biblical holiness is fairly communicable to any culture.

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<sup>8</sup>Wesley, "Sermon: On the Fall of Man," II:6.

## II. Confucius's Understanding of Sanctification (Sheng) Complements that of Wesley's

Dr. Im tries to show the integrity of Confucius's teaching of holiness from an anthropological point of view, which he said, is in some ways different to what Wesley taught. Of course, Wesley's understanding of sanctification is firmly biblical and therefore theological, which became relevant to the pre-religious Wesleyan institution such as the Church of the Nazarene International. But how to bridge the gap between these two camps, which also represent in some way western and eastern cultures, is what I see as the purpose of this paper—and that must be commended.

What the paper traced concerning teachings of both Wesley and Confucius is for me complementary and not incompatible. Of course the obvious possible disagreement with my position is the issue of Wesley's theological and spiritual spectra, whereas Confucius' was anthropological and social.<sup>9</sup> Using the Bible as his basic instrument to lead a revolution of spiritual change, Wesley toured in almost every place of England preaching the message of holiness. And by the grace of God, his effort did not go in vain. Wesley's influence became so monumental that it even spread not only in England but also in almost the whole world. But a thousand years before Wesley, Confucius of China made an immense influence upon the lives of his people. His teachings, which are regarded as highly significant until today in the countries like Korea, Japan and China, became pavement to ethical change of his people. His golden rule, "Do not do to others what would you not like yourself," which is a direct semblance of Matthew 7:12, though stated negatively, became memorable. Confucius's effort, which has been seen in his *Analects*, never went in vain. But the question one may raise is this: "What was the purpose of these two well known teachers?" The obvious answer would be: "To help people change and get better spiritually (inward) and morally (outward)." Is there any difference? Yes and No! No—"if man is clean on the inside, he or she must be clean on the outside because what the inside desires can and will happen." Yes—"if human is clean on the outside, it does not mean that he is clean on the inside." Therefore, Confucius's ethical teachings would complement Wesley's biblical holiness or perfect love but not vice

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<sup>9</sup>Compare for example Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* and Confucius's and his disciples on the *Sayings of Lun Yu* (499), translated in English, [www.confucius.org](http://www.confucius.org). Access, September 27, 2003. Tzeng Tzu and Yu Tzu were only two of Confucius's disciples who acknowledge trustworthiness and filial piety as very important obligation of individual. Both Confucius and later Mencius gave the same weight on the significance of filial piety in this life.

versa. Wesley's goal is dual and inward, moral or outward holiness while Confucius is moral or outward holiness.

### **Conclusion**

The real concept of holiness according to Wesley is perfect love or love for God and fellow men, while to Confucius it is to obtain "sheng" or sanctification, by exercising filial piety and love for neighbor. The only difference according to Dr. Im is that Wesley believed that perfect love is obtainable by God's grace whereas to Confucius it is attainable by human practice and effort. However, they are bifocal in a sense of having moral purity. Filipinos do not disregard both. In fact, the "untraced" Filipino trait of "pakikipag-kapwa tao" (having a good relationship with fellowmen) is very important so that even today, it is treated as highly significant. Then when the Spaniards came, "pagiging makadiyos" (being godly) became part of the Filipino religious heritage, which of course in a sense relevant to conceptualize Wesley's understanding of biblical holiness.

Though I agree with Dr. Im's concluding remarks, which aim to validate the necessity of teaching holiness in relation to one's own culture, I would also say that there is a danger behind it. It is like bending what we believe as a biblically founded doctrine to make it synonymous or inferior to one's own culture. I do not say that we should neglect the culture that we have. But the Bible and all the doctrines that come out of it must be treated superior and used as instruments to straighten some of our wrong cultures. It could be so since culture is dynamic. In the Wesleyan quadrilateral, the Bible is always treated supreme in order to have a right doctrinal direction. As a Nazarene and privileged to have the heritage of Wesleyan tradition, I would dare to say that the Bible itself is the supreme instrument for the propagation of faith and doctrine. Wesley, the *homo unius libri* never hesitated to deal with the basic issues using the Bible as the sole material. However, he never forgot the other three significant devices in verifying ecclesiastical teachings, using them as supplementary to the Bible.

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## Response to Dr. Im

Thomas Dorum

Dr. Seung-an Im has written a paper that has made me think much about comparing Wesley and Confucius. The reader has to remember constantly that the approach was from an anthropological rather than a theological perspective. That is what makes this comparison possible. His discussion of Sheng and Jen were very helpful in understanding the Confucian approach to the positive development of mankind. Jen is half of the two commandments upon which all the law and the prophets hang: “Love your fellow men” (page 20) (Matt. 22:37-40)

Dr. Im makes it clear that there is compatibility on the potentiality of humanity, human responsibility, actualization of perfection in this world, the necessity of inward transformation of humanity, universal transformation of humanity, and the praxis of love. The main goal is to build a bridge for reaching out to Confucians.

I have some questions that I would like Dr. Im to talk about after reading this paper. Can this theological subject be approached anthropologically without doing violence to our proper understanding of the subject of entire sanctification? Many of the theological papers I have recently read do not seem to reference the Bible as a source. Theology is a study of God. Wesleyans believe God is a self-revealing God. Part of that self-revelation is the Bible. This is something I want to say to all the theologians present rather than to Dr. Im specifically when one considers the focus of Dr. Im’s paper. It seems that Dr. Im is pushing sanctification to fit into the anthropological approach to make some common point of connection. If we were to approach Confucianism theologically, what problems would we find examining this philosophical religion by this method?

Dr. Im did not employ the relational aspect of Wesleyan theology in his anthropological approach. In H. Ray Dunning’s discussion of the image of God, he identifies a fourfold relation: relation to God, to others,

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to possessions, and submission to one's self to the creator that recognizes the place of one's self in the Divine-human relation constitutes the image of God. Dr. Dunning's emphasis upon relationship fits my Melanesian culture and is anthropological. Would this approach more easily provide a bridge to reach out to the Confucians?

I am grateful to Dr. Im for his interesting comparison. It will provide our staff with an opportunity to reexamine ways of creating a bridge to reach out to other religious groups in Melanesia on the subject of Entire Sanctification.

## Doing Empatheology as a Praxis of Holiness Theology:

### Theological Reading Luke 10:30-37

Chun, Kwang Don

#### I. Introduction

In the beginning was theology, and theology was with God, and theology was in God. Theology was in the beginning with God. All things of theology were made through God; and apart from God nothing in theology has come into being. Theology came from God, and God came into theology. God became word in theology. Theology is the written incarnation of God-reality. Theology is God-rooted in its beginning, God-initiated in its process, and God-centered in its ending. Theology bears witness of who God is. God bears out what theology says. Theology is what God means. God is what theology means. Theology makes sense in light of God; God makes sense in terms of theology. The head of theology reiterates the logos of God; the body of theology reflects the ethos of God; the heart of theology retains the pathos of God. God is the history of theology, and theology is the story of God. Thus, theology in Augustine's definition is *sermo de Deo*, namely "talk about God." God-talk is the text of theology, and God-walk is the context of theology. The foundational subject of theology is God; God is the fundamental object of theology. The primary question of theology is deeply related to the ultimate question of God, without which all other theological questions become groundless, pointless, and meaningless. In this sense, Langdon Gilkey states: "Without some answer to the God-question, all talk about Word and Sacrament, about Scripture and hermeneutics, about the covenant community of the Church, about a Christ who is Lord of our life and history, and about the eschatological interpretation of history as God's action, is vain and empty."<sup>1</sup> It is to take a wrong way to search for theological truth and to do Christian theology by any means without having the proper knowledge of God, no matter how academically it makes its case in a convincing manner.

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<sup>1</sup>Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969), 110.

Any theological argument either in disjunction with the very reality of God or in ignorance of the very identity of God is not quite appropriate to sustain its theological accountability in making the truth claims of the Christian faith. There is no authenticity or credibility in a theology that refuses to take the problem of God seriously, no birth of true theology in those who are not keenly aware of the being and doing of God in the world of human history.

No one can seriously deny, therefore, that anyone who wants to hit the nail on the head when one discusses holiness theology must first of all get a real grasp of who God is. Holiness theology is a theology of God. It is neither a theology of Wesley nor of Wesleyans. God is the immediate point of departure for, the intimate point of reference to, and the ultimate point of arrival at, holiness theology. Holiness theology is a wholeness theology of God in a sense that it wholly participates in the totality of God-reality. Indeed, God is the hypothesis of theological thesis, the proposition of theological position, the suprastructure of theological infrastructure in constructing holiness theology. So in order to do holiness theology, one needs to continuously turn back to God rather than to others, and to comprehensively examine the holistic reality of God—the universal truth of God that is *ex cathedra* synchronously or diachronously applicable to the *prius* and *posterius* of all Christian praxis running across the boundary of holiness denominations. For holiness theology is anything but merely a particular, peculiar, parochial theology that is entirely or exclusively limited to epistemological and experiential realm of the so-called holiness denominations built upon Wesleyan tradition. It is rather a universal theology that is not separate and apart from the central truth of Christianity—the very concept of God that has constituted the underlying foundations of all theological instructions and constructions. Holiness theology is exclusive in its connotation, inclusive in its denotation, and comprehensive in its notation. Without right knowledge of God, needless to say, there is no right knowledge of holiness in particular as well as of holiness theology in general. The more we understand God, the deeper we know the meaning of holiness, the better we do holiness theology.

## II. Approaches to the Reality of God

Throughout Christian history, there have been differing opinions concerning the reality of God.<sup>2</sup> They will be classified into three major

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<sup>2</sup>Gordon D. Kaufman, *God The Problem* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), 9-15; Edward Farley, *Divine Empathy: A Theology Of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 8-19.

categories according to the way in which people claim to experience, believe, and understand God's way of being, and God's way of doing, in the historical context of the world. Most God-talks have been made in the wake of these categorical directions, by which they have come to view the real entity of God from the standpoint of their own social framework and location. The three categorical elucidations and assessments of the divine reality in the trajectory of their dominant and ongoing point of direction show in what way, in what sense, and to what degree, they are different to one another.

### **A. God of Orthodoxy**

Our first conceptions and perceptions of God have been wrought by means of the theology of orthodoxy in traditional Western Christianity, which, by and large, underscores right beliefs, right opinions, right knowledge, right standards, and right doctrines. Their theological construction considers only metaphysical speculation, exegetical circulation, theoretical articulation, and dogmatical recapitulation. This theology of orthodoxy has existed as a theory-oriented theology on the radical verge of divorcing itself from the flesh and blood of everyday life; thereby falling into absolute idealism, cold rationalism, blind biblicism and dry dogmatism. This theology focuses much attention on the essential "being" of God and little attention on the existential "doing" of God. The God of orthodoxy is the God of heaven rather than the God of earth. Therefore, because the concept of God is to be funneled into the network of orthodox theology whose firmament and hypostasis have no inkling of the active involvement of God in human history, the image of God appears to be a lifeless, bloodless, motionless Supreme Being, sitting grimly and nonchalantly on the farthest and highest throne of heaven. Such an orthodox concept of God has mainly arisen from habitual metaphysical-suprastructural-dualism that continuously and consciously created an inaccessible, incomparable, and indeterminable lacuna between the divine and the human, on the condition of radical antinomy, dichotomy, and heteronomy. The presence of divinity is the absence of humanity; the presence of humanity is the absence of divinity. In relation to the world, the God of orthodoxy remains as the Wholly Other who is out there, up there, and over there, far beyond the mundane reality of human existence. This God is not accessible to us through our experience, available to us by our call, or accountable for us in our need. Orthodox theism underscores "the distance, the difference, the otherness of God . . . In this picture God is worldless and the world is Godless: the world is empty of God's presence . . . he relates to it externally, he is not part of it but essentially

different from it and apart from it.”<sup>3</sup> God is depicted as a total stranger or a permanent alien who has hardly identified God’s self with the people or fully assimilated into the context of their world. As a result, this sort of theology turned out to become an *extreme orthodoxization of God*, by which they made God an apathetic being whose primordial nature is subject to no suffering, no movement, no passion, no change, and no exigency at all.<sup>4</sup>

## B. God of Orthopraxy

The second direction by which the conception and perception of God has been molded is a contemporary liberation theology of orthopraxy, that, against and over a theology of orthodoxy, devotes itself to right practice, right action, right commitment, right movement, and right participation in favor of the oppressed victims, and in disfavor of the oppressive reality. Central to a theology of orthopraxy is the contention that what one knows and how one acts do not really exist apart from each other. Hence, orthodoxy without orthopraxy is meaningless and unorthodox. Rather, doing is more important than knowing, in the sense that orthopraxy is the ultimatum of orthodoxy. From this, a theology of orthopraxy has become an action-oriented theology which has launched a frontal assault on the bastion of the divine conceptions in an inactive state of indifference, inertia and inefficacy, as couched in a theology of orthodoxy. The divine idea of radical transcendence and wholly otherness has no place in the framework of this theology. The God of orthopraxy is an actor or agent who appears in and through action. Thus, we understand who God is only in light of what God does. For it is in the midst of what actually happened in the events of history that God comes into manifestation and existence. The presence of God can be known in the historical presence of God’s doing. On the basis that God acts, a theology of orthopraxy maintains that God exists: the divinity means God-in-action. In a word, “God simply *is* what God manifestly *does*.”<sup>5</sup> A God who does not act is absent and dead. This understanding of the divine reality is reasonable in many aspects, but runs the risk of ignoring the other dimensions of God. Certainly God is much more than what God does. What God does is the tip of an iceberg.

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<sup>3</sup>Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 65.

<sup>4</sup>Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope*, Chapter VI; Jung Young Lee, *The Trinity In Asian Perspective*, 91-4.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph Sittler, *The Structure of Christian Ethics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 4.

We need to perceive and conceive the reality of God in other ways. The orthopraxy idea of God is largely configured by, and excessively preoccupied with, the extrinsic outwardness of what God does from the eisegetical-etic (view from the outside) perspective. Thus, it fails to look into the intrinsicness of who God is, behind events, and how God feels before, during, and after, God's act from the exegetical-emic (view from the inside out) perspective. What orthopraxy theology is concerned about is nothing but God's "doing"—a phenomenal manifestation of God's self that is a consequential part of the primordial whole of the divinity. As such, the divine concepts issuing from an *extreme orthopraxization* of God have no perceptible indication of, and no penetrating insight into, what is going on within the innermost heart of Godhead as a whole. Therefore, they are unable to reach, grasp, or touch a profound dimension of God beyond and behind concursus *Dei*.

### C. God of Orthopathy

There is the third direction as an intermediary matrix (*tertium quid*) that forces a critical reconsideration of the concept of God, frequently bypassed by theologians in the positions of either God's being-oriented orthodoxy or God's doing-oriented orthopraxy.<sup>6</sup> This direction, which opposes the orthodoxy-line (thesis) of Western religious tradition and the orthopraxy-line (antithesis) of liberation thought, is the orthopathy-line (synthesis) that underlines right passions, right compassion, right tempers, right affections, and right patience. [Pathy is derived from Greek *pathos*: feelings, sympathy, compassion, affection]. This position avoids conceptualizing the ideas of God in the trajectory of orthodoxy or orthopraxy. This type of polarization tends to fall into two extremes by placing either the other-sidedness (esotericism) of God at the expense of divine relativity on the right, or by placing the outsideness (extrinsicism) of God at the expense of divine inwardness on the left. Instead, keeping a dialectic tension between the theory-chained and the action-chained concepts of God, it seeks to understand and descant upon the nature of God from the more fundamental perspective, in terms of orthopathos as the qualificative total sum of the divine reality. For this reason, the most appropriate locus used to identify and comprehend holistically the reality of God is neither

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<sup>6</sup>The good examples of theological works thus far made in this direction are Kazo Kitamori, *The Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965); Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); Jung Yong Lee, *God Suffers for Us* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974); Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993); Samuel Solivan, *The Spirit, Pathos and Liberation: Toward an Hispanic Pentecostal Theology* (England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

theory nor praxis, but a divine pathos which is viewed as constituting the initial and permanent ethos of God in relationship to the entire creation. It is *initial* in the sense that according to order there is a divine action prior to any theory about God, and before any action of God there is a divine pathos. Strictly speaking, without a divine pathos, there is no divine act and no theory. The genesis of the divine revelatory activity is a divine pathos from which the unspeakable is spoken, the unknown known, the unattainable attained, and the unavailable available: God's pathos is a centripetal force and centrum of the centrifuged revealing activity of God through and toward the world. God's revelation proceeds neither "from above" in the case of orthodoxy theology emphasizing its vertical dimension, nor "from below" in the case of orthopraxy stressing its horizontal dimension; but its very starting point is "from within," from deep within God's very being as God—the divine pathos in the case of orthopathy theology. The situation is this: while a theology of orthodoxy claims, "In the beginning was the *Word*," and while a theology of orthopraxy exclaims, "In the beginning was the *action*," a theology of orthopathy proclaims, "In the beginning was the *pathos*." The pathos is the very essence and very presence of God, the *a priori* of God's action, and thus Jesus Christ is the *a posteriori* incarnation of the pathos. On the other hand, a divine pathos is *permanent* in the sense that it does not disappear even after a divine action is taken and its goal achieved. In addition, it is not so much a temporal ethos of the divinity as an omnipresent and ongoing essence of God from beginning to eternity. The divine pathos always remains as a permanent living reality in and with God, engendering a divine action from God's self toward the world, engraving a knowledge of God in the human mind, and enduring a tremendous burden of sinful corruptions in the course of history. Indeed, the divine pathos is the alpha and omega of God's reality, identity, and activity, whereby a theology of orthopathy attempts to perceive the images of God which have been defracted, distorted, and depreciated by the way of orthodoxy and orthopraxy theologies. To reflect God through the prism of orthopathy is not merely to cause another blurred view that is vulnerable to the charge of either a new Patripassianism or theopaschitism in its own wager of the divine passibility of the Father, or an *extreme orthopathization* as an intrinsicism of God at the expense of both the extrinsic-esoteric transcendency and the exoteric-exigent immanency of the divinity in orthodoxy and orthopraxy traditions respectively. Rather, it is to have a sharp focus on the image of God which has been obfuscated by the astigmatic eyes of epistemology at the interplay of a hypermetropic lens of orthodoxy and a myopic lens of orthopraxy, because, a lens of orthopathy has the ortho-focus on the very essence of God who *is* the pathos.



### III. Three Ways to the Nature of God

At this juncture, it is necessary to expand on the concept of God by means of three different terms—apathy, sympathy and empathy—in order to better understand the God of orthopathy. To begin with, let us identify the meaning of apathy and then compare and contrast the other two similar, yet different words—sympathy and empathy. The term apathy, in radical opposition to sympathy and empathy, derives from the Greek word *apatheia*, which means impassiveness, indifference, unresponsiveness or unchangeableness. It is a state of mind entirely free from subjective emotions, interactive interests, and intersubjective concerns. An apathetic person is one who continuously keeps oneself distant from the world of others and is totally incapable of identifying oneself with others by participating in their conditions by any means. In apathy other has no place in myself at all. Nobody is permitted to keep in touch with myself, and I am not allowed to get in touch with other. I am absolutely free from anything, anyone, anytime, anyhow. Apathetic being is self-centered, self-contained, and self-sufficient. I am that I am. No one except myself can either influence what I do or determine who I am. Apathy means an attachment to myself and a detachment from others. Apathy is the absence of sympathy as well as empathy. Apathy cannot exist along with sympathy or empathy.

The term sympathy, which derives from the Greek word *symptheia*, is equivalent to the German *Mitfhlung* which translated means “feeling of being with other.” The term empathy, which derives from the Greek word *emptheia*, is equivalent to the German *Einfhlung* which imports “infeeling of being into other.” Sympathy imposes a feeling of I on thou and empathy transposes a feeling of thou into I. That is to say, “A sympathetic person feels *along with* another person but not necessarily *into* a person . . . Empathic behavior implies a convergence . . . Sympathetic behavior implies a parallelism in the behavior of two individuals.”<sup>7</sup> Sympathy is incapable of assuming the position or condition of other. Empathy enables the full participation of oneself in the reality of other as if it is one’s own experience. Sympathy is the external way of identification with the other in a superficial manner, whereas empathy is the internal mode of union with the other in a spontaneous manner.<sup>8</sup> In sympathy, the other still remains as the other (my object), but in empathy the other becomes a part

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<sup>7</sup>A. Buchheimer, “The Development of Ideas about Empathy,” *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 1963 (10), 63.

<sup>8</sup>Jung Young Lee, *Patterns of Inner Process: The Rediscovery of Jesus’ Teachings in the I Ching and Preston Harold* (Secaucus N. J.: The Citadel Press, 1976), 171-2.

of myself (my subject). I can sympathize without losing the self, but not empathize without losing the self. "When we empathize, we lose ourselves in the new identity . . . When we sympathize, we remain more conscious of our separate identity."<sup>9</sup> Sympathy commands a full affirmation of who I am in contrast to other. Empathy demands a radical negation of who I am for the sake of other. In sympathy, there is an ongoing tension between who I am and what I am supposed to do. In empathy, there is no conflict of interest between one and the other, no hierarchy between the empathizer and the empathized, no qualitative difference between the subject and the object, and no dichotomy between essence and existence. In a word, sympathy is a self-oriented way of being with other at the center of oneself, and empathy is an other-oriented way of being into other at the sacrifice of oneself.

### A. God of Apathy

The Greek concept of divinity is characterized by apathy, for God as perfect being is believed to be unaffected and unchanged by external situations and conditions around him. Divinity means the absolute transcendence from all things that is the complete freedom from dependence on all possibilities and probabilities of external circumstance in the course of nature. To be divine is to be absolutely above and totally free from the property of the created which is subject to impulse and passion, without turning from itself to the right or to the left. Human nature has nothing to do with divine nature and thus divinity is the complete absence of humanity. The affectional aspects of humanity are supposed to be incongruent with deity so that pathos could not be interposed into the reality of the deity and juxtaposed alongside the identity of the deity. Emotional response, passionate involvement, and sentimental participation are essentially and existentially alien to the very nature of God, *theos apathes* who is believed to be emotionless, senseless, pitiless, motionless. What happens *to* God do not, cannot, and will not change what happens *in* God. God is passionless and changeless: nothing changes apathetic God internally or externally. For God it is totally impossible to be passible and totally possible to be impassible. It is apathy that is constitutive of, and representative of God-reality, so to say, impassibility that let God be God and God remain God independently of constantly changing circumstances.

The Greek concept of God prevailed throughout the ages had played a major role in shaping the classical idea of God within the orthodoxy line of Western theological thought. The concept of apathy that had heavily

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<sup>9</sup>R. L. Katz, *Empathy: Its Nature And Uses* (New York: Free Press, 1963), 9.

dominated over the Hellenistic notion of God “becomes a fundamental principal in the doctrine of God for Jewish and Christian theologians.”<sup>10</sup> Because of the deep influence of the Greek deity that is essentially impassible and existentially immutable, God of orthodoxy is believed to seem the apathetic Supreme Being who neither shows sympathetic concern for all things nor takes empathic participation in worldly matters. For such a God, apathy is intrinsic; pathos is extrinsic. Pathos could be hardly consonant with the absolute transcendence, total independence, full complacency of God who remains forever in God’s own status and entity. God and pathos are mutually exclusive and actually contradictory. “Indeed, to attribute any pathos to God, to assert that He is affected by the conduct of those He has brought into being, is to reject the conception of Him as the Absolute. Pathos is a movement from one state to another, an alteration or change, and as such is incompatible with the conception of a Supreme Being Who is both unmoved and unchangeable.”<sup>11</sup> Therefore God of orthodoxy emerges as the apathetic Being who could not be capable of, proactively or reactively, responding to any suffering conditions of the created, becoming thereby the Wholly Other who is considered wholly apathetic beyond passion and compassion. Both by disassociating God’s self from all things and by withdrawing within Godself, God of apathy needs not and cannot feel the pathos of suffers by, sympathetically or empathically, identifying with their painful situations. God of apathy is a disabled God who is completely immutable and impassible to the suffering cry of person and thus totally incapable of treating the problem of the world. God is too apathetic to be pathetic. Apathy defines the essential identity of God, and designates the existential reality of God in a theology of orthodoxy.

## **B. God of Sympathy**

As already discussed, the classical concept of God is neither sympathetic nor empathic, but apathetic. However, there have been exceptional attempts made from some traditional theologians to understand the apathetic nature of God, keeping in mind the somewhat perennial question of “Can God suffer?” They had struggled to find an answer to the question of the passibility or impassibility of God in the midst of human tragedy. One of the best examples is Anselm of Canterbury who tried to make sense of the pathos of God in God’s apathetic nature through his

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<sup>10</sup>Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets*(II), 34.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 40.

theological praxis of faith seeking understanding.<sup>12</sup> The core of his astute perception is that “the ontological aspect of God is incapable of being passible for human wretchedness, but the soteriological aspect of God is capable of being passible for the wretched.”<sup>13</sup> As it were, the suffering of human beings can be expected, experienced, and expressed by God, not so much essentially and substantially as existentially and relationally. This view is consciously or unconsciously shared by some contemporary Christians in the direction of orthopathy. According to Heschel, “the divine pathos is not conceived of as an essential attribute of God . . . but as an expression of God’s will; it is a functional rather than a substantial reality . . . pathos is not something absolute, but a form of relation.”<sup>14</sup> Kitamori in consort with Heschel writes: “Theology of the pain of God does not mean that pain exists in God as *substance*. The pain of God is not a ‘concept of substance’—it is a ‘concept of relation.’”<sup>15</sup>

It becomes clear from their positions that God’s essential mode of being as God in heaven is at variance with God’s existential way of doing in earth. In my view, such an idea of God is so problematic that I take issue with their positions. It is my observation that their notion of God seems to be in an empathic position at a glance, but still in a sympathetic position in a strict sense, on the basis of the following aspects.

Firstly, their way of understanding the reality of God does not overcome the dualistic category of Greek philosophical thought by which they, consciously and continuously, make a radically qualitative distinction between God’s essence and existence. In their minds God’s essence parallels God’s existence. There always exists an ongoing tension or antithetical conflict between the infinite essence and the finite existence of God, without either completely uniting or completely disuniting from each

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<sup>12</sup>Anselm of Canterbury, *Saint Anselm: Basic Writings*, trans. S. W. Dean (La Salle: Open Court, 1962), 13-4. He stated the passibility of impassible God in his *Proslogium* as follows: “How, then, art thou compassionate and not compassionate O Lord, unless because thou art compassionate in terms of our experience, and not compassionate in terms of thy being. Truly, thou art so in terms of our experience, but thou art not so in terms of thine. For, when thou beholdest us in our wretchedness, we experience the effect of compassion, but thou dost not experience the feeling. Therefore, thou art both compassionate, because thou dost save the wretched, and spare those who sin against thee; and not compassionate, because thou art affected by no sympathy for wretchedness.”

<sup>13</sup>Andrew Sung Park, op. cit., 113.

<sup>14</sup>Heschel, *The Prophets* Vol. II, 11.

<sup>15</sup>Kazoh Kitamori, *Theology of the Pain of God* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965), 16.

other. Indeed, dualism enables them to perceive the wholeness of God from the exclusive “either/or” way rather than the inclusive “both/and” way so that it fails to do full justice to the knowledge of God. In the totality of God, essence and existence are not separate entities. God’s essence and existence are one and all. “Existence is the being of essence, and therefore existence can be called ‘essential being.’ Essence *is* existence. It is not distinguished from its existence.”<sup>16</sup> God is fully God “both in its essence *and* in its existence.”<sup>17</sup> God is not a different God in essence or in existence. “In all ultimate matters, truth lies not in an either-or, but a both-and.”<sup>18</sup>

Secondly, incarnation is the perfect paradigm to show the mysterious truth of how God came into full essence and full existence at the same time. “The Word became the flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth” (Jn.1:14). Incarnation means that God’s essence became God’s existence and that God’s existence became God’s essence. Incarnation is firstly, the ontological and secondly, the existential shift of God. God is both ontologically existent and existentially ontological. We have beheld the full presence of God in the full existence of God, and the full existence of God in the full presence of God. The Word and God are one. “In the beginning there is no duality.”<sup>19</sup> In the middle of incarnation there is no dichotomy between the Father and the Son, heaven and earth, the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal. Incarnation is not the either/or event but the both/and event in which God’s essence and existence became united as one Person in Christ Jesus without distinction, without disruption, and without antithesis. The incarnated One is both ontologically God and existentially God.

Thirdly, when Christ suffers, God suffers both ontologically and existentially. He is not the kind of God who is ontologically, substantially, and existentially impassible; yet soteriologically, functionally, relationally, and existentially passible. I wonder how God, who is intrinsically unable to be passible, is able to be extrinsically passible. It is possible for the God of sympathy. For the God of sympathy is one who externally participates in the suffering reality of others without internally incorporating the pain

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<sup>16</sup>Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 82.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Faith of Other Men* (New York: New American Library, 1963), 72.

<sup>19</sup>Jung Young Lee, *Patterns of Inner Process*, 178.

into one's very being. The God of sympathy is one who superficially identifies Godself with sufferers without substantially losing one's own identity. The God of sympathy is one who indirectly assumes the role of other without directly negating one's exclusive position. On the other hand, it is impossible for the God of empathy. For the God of empathy is one who is ontologically and existentially capable of being passible. The Christian God is not so much the God of sympathy whose essence and existence are entirely incompatible with each other, as the God of empathy who can suffer holistically. If God suffers existentially, God must suffer ontologically. Also, if God suffers ontologically, God must suffer existentially. There is no God who suffers *either* ontologically *or* existentially. The God of Jesus Christ is the God of empathy who can suffer *both* ontologically *and* existentially. God really died on the cross, ontologically and existentially. Jesus Christ is not only the "existentially" crucified God but also the "ontologically" crucified God.

It is clear that God of orthopraxy preoccupying with the existential (outer) doing of God without taking seriously the essential (inner) being of God may run the risk of becoming God of sympathy. For only on the ground that what God does externally and *a posteriori* rather than what God internally and *a priori* feels could it be claimed who God is in a theology of orthopraxy. Thus the hermeneutical use and wont of orthopraxy that was caught in a radical dualism of the divine doing and the divine being, is so keenly unaware of the empathic union between God's essence and existence that it might have a difficulty to understand how God is passible ontologically and existentially. God of sympathy is theologically possible in orthopraxy but impossible in orthopathy.

### C. God of Empathy

The God of orthopathy is not the God of apathy or sympathy but of empathy. God is too pathetic to be either apathetic or sympathetic. God by no means exists as either the *Deus absconditus* or the Wholly Other or the Unmoved Mover or the First Cause that is supposed to be ontologically indifferent to and existentially independently of the pain of the suffering people in the world. In and through empathy, God cannot be a stranger of the world, nor does God remain as a spectator of history. It is empathy that brings God into immediate contact with the misery of people, into intimate convergence with their broken existence, and ultimate manifestation toward their wretched world. God is in motion and at work where empathy is. Empathy is a starting point of God's redemptive activity, and thus the prime mover of God. God falls into human history by empathy. God moves in empathy: empathy moves in God. Empathy is an inseparable part of God's essential being as God, and of God's existential doing as God.

Indeed, empathy is the *modus operandi* of the divine pathos, and the *modus vivendi* of God in the world. The divine pathos overflows with boundless empathy. Empathy is what characteristically and continuously defines the vertical dimension of God's telos and determines the horizontal dimension of God's praxis throughout human history. It is empathy that makes it possible to see the Invisible, touch the Untouchable, experience the Holy among us. This is what incarnation is all about. God has become Jesus in and through empathy. The kenosis of Christ, the self-emptying of God, the radical negation of Godhead, was absolutely impossible by sympathy but absolutely possible by empathy. Incarnation is the empathic event and not the sympathetic one. Christ is the empathic being of God. Immanuel is the empathic, not sympathetic sign of "God with us." The life and message of Jesus Christ is full of empathy. He is never a condescending sympathizer for people, but a suffering empathizer with others. The preferential option for the poor and the oppressed is not His sympathetic choice but empathic imperative. His passibility is not just an expression of sympathy, but a profound manifestation of God's empathic pathos. Jesus Christ died on the cross not because of God's sympathy toward us but because of God's empathy with and into us. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is the radical antithesis to the apathy and the sympathy of God. The cross is an ultimate symbol of the divine empathy. Christ is the embodiment of God's empathy, and Christianity is the religion of Christ's empathy.

#### **IV. Theological Reading of the Samaritan Story**

Jesus answering said, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his raiment and wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was. And when he saw him he had compassion on him, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host and said unto him, 'Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again I will repay thee.' Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves?" And he said, "He that showed mercy on him." Then said Jesus unto him, "Go and do thou likewise" (Lk10:30-37, King James 21st Century version).

This is a famous story told by Jesus, a very important story full of theological implications and significations that, in my view, may have to

do with the essential and existential nature of God. It contains especially a crucial key to a deeper understanding of God-reality so that this story enables us to realize the reality of God and conceptualize the concept of God from the perspective of apathy, sympathy, and empathy. This is not only a story of human beings but also a story of God—a *theological* story that may provide the insight and powerful foundation for a theological praxis of faith that seeks to understand “who or what God is” at the essential and existential level. This is a constant reminder that throws light on the nature of theology, the concern of theologians, the focus and locus of theological construction. Consequently the exegesis of this story helps us to acknowledge three types of doing theology—apatheology, sympatheology, empathology—in accordance with three aspects of God’s ontic nature.<sup>20</sup>

### A. Apatheology

Apatheology is a theology of those who believe in the God of apathy. It literally means an apathetic theology which, like its God, is fundamentally or structurally incapable of being concerned for and participating in the suffering reality of people, as indifferently and constantly remains in a deep silence in the face of harsh human condition throughout history. Keeping itself aloof from the grinding reality of the status quo, apatheology has been systematically reinforced in an effort to evade any prophetic request of the biblical message, in such a way that it may directly or indirectly not only legitimize the social fabric of absurdity but also consciously or unconsciously contribute to the apathetic structure of the world. In this manner apatheology has tended to become a powerful weapon in the hands of apathetic persons—group ideology that may supply plausible answers to questions arising out of living on the boundary-line of those who suffer ruthlessly and countlessly. For concrete instance, in the name of the holy (apathetic) God, European traditional theology was used to colonize the third world countries, German state theology to slaughter millions Jews, American white theology to

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<sup>20</sup>Theology is a critical reflection of theologian on God, and all theology is built upon and stands for its own understanding of God. The way theologian understands the nature of God determines the way he/she constructs the character of theology. By and through an understanding of God, the pretext of theologian can be motivated, the text of theology activated, and the context of theological work cultivated. Doing theology is to deeply participate in its own perception and conception of God who is anticipated by theologian in faith seeking understanding. There must be a foundational idea of God behind all kinds of theology—the underlying belief of God that can theoretically justify, structurally fortify, and religiously sanctify theological praxis. Thus, each of apatheology (a combination of apathy and theology), sympatheology (sympathy and theology), and empathology (empathy and theology) respectively means theology based on the idea of an apathetic, sympathetic, and empathic God.



discriminate black people, patriarchal theology to oppress women, contemporary choice theology to kill the numberless unborn babies, and so on. All these theologies have overtly or covertly contributed to rob them of all they had, and thus in the sight of those who are victimized, theologians and their God alike are to be viewed as apathetic beings: apatheologists and apatheos.

Biblically speaking, they are robbers without any sympathy or empathy, who “who stripped him of his raiment and wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead.” The robbers were so apathetic that they could simply regard the robbed just as a “thing,” and that they must have no feeling, no passion, and no remorse toward him at all. Apathy forms the human relationship of I-It in terms of Martin Buber, a type of apathetic relation by which I treat all others just as “It,” namely insignificant others, indifferent beings, impersonal things, inhumane objects for the sake of one’s own selfish desire. It is in the state of apathy that nothing bothers, nothing stirs, and nothing stops us. Thing does not create any pity from within us. Thus any theology in the relation of I-It is apatheology, a senseless, heartless, and spiritless theology that makes it possible to strip God and us of passion and compassion.

## **B. Sympatheology**

Sympatheology is a theology of those whose belief and behavior are closely affiliated with the God of sympathy. It literally means a sympathetic theology which externally seems to show a little pity on suffering victims in general way, but internally quite reluctant to dedicate itself to the duty of helping them in particular way at the sacrifice of anything if necessary. Unlike the apathetic theology, this sympathetic theology may feel a certain guilty for the tragic circumstances of the world that have victimized people in demonic way, but its response to deal with their tragedies still remains in the official, superficial, and inactive dimension of attitude by way of neither fully identifying itself with the painful existence of people nor deeply engaging into their riskful situation of life. Since a sympathetic theology is self-centered in its concern, self-oriented in its content, and self-contained in its context, it is structurally unable to break the *de jure* status quo of theological praxis apart from the real pain of people and mentally unwilling to go beyond the *de facto* boundary of its own world that is exclusively confined by the line of race, gender, class, culture, nationality etc. Sympathetic theology does not allow itself to fully enter in the suffering realm of people, so it may objectively or dispassionately feel their virtual/phenomenal reality of suffering but not subjectively or passionately experience their actual/noumenal reality of suffering. In a word, sympathetic theology is nothing more and nothing

less than a theology in just *feeling sorry*. The suffering of others is none of their theological business at all. Their doing theology has nothing in actual contact with the suffering others, and nothing to do with the suffering reality of others. As a result, sympathetic theology in opting for self-interest assumes the attitude of an onlooker in the face of suffering fellow human beings.

Biblically speaking, the priest and the Levite in the Samaritan story can be called as sympatheologians and their theology coined as sympatheology. When the Levite saw the bloodstained victim lying on the street, he “did feel a little pity, and stopped to look, no doubt compassionately, on the sufferer.”<sup>21</sup> It also is quite probable that the priest like the Levite might feel a certain pity within at the sight of the robbed sufferer. However on the basis of what has been discussed so far and of reading the text as a whole, it becomes clear that what both of them felt at that time on the spot was not empathy but sympathy. Sympathy makes us feel sorry conventionally and psychologically toward the sufferer from the own standpoint of spectator, whereas empathy enables us to shake ontologically and existentially through solidifying ourselves with the sufferer. Sympathy moves our eyes; empathy shakes our whole being. Sympathy comes and goes according to interests; empathy works regardless of them. Sympathy depends on human condition (race, class, gender, status, nationality, religion etc.); empathy overcomes it. Sympathy flows from head; empathy overflows from heart. Sympathy disappears sooner or later; empathy remains long. Sympathy is so self-oriented and self-directed that it may leads us to easily forget suffering others and in the end make us inactively shy away from their painful reality, while empathy urges us, profoundly and proactively, to be somebody for nobody and do something for nothing. That’s why the priest and the Levite passed by on the other side of the road, far be it from them to help the victim in a critical situation, when they saw him. For the priest and the Levite who were religiously claimed to be entirely sanctified and socially considered *holy* men, “At any rate something else was more important to [them] than a man’s life—even the life of a fellow Jew.”<sup>22</sup> It is quite possible and understandable for the sympathetic person having sympatheology to do so, for sympathy induces him to behave according to what might happen to him rather than

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<sup>21</sup>H.D.M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, edited, *The Pulpit Commentary*, Vol. 16 (Virginia: Macdonald Publishing Company), 275.

<sup>22</sup>Ralph Earle, A. Elwood Sanner, Charles L. Childers, *Beacon Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1964), 503.

according to what might happen to the other as a result of his action. What the sympathetic person is really concerned about, more accurately, is not the other at all, but only himself in search of position, job, status, career, success, etc. What always matters to sympatheology is to do theology for the sake of theology itself, while not only glossing over what is going on in the tragic life of robbed neighbors on the road to Jericho but also ensconcing itself comfortably or complacently under the sacred canopy of the established order of Jerusalem. In this sense, any theology which passes by on the other side by avoiding the suffering reality of people around the world can be thought of as sympatheology that may produce irresponsible religious hypocrites like the priest and the Levite under pretence of holy personality.

### **C. Empatheology**

Empatheology is a theology of those whose heart and mind are full of empathy over sympathy and against apathy. It literally means a theology of empathy which can actually not only feel the painful reality of people a theology of apathy may in no way experience because of its impassibility, but also wholly embrace the total reality of sufferer a theology of sympathy may hardly grasp because of its self-centeredness. This empathic theology is immanently/passionately submerged in the tragic condition of sufferer, existentially/ ontologically merged in the broken being of sufferer, and concretely/continuously emerged from the actual participation in the context of sufferer. For it is foundationally and profoundly rooted in a God of empathy who is willing to stand in preferential solidarity with the insignificant others by choosing to reveal Godself through the divine identification with them in the redemptive history of the world. To be more explicit, a God of empathy seeks the last, the least, and the lost—those whom apathetic persons have robbed and sympathetic persons have neglected—the insignificant sufferers who are politically oppressed, socially discriminated, economically exploited, culturally alienated, sexually abused, bodily disabled, spiritually and religiously condemned in the dark side of history. “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are”(1Cor.1:27-28). In terms of Karl Barth, “God always takes His stand unconditionally and passionately on this side and on this side alone: Against the lofty and on behalf of the lowly, against those who already enjoy right and privilege and on behalf of those who are denied it and

deprived of it.”<sup>23</sup> This is what a God of empathy means: “God is never neutral, never beyond good and evil. He is always partial to justice.”<sup>24</sup> God is not a colorless, heartless, and motionless God. God is ontologically and existentially bound to the pain of the suffering people, “for a God who loves actually and not just figuratively must be wounded and hurt as the people in whom God dwells are hurt.”<sup>25</sup> It is in empathy that the Unmoved Mover is deeply moved, the Wholly Other becomes wholly present among the suffering victims, and hence God of I AM THAT I AM no longer remains as the *Deus absconditus* in the suffering situation of the wretched world. Empathy is the prime mover of God. God is not the Unmoved Mover. *God is the Moved Mover!* God is not the Wholly Other. *God is the Wholly Nonother!* God is not I AM THAT I AM apathetic or sympathetic. God is I AM THAT I AM empathic. Thus the theology of such a God is empatheology.

Biblically speaking, the Samaritan must be a man of empathy—an empatheologist who was to do empatheology. In those days Jews and Samaritans like cat and dog were enemies for a long period of time so that they refused to have any official or private relationship by apathetically looking down one another. Under this circumstance, the Samaritan was not obliged or supposed to treat a Jew well who was attacked by bandits and lying half dead beside the road. However, “When he saw him,” according to the story, he didn’t have either apathy like robbers or sympathy like the priest and the Levite, but “he had compassion on him, and went to him. . . took care of him.” It is neither apathy nor sympathy but empathy that enabled the Samaritan to do so. At that time, religious law and theological doctrine didn’t rule over him, nor did racial prejudices and social customs rule over him, nor did personal interests and peer pressure rule over him. He followed only his empathy along, for his heart, his mind and his body—his whole being—were melting down in empathy. Any visible or invisible walls of political hostility, social animosity, historical antagonism, racial bigotry, religious contempt between them were totally broken down by and through empathy, and thus these things couldn’t prohibit the Samaritan from doing good to the Jew. It is in empathy that nothing else was more important to him than the life of him who suffered. To the eyes of the Samaritan fully charged with empathy, the Jew could

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<sup>23</sup>Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/1 (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1957), 386.

<sup>24</sup>Heschel, *op.cit.*, 11.

<sup>25</sup>Harvey Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984), 229.

not be counted as either a thing of robbery at all as in the eyes of the apathetic bandits or the object of cheap mercy and temporal concern as in the eyes of the priest and the Levite in sympathy. Rather he was a neighbor in a critical condition whom the Samaritan needed to love like himself, so that he could not be a stranger to him or remain as a bystander of his desperate need. Indeed, the Samaritan way of doing, explicitly or implicitly, indicates what empatheology means. Empatheology is a theology of “compassion [which] asks us to be where it hurts, to enter into places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish . . . [Empatheology] requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. [Empatheology] means full immersion in the condition of being human.”<sup>26</sup>

### V. Conclusion: Empatheology as Holiness Theology

The Holy God of the Bible is not the Wholly/Holy Other as what the Rudolf Otto called the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* - the *numinous* that is a strange, awesome, fearful, weird, uncanny, Being, absolutely and completely veiled in the incomprehensible and impenetrable mystery.<sup>27</sup> The Holy One of Israel is not so much the apathetic Being who is by nature thought of as being heartless, passionless, motionless, and painless in ongoing relation to the world as the empathetic Being of compassionate pathos who is deeply moved and affected by the suffering reality of people. The Holy Other has no place in the realm of Christianity. The very entitative and genitive character of the Holy One in the understanding of the biblical man implies the “relatedness” of God. So to speak, holiness signifies a pattern of God’s relation to human being.<sup>28</sup> What the biblical persons—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and many others—encountered and experienced were not just the concept or idea about God, but the holy reality of the empathetic God who has a living and personal relationship with them. In this sense, “The holy in the Bible is not a synonym for the weird.”<sup>29</sup> It is a synonym for the empathic. The Holy One is the Empathic One. To be holy is to be empathic, for God as holy means God is empathic. “Be holy, because I am holy”(I Pet 1:16) indicates “Be

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<sup>26</sup>Daniel S. Schipani, *Religious Education Encounters Liberation Theology* (Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1988), 220-21.

<sup>27</sup>Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. By John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 5-11.

<sup>28</sup>Heschel, *op.cit.*, 7-8.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

empathic, because I am empathic.” Empathy is the very essence and very existence of the Holy God. Empathy is what holiness means. Holiness is what empathy means. One can experience empathy in holiness. One can experience holiness in empathy. Holiness *is* empathy. Entire sanctification means entire empathy. There is no entire sanctification without entire empathy. Indeed, *holiness theology is empathology*. Doing empathology is a praxis of holiness theology. Holiness theology in either apathy or sympathy is the direct antithesis to a theology of the Holy God who is empathic.

After telling the Samaritan story, Jesus simply said: “Go and do thou likewise.” Theologically speaking, what He means by that is: “Do empathology like the Samaritan.” It is of course not Jesus’ intention to order His followers to do apatheology or sympatheology. Empatheology is the Samaritan theology. By the way, it has been allegorically said that the Samaritan here stands for Jesus Christ Himself. In fact, no one can deny that Jesus’ theology was empathology, whereas almost other theologies of the religious status quo in His days were either apatheology or sympatheology (Mt 21:13; Lk 11:42-52). A great theology always comes from a great heart, namely a great empathy. Jesus’ great theology came from His great empathy. In order to do a great theology thus one needs to have a great empathy over a great mind. To do theology without a great empathy may fall in danger of doing apatheology or sympatheology. God has called one to be an empathologist and to do empathology in one’s given context. Christianity is neither an ideology of apathy nor a theory of sympathy but a praxis of empathy.

**The *Telos* and *Pathos* of Christlike Kenosis**  
 A Response to  
**Doing Empatheology as a Praxis of Holiness Theology:**  
**Theological Reading Luke 10:30-37**  
 Larnie Sam A. Tabuena

A passionate quest for “ultimate truth” in classical theism is nonetheless tantamount to human attempts of discovering life’s *summon bonum*. Even in the Old Testament Hebrew community, ethical piety at the core of the Decalogue reflects how stipulated wisdom regulating social relationship earnestly takes into account the godness of Yahweh. Philosophy’s chronic search for ultimate reality concurs with the obsessive pursuit to acquire timeless principles for human behavior in collateral fashion.

In Platonic idealism, for instance, the “ontologically real” transcending spatial-temporal restrictions is implicitly identified with the “absolute ideal.” Phenomenal reality approximates the archetypal perfection so far as possible, transitory creation impelled by the nous, the universal mind and substratum of all that is, to move forward toward the supreme good in a teleological striving to achieve the divine purpose. Thus, man is intelligently designed with a telos bearing eternal validity, transforming himself through an ascending scale of self-realization to liberate one’s finite being from space-time constraints of corporeal existence and thereby achieve perfection. Contemplation of or constant identification with “the true, the good, and the beautiful,” is the highest virtue. Resemblance to God is the chief end of man.

The symmetrical correlation between theology and ethical praxis ensuing from a salient theocentric paradigm renders Dr. Chun’s stress on his empatheology model an indispensable contribution to the distinctive Asian understanding of holiness in the postmodern intellectual milieu. I affirm Chun’s contention that the profound knowledge of who God is indeed essentially builds a solid foundational groundwork on which holiness theology rests.

The moral question “how men ought to live” presupposes a radical realization of the embedded *imago dei* in the inner constitution of our being that inherently makes us the crown of God’s creation as well as partakers of His divine nature. Man was created not as a fully developed entity as the rest of creation had been, but an open system meant to achieve some sort of maturation and wholeness. Man is thus open to diverse possibilities. As he grows in awareness of these possibilities, he also increases the range of his freedom. Either/or decisive moment confronts such moral agent endowed with tremendous capacity whether or not to obey the highest telos of godlikeness. The exercise of free will might lead to the experience of meaningful existence insofar as the agent conforms to the mark set for him. Humans coming into being out of the dust possess merely potentiality, the possibility of becoming something. The physical aspect cannot act spontaneously, cannot move itself, but must be acted upon, must motivate it into becoming an actuality from its latent state of mere possibility. The principle whereby each essence within the phenomenon realizes itself is “entelechy,” inner purpose, end, or completion. Wisdom actively participating itself in the becoming of each individual is analogous to the presence of the “incarnate rational order” in John 1:1 working his way through at the interior that we may embrace and live the godlike qualities. Existential theocentricity echoes the conventional Filipino centripetal thought mode considering the self as an extended essence of divinity. Apotheosis or human deification in Filipino thinking, although it has some animistic underpinnings, succinctly illustrates “realized essentia” in terms of ontological perfection and existential becoming. Therefore, “imitation of Christ” virtue, being godlike can easily be accommodated into Asian relational-teleological yearnings.

In our willful defiance of God’s intention, we horribly “missed the mark” thus bringing us into a state of what Kierkegaard used to call “inauthentic mode of existence.” Sin is a breach of God’s known law with the full participation of human faculties by a morally responsible agent contrary to Christian love. The concept of violation in the light of the oriental doctrine of non-interference includes intrusion or infraction of governing lawful order and relationship structures in any form. It is a deviation from the preordained path of divinely implanted entelechy giving way to sporadic cessation in the smooth flow of natural courses. It destroys cosmic equilibrium. Moral corruption, induced by acquired depravity, becomes a universal predicament that tremendously affects both the healthy structure of humanness as well as the interhuman relational dimension. In the form of encoded societal legislation and ecclesiastical purity, the highest projection of good tainted with depravity tends to



supersede love's redemptive value. Cultural ultimates and religious tenets to such degree hamper the true expression of the telos in social context, as in the case of the Samaritan narrative.

Only then through a transforming encounter with the personal *Logos*, the integrating, creating, unifying, sustaining principle serving as an ever-active spiritual urge to participate in God's being that we are restored to the original purpose for which we are created and called to be. The "Word" in ancient Hebrew concept and other Orientals is conceived not primarily as expression of thought; it was a mighty and dynamic force. The Hebrew word *dabhar*, the counterpart of Greek *logos*, signifies both the highest mental function and moral personality. Creation discloses Yahweh's power working itself out in nature and His goodness. Yahweh's word implies His will coming particularly to expression. In *dabhar*, Yahweh makes His essence known. Whoever has the *dabhar* knows Yahweh. Jesus' categorical statement is noteworthy. He said, "I am the truth" instead of "I will teach you the truth." It is neither a revelation of a mere verbiage or some propositional truth-claims subject to the canons of verification and falsification nor a conclusion reached through the application of scientific method or logical argument but a personal identification of Godself with humanity, hence making Himself potentially available for acceptance, intimacy, and direction. Christ will not usher us to heavenly destiny, He is our destiny. Living according to the ethos of God's standard is likely when we possess the mind and pathos of Christ that enable us to fulfill the telos which is Christlikeness expressing itself in corporate relationship as active perfect love. The internal dynamic outworkings of *logos* presence practically resembles the destiny-driven force of entelechy motivating the self to achieve the divine end, Christian perfection. *Agape* in relation to the whole business of living, influencing every segment of human ethical propensity, is the manifestation of this crisis experience. Should the synthesis of theology and praxis in holiness hermeneutic be called for the lack of better term "agapetheology" as well?

Man, in terms of his finite human situation, obtains revelatory experiences. Our church enhances the fulfillment of the general mission statement (Manual 424.3) by allowing certain degree of contextual or cultural adaptations in ways that reflect deliberate articulation of Christian truths consistent with the Wesleyan-Arminian theological persuasion. A theology that can draw people closer to God is the best theology. Levy-Bruhl's cognitive relativity approach adheres the conviction that "every logic we use in our descriptions of the world is not universal but rather a function of our ideological heritage, particular linguistic and immediate techno-environmental circumstances, and that no one logic is necessarily superior to any other." Distinct approaches to divine reality constitute

interpretive mechanisms evolving out of the peculiar streams of religious consciousness, specific problems arising from the widespread phenomenon of meaningless existence, and intermittent paradigm shifts being dictated by *Zeitgeist* “spirit of the age,” indicating unique reality constructs of each intellectual civilization. Each theological concern is by no means monochronistic delineation with severe exclusion of other extreme end. It is logically improper to conclude that the Platonic doctrine of divine absolute transcendence would precisely represent the typical Greek notion of God. In fact, Plato believes that the union of the soul (ideal) with the newly created world (matter) gives the materiality spiritual beauty, order, direction, and purpose. The ethic of self-realization would make godlike state possible for man. Moreover, the Socratic dictum “know thyself” as well as Aristotle’s hylomorphic reality bears intense humanistic tendency and synergistic complementarity of the eternal and the temporal. The “*vox populi vox dei*” dogma of liberation theology has firm conceptual grounds on God’s sovereignty. Similarly, we have what we call orthodox theology which is predominantly theory-oriented and orthodox ethics comprising a behavior-action-oriented orthodoxy.

The logos as suffix appended to the term theology presupposes a basic rationality in all things and events in the human and cosmic existence. The rationality emerging out of the correlation between the phenomenon of transcendence and mundane reality is referred to as theology. The dialectic of wisdom and praxis could be attained through “collective dialogical situation” which provides clues to the Asian penchant for life as inward in its spirituality as it is compassionate in its outward relation. Understanding prevalent Oriental reality constructs would set qualifying parameters on the major direction of theologizing.

### **Onto-Intuitive Mode of Cognition**

Orientalists have a distinct cognitive worldview which provides vivid depiction of reality and explanation of mundane human existence. Their modes of knowing do not practically succumb to the epistemological parlance employed by analytic paradigm as much as putting a premium on the knower’s immediate apprehension of metaphysical entities and ethical principles of universality. The *noumenon* (God in itself), His primordial nature is absolutely unfathomable, mysterious, too profound beyond human understanding. The numinous elements of experience are ineffable truths beyond the scope of verbal symbols. The austere habit of reaching certain tenable conclusions with logical precision does not represent typical Asian rationality but a spontaneous exercise of intrinsic insights on beings, events, and entities from a viewpoint of the cosmic whole.

The pervasive sense of mystery among Orientals encompasses either the fascinating experience of the transcendent or encounter with the ineffable as well as an invitation to communion, to a knowing relationship. This approach to God reality sacralizes time, space, things, and persons and makes them holy in the sense of being “set apart” to be participants and factors in a system of what seem to be asymmetrical relationships between humans and the numinous. It is at times characterized as “feeling of truth,” one’s direct non-intellectual grip and dynamic awareness of *a mysterium tremendum et facinans* fostering the possibility of supreme communion. Faith-seeking-understanding in Eastern way is not simply a discursive enterprise but participation in divine nature leading to the unity of beings.

Intuitive insight is also conceived by other existentialist theologians as a “leap of faith” to the Unknown in whom wholeness and depth can be grasped. Filipinos’ personalistic view of the created order affirms the assertion that personal beings rather than oneself or mechanistic impersonal laws directly control existence. Passive attitude of resilience to life’s preordained lot and infinite resignation to the governing will of a regarded supreme deity bring harmonious relationship. This concept is identical to a Wesleyan doctrine of consecration and faith as prerequisites to the experience of entire sanctification.

The dialectic structure of faith enables the knower to comprehend paradoxical antinomies in the form of truth emanating from irreconcilable contradictions such as the incarnation of the *Logos*. The embodiment of infinite spirit to finite flesh is an offense to consciousness in the eyes of modern logic. The act of faith removes the logical impossibility of human-divine communion. Intuition is the inherent knowledge inspired by God. It is the process by which we know the super-sensuous world, the world that is beyond senses and thoughts. John Wesley defines faith as “spiritual sensation of every soul that is born of God, a spiritual evidence of God and the things of God, a kind of spiritual light exhibited to the soul, a supernatural sight or perception thereof.”

Mystical participation between the self and the Absolute in ecstatic union engenders unmediated knowledge. Ontological union expresses the highest degree of existential telos manifesting itself in the moral realm thereby the self achieves the wholeness of being. The difference between the subject and the object is not stressed so that both are in communion. Spiritual convergence obliterates the objectifying abyss of Western dichotomy predicated by the law of logical analysis. In particular, Filipinos’ transpersonal thought mode under such conviction that spiritual

beings inhabit the universe unconsciously holds a larger cosmic collectivity.

A direct participation in, or identification with what is intuited, the soul gradually begins to take on the features of a being as the object of contemplation. "From glory to glory He is changing me." Holiness then, is a growing continuum of becoming into the likeness of the Supreme Being whose revealed attributes are incarnated in the deep recesses of man's soul who longs to be such. It is also understood as imputed state of being resulting from the consistent participation of the person's total faculties in the nature of God.

### **Existential-Intersubjective Norm of Relation**

Theology, Grider says, "is a discipline whose business is to help us reflect on Christian faith in ways that make a difference in our lives." We do not theologize with our mind alone, but with our whole being within the grand scheme of personal relationships. Theology is our response to life itself, the product of the very humanity and spirituality of each theologian through a meaningful emersion in a mass of social engagements. It reflects man's ultimate concern, the depth in spiritual dimension which determines our being or non-being. You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you. Various Filipino legends stated in narrative forms the expression of individual existential worth in terms of ontological identity and existential participation. Our existential participation in the being of God constitutes what we may call "internal relations." "If properties that partake of the character of internal relations are absent, the thing is no longer what it was, it becomes something else . . . Man's essence is constituted by his relation to God . . . Sanctification involves a change of relation in the internal sense, the person is really changed by this relation" (Dunning 1988: 15). *Yada* is the Hebrew word used to describe the most intimate relationship in human life. Existential knowledge comes in the unique effects of an encounter with another in the very throes of one's own existence. The God of the philosophers is labeled as "the absolute being" who becomes the object of research and academic ramifications. In Buberian category, the meeting of the "contingent" and the "Infinite" in the narrow ridge transforms the "Absolute" into the "Eternal Thou" by virtue of the established ever-present relations. The dialogical communion maintains *coincidentia oppositorum* between man and the absolute person which is the other thou. However, the extended lines of relation meet in the Eternal Thou. The qualitative difference indicative of each thou is retained but not stressed so that the beauty of harmony in relation becomes the sole focus.

Dr. Chun points out that Christ's empathy encapsulates the vertical dimension of divine telos which significantly determines the horizontal dimension of God's praxis throughout human history. Empatheology implies full immersion in the condition of being human. God's condescending disposition to lay grounds for personal encounter can be seen in the model of Christological kenosis. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8). Empathy connotes not just listening to another's story but also participating in the other's story. "He became as we are in order that we might become as He is."

On the ethical principle of "great exchange," Martin Luther once wrote a commentary on Isaiah 53:6, "laid on Him the iniquity of us all." He said, "learn to know Christ and Him crucified. Learn to sing to Him, and say Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness, I am your sin. You have taken upon yourself what is mine and given me what is yours. You become what you were not, so that I might become what I was not." What a wonderful exchange! Was there ever such love? The essential expression of hostility is disobedience—living to oneself, estrangement from the mark set in our inner being as a desired end, entanglement in a self-seeking which cannot fulfill the divine command of love. Alienation from the ground of our being is living a disintegrated life and non-harmonious social relationships. It brings before men the action by which God takes them up again into fellowship with Himself those who have allowed this action to reach its goal in them, opening themselves to it. Love is a spiritual affection for holy things, which is the fruit of the Spirit, opposed to all evil, and only satisfied with a likeness to Jesus Christ. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples if ye have love one another." Without Christ, we do not know love, we cannot love, for there is no love in us except that which comes from God and flows through us. "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us." I think the most personal definition of love is Christlikeness.

Dr. Chun's stress on making incarnation as a perfect conceptual paradigm to show the unveiling of mysterious essence in existence is noteworthy. Love indeed motivates Christ's willingness to allow us to experience the glory of the one full of grace and truth. Love is the will of choosing to be. *Quodesh*, "to set apart," tells of God's exclusive distinctiveness. We cannot compromise the reality of God just by trying to meet the requirements of our worldview. When we talk about

transcendence, it does not imply spatial chasm but a qualitative distinction as holy God different from His creation. It is therefore the majestic message of kenosis that the Wholly Other by the act of His will chose to identify Himself with lowly creatures. The commandment that a priest avoid contracting corpse-impurity in the story of the Good Samaritan conflicts with the commandment to love the neighbor. Love principle should always override other laws in cases of conflict. Perfect love as a nomenclature of entire sanctification claims superiority over purity laws. It is risking the legal and religious for what is highly essential or of higher value in human relationship.

Self-emptying and total identification motifs explain well the praxis of holiness theology in the scripture. The parish priest in a town named austerity climbed way up in the church steeple to be nearer to God. He wanted to hand down God's word to his parishioners, like Moses of old. Then, one day he indeed thought he heard God say something. The priest cried aloud from the steeple, "where are you, Lord?" I cannot seem to hear your voice clearly. And the Lord replied, "I am down here among my people. Where are you?" God cannot be found through austere academic discipline or ivory tower speculation. His nature is revealed in His active involvement within the cluster of human relationships. I-thou relationship models the tripartite dimension of meaningful dialogue. All real living is personal meeting. We meet the Eternal Thou when we meet the finite thou. The I cannot be the I without a thou and vice versa. Self-abnegation takes pleasure in the present experience of communion being unmindful of particular circumstances

The norm of reciprocity, although universally present in almost all cultures, has been intensely demonstrated as a uniquely Asian behavioral trait. Filipinos believe that in "mutual participation," the causal agent as it acts emits perfection outside itself and thereby letting another be. It makes another being participate in existence. As the causal agent diffuses its perfection, another being begins to be. This participation can be conceived as coexistence. The distinctiveness of each being are meant to enhance humanity through a complementary participation in the being of the greater self (incarnation). Greater self embraces all into one and the faculty by which the multiform reality of the cosmos is seen in smooth interpersonal relation.

*A Response to*

**Doing Empatheology as a Praxis of Holiness Theology:  
Theological Reading Luke 10:30-37 by Dr. Kwang Don Chun**

Hitoshi Fukue

Dr. Chun's paper is creative, innovative, and persuasive. His theological concern is practical, helpful and influential. No one can deny after reading his paper the fact that he made an important contribution to the theological world. He used and even created some words that clarify what is to be the essential understanding of God in our world today. He opts for the genuine understanding of God as the God of Orthopathy, God of Empathy, and chooses a kind of theology he terms as Empatheology. In all his theological concern, the word pathos is the most important key to unlock the reality of God. Let us think through with the author how he reaches his conclusion in this direction.

In the introductory section, Dr. Chun makes a point that the proper knowledge of God is the foundation of doing theology. He makes an apt comment that holiness theology is a theology of God and that it is neither a theology of Wesley nor of Wesleyans. Holiness theology is a universal theology that is not separate and apart from the central truth of Christianity. He emphasizes the fact that without right knowledge of God, there is no right knowledge of holiness. Thus Dr. Chun begins to search for the right knowledge of God which is essential in understanding holiness theology in the following pages.

In understanding God, Dr. Chun first typifies three kinds of theological approaches to the reality of God, which are *God of Orthodoxy*, *God of Orthopraxy*, and *God of Orthopathy*. He feels the need for developing a theology of Orthopathy believing that it has been largely neglected in traditional Western theology. Pathos being vital in understanding the nature of God, Dr. Chun further typifies three kinds of approach to the nature of God, which are *God of Apathy*, *God of Sympathy*, and finally *God of Empathy*. And using a scriptural passage from the Samaritan Story, he further categorizes three kinds of theology: *patheology*, *sympatheology*, and *empatheology*. These terms are Dr.

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Chun's unique way of sharpening the understanding his theology based on empathy, which is, according to him, synonymous with holiness.

Now let us look more closely at what Dr. Chun means by these terminologies. His first categories are God of Orthodoxy, God of Orthopraxy, and God of Orthopathy. He means by God of Orthodoxy right beliefs, right opinions, right knowledge, right standards, and right doctrines. Understanding God as the God of Orthodoxy fails to take human reality seriously and has a danger of falling into absolute idealism, cold rationalism, blind biblicism and dry dogmatism. It projects God as a lifeless, bloodless, motionless Supreme Being detached from human suffering and living. He identifies this kind of theology with the traditional Western Christianity.

The second type in this category is God of Orthopraxy. What he means by God of Orthopraxy are right practice, right action, right commitment, right movement, and right participation in favor of the oppressed victims, and in disfavor of the oppressive reality. In this perspective, understanding of God depends on what God does. Because of its heavy emphasis on the actions of God, this kind of theological perspective fails to perceive the innermost heart of God as a whole. It fails to reach the profound dimension of God. Dr. Chun identifies this kind of approach with contemporary liberation theology.

In the light of above discussion, Dr. Chun considers a position which is neither the God of Orthodoxy nor the God of Orthopraxy. And that third approach is the God of Orthopathy. This approach emphasizes understanding God from within, from deep within God's very being as God. By God of Orthopathy, the author specifically means right passions, right compassion, right tempers, right affections, and right patience. It is different from right thinking, or right doing. It is right feeling, if we understand the author correctly. He defines the Greek word *pathos* to mean feelings, sympathy, compassion and affection. Since the divine pathos is the alpha and omega of God's reality, Dr. Chun believes the theology of orthopathy can ameliorate the damages done by the theology of orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Now establishing a case for God of Orthopathy, Dr. Chun elaborates on the meaning of orthopathy by distinguishing three Greek words related to pathos. They are apathy, sympathy, and empathy. Using these three words, he typifies the understanding of God as God of Apathy, God of Sympathy, and God of Empathy. This is the author's attempt to further clarify the term orthopathy. The first type, God of Apathy is absolutely above His creation and completely detached from humanity. The God of Apathy is passionless and changeless, much like the description he made



about the God of Orthodoxy. Dr. Chun traces the roots of this kind of theology in the Greek concept of God which had a major influence upon the formation of classical idea of God in the Western theological thought. The God of Apathy is a Supreme Being who is an Unmoved Mover, Wholly Other beyond any human reach. God of Apathy cannot identify with the pathos of sufferers nor their painful situations.

The second type is God of Sympathy. The Greek term sympathy is, according to Dr. Chun, equivalent to German term *Mitfuehlung* which can be translated as feeling of being with other. The sympathetic person feels *along with* another person but not necessarily *into* a person. Sympathy is incapable of assuming the position or condition of other. Sympathy is the external way of identification with the other in a superficial manner. In summarizing the concept of sympathy, Dr. Chun writes, sympathy is a self-oriented way of being with other at the center of oneself. So the God of Sympathy is one who externally participates in the suffering reality of others without internally incorporating the pain into one's very being. Dr. Chun sees the danger in God of Orthopraxy preoccupied with the doing of God without taking seriously the essential being of God by becoming God of Sympathy. In other words he sees in liberation theology the risk of superficial identification with the sufferers and the painful situations.

The author opts for the third possibility of God of Empathy as the most viable genuine understanding of the nature of God. God of Empathy comes into immediate contact with the misery of people, into intimate convergence with their broken existence, and ultimate manifestation toward their wretched world. God comes into human history by empathy. Christ is the empathic being of God. The life and message of Jesus Christ is full of empathy. He is never a condescending sympathizer for people, but a suffering empathizer with others. The cross is the ultimate symbol of the divine empathy Christianity is the religion of Christ's empathy. Here is the summation of Dr. Chun's theology of empathy, or what he calls Empatheology.

In the following section, the author skillfully analyzes the Samaritan Story into the three categories of theology he has been discussing, namely, apatheology, sympatheology, and empathology. He sees the robbers in the story as a type of apatheology. It is a theology that is incapable of being concerned for or participating in the suffering reality of people. Dr. Chun cites concrete instances in history when in the name of the holy (apathetic) God, European traditional theology was used to colonize the third world countries, German state theology slaughtered millions of Jews, American white theology discriminates black people, patriarchal theology oppresses women, contemporary choice theology kills the numberless

unborn babies, and so on. This is a strong criticism of a kind of theology which separated God from identification with human suffering.

Dr. Chun sees in the priests and the Levite in the Samaritan story sympatheologians. They do feel sorry for the hurting people but they do not go further than just feeling sorry. They neither fully identify themselves with the painful existence of people nor deeply engage into the risky situation of life. It is an attitude of an onlooker in the face of suffering fellow human beings. Though Dr. Chun does not associate sympatheology with liberation theology explicitly, the flow of his paper seems to suggest such conclusion.

And now comes the grand idea of the empatheologian identified with the Samaritan. The empathic theology is immanently/passionately submerged in the tragic condition of sufferer, existentially/ontologically merged in the broken being of sufferer, and concretely/continuously emerged from the actual participation in the context of sufferer. And the next sentence is worth quoting. To be more explicit, a God of empathy seeks the last, the least, and the lost those whom apathetic persons have robbed and sympathetic persons have neglected the insignificant sufferers who are politically oppressed, socially discriminated, economically exploited, culturally alienated, sexually abused, bodily disabled, spiritually and religiously condemned in the dark side of history.

In concluding his paper, Dr. Chun relates his theology back to holiness theology. In his words, holiness is what empathy means. Entire sanctification means entire empathy. *Holiness theology is empatheology*. And his last sentence is impressive. Christianity is neither an ideology of apathy nor a theory of sympathy but a praxis of empathy.

Now please allow me to make some comments on this excellent paper of Dr. Chun, who is my personal friend. First I must say that I am deeply indebted to this paper in clarifying my mind in understanding the nature of God by his skillful comparison of three types of theology. I believe that he also realizes that those are types of theology and by the nature of types, these types of theology do not exist in pure forms but rather in reality there are myriads of combinations of these three types. But these types help us to search for a more genuine expression of Christian faith in theological thoughts. Dr. Chun's emphasis on empathy is well taken and very much needed in today's world where in the name of God wars are being waged, and in the name of prosperity theology, economic exploitation takes place, and in the name of religion, women are oppressed. Empathy is called for in every sector of our world today. I agree with the author that orthodoxy nor orthopraxy is sufficient in today's world where human beings have become too intelligent and over-informed,

and our world has become too materialistic and too success oriented. Empathic understanding is essential if we desire for a more peaceful world with less craving for wealth and success.

I am especially appreciative of this paper, because Dr. Chun in my opinion has expressed his theology from a very Asian perspective. He is in line with Asian theologians such as Kazo Kitamori in his *Pain of God Theology*, C.S. Song in his *Compassionate God*, Kosuke Koyama in his *Broken Image of God*, Andrew Park in his *Theology of Han*, Shusaku Endo in his *Silence* and many others. Kitamori made a long lasting contribution in theological world by illuminating the feeling of pain in the heart of God which culminated in the cross of Christ. The cross was the expression of God's pain of embracing those whom He should not embrace. C. S. Song made a distinctive contribution to our theological world by elucidating the point of contact between God and humanity at the reality of human suffering. God meets us in our suffering. God is a God of compassion. Koyama depicts the brokenness of God in His suffering for humanity. Weakness of God is emphasized in his theology, because in weakness God opened Himself to humanity. In His brokenness God heals the brokenness of humanity. Park emphasizes the human suffering in terms of Korean word, *han*, and Christ in His *han* experience of the cross, He heals the *hanful* condition of humanity. Endo depicts Christ not as a victorious King of Kings or Lord of Lords but rather as one who walks along side of us in total misery and weakness. By identifying with us in our total weakness and shamefulness, Christ heals us and gives us hope.

These examples and the paper by Dr. Chun reinforce my contention that it is uniquely Asian experience to see and hear and understand Christ and the nature of God in terms of One who totally identifies Himself with humanity at the point of suffering and weakness and sin and shame in motherly empathy, selfless brokenness, and total compassion. And this emphatic identification of God in Christ with us brings healing to our souls. I concur with Dr. Chun that this is an area where traditional Western theological thoughts did not fully explore, perhaps because of their preoccupation with doctrinal correctness, or proselytizing zeal. The fact that these Asian theologians are concurrently expressing theology of similar vein seems to indicate that Asian Christians are hungry and thirsty for God who meets us in our suffering and weakness in empathic understanding rather than in our right understanding or right doing. Asian Christians are generally less interested in seamless orthodoxy or rigorous militant proselytization than conciliatory spirit and meditative character. And if there is anything Asian theologians can contribute to the world, I believe it is this empathic understanding of God.

Now I need to also raise a question to my friend, Dr. Chun. Dr. Chun in this paper seems to criticize traditional Western theology quite severely as well as liberation theology. It is true and obvious that the Western societies have made many mistakes in the past and religion had a large part in them. It is also true that liberation theology has done both good and harm in many parts of Latin America. But so have Asian societies. Most notoriously my own country has done unimaginative wrongs. How much of our wrongdoings can we attribute to religious faith? Is it the religious faith that causes people to do wrong things? Or is it the people who do wrong things in the name of religion? Is it the Islam religion that causes people to go into terrorism, or the people that use Islam religion to justify their cause? I tend to think it is the latter. Religion historically has been manipulated by people who have their own agenda. Orthodoxy of the Western society is not the cause of their historical misbehavior, but rather the people used the doctrines of the church to justify their political, social and economic expansionism. It is the human sin that uses anything to justify their desires. In this sense, it is a universal nature of human beings to seek self-interest in the name of anything, be it religion or ideology. So I would not go so far as to identify traditional Western theology with God of Apathy. There is a line of theology in the Western society which is as empathic and compassionate as any Asian theology, if not more so.

As Dr. Chun aptly pointed out that theology emerges out of a particular social, cultural and historical milieu, I believe that Western society and culture influenced the birth of systematic, rational, dogmatic, way of thinking and doing theology. A particular cultural, social and historical moment called for the kind of liberation theology that we see in Latin America and in other parts of the world. In the same manner, theology we find in Asia often reflect our cultural, social and historical characteristics whether we realize or not. Thus, I would rather perceive different kinds of theology as attempts to express their Christian faith in the particular cultural, social and historical context. And each theological tradition has its own peculiarity and characteristics which can make contribution to the rest of the world, if it is developed with discernment and compassion. If I may say boldly using Dr. Chun's terminology, God is God of Orthodoxy, God of Orthopraxy and God of Orthopathy and much more. God enhances our thinking, doing, and feeling and our entire existence.

Just as there are two sides to a coin, there are positive and negative aspects in every theology. We may find negative aspects in Empatheology. If we lose sight of right thinking, right reasoning, and right doing, in order to emphasize empathic understanding of God, we might build our theology

on a sand rather than a rock. We must always critically examine our theology with reflection and discernment in order for our theology to become instrument of God's love and peace. Rudolf Otto's concept of God as *Das Heilige* (The Holy) was an attempt of examining the prevalent theology of his time in Western church and academia. He tried to correct the theological trend of his time which was too rationalistic and conceptual in nature. So he emphasized the metarationalistic nature of God by using such phrase as *mysterium, tremendum et fascinatum*, or holy Other. I believe it was Otto's way of correcting the theology of his time. Thus, I believe theology is an ongoing endeavor to discern the true nature of God and our existence before this God in Christ by positing and responding our ideas of God through Scripture, reason, tradition and experience as John Wesley insightfully instructed us.

Lastly, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Dr. Chun who gave me this opportunity to reflect on his precious paper. He caused me to think some vital issues of theology in relation to society, culture and history, for which I am truly grateful. I do hope whatever I said would not mar our friendship which I cherish deeply. Thank you, Dr. Chun!

## Scripture and Culture in Ministry

Mark Hatcher

Readings of the Bible from different personal, socio-cultural, ecclesial, and theological locations has made it clear that there are no neutral readings of the Bible. Every interpretation is affected in part by the aims and interests that readers bring to their engagement with the biblical text. Robert Morgan (Morgan with Barton 1988:8) observes that “some disagreements about what the Bible means stem not from obscurities in the texts, but from conflicting aims of the interpreters.” Anthony C. Thiselton (1992:588) notes that the interests of interpreters can affect the meaning people perceive to the extent that many right-wing conservatives and left-wing radicals feel like they can predict the results of biblical exegesis by “*socio-political typifications* of ‘conservative,’ ‘neo-liberal,’ ‘radical,’ ‘historical-critical,’ ‘moderate,’ or ‘pleasing the Board and the Constituency’ goals of interpretation.” The aims and interests that people bring to their study of the Bible influences such things as the contexts they examine, the questions they ask, and the resources they bring into interaction with the biblical text. It affects what textual phenomena is noticed and assessments of its relevance, importance, and validity.

Concerns that arise from our cultural backgrounds and concerns that arise from the ministries that we pursue will influence the aims and interests that we bring to our study of Scripture. This influence and the effect it has on our interpretation can be illustrated by the following three interpretations of the episode of Jesus’ interaction with a Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (John 4:4-42). The interpretations I have chosen are all ones that were readily accessible to me and do not intend to reflect the scope of possible ways diverse cultural backgrounds and ministry interests could affect what people perceive. They do help to make clear a number of issues that we can reflect on together.

In his commentary *The Gospel According to John*, Leon Morris (1971) pursues the aim of showing the historicity of the events presented in the gospel and the meaning that words and events would have in their

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historical and literary context.<sup>1</sup> Comments sprinkled throughout his commentary suggest that he pursues this aim with conservative evangelical ministry interests, such as supporting (and perhaps clarifying) orthodox doctrine and encouraging faith in Christ as personal savior. Morris (1971:254-285) perceives the episode at the well to be an actual historical event that presents the mission of Jesus to bring eternal life to all people, including the Samaritans who were hated by the Jews. He understands Jesus' interaction with the woman as personal evangelism. Jesus breaks with Jewish sensibilities and initiates interaction with the Samaritan woman, asking her for a drink. Through their interaction, particularly through Jesus revealing his knowledge of her sinful marital situation, Jesus brings the woman to faith that He is the Messiah. Her testimony in turn kindles faith among others in her town. Jesus stays for two more days with the result that more believe and come to know that He is the savior of the world.

In keeping with his aims and interests, the contexts Morris brings into play to arrive at this interpretation are largely historical, literary, and grammatical. He pays attention to the historical use of words and grammar, geographical features, historical customs that suggest a backdrop, relations with other parts of the Gospel of John, and parallels and contrasts with literature he considers to be present in the milieu. Though he does not directly acknowledge it, his periodic comments about the woman's motivation and emotional responses as she participates in the dialog suggests his employment of a personal evangelism narrative as a significant interpretive context.<sup>2</sup> Morris perceives Jesus to be moving the woman from resistance to faith.

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<sup>1</sup>Morris does not specifically state his aim. But in his discussion of history and theology (1971:44) he raises the issue of "whether John is telling us what he thinks about God, or whether he is telling us what God has done." Morris positions himself with the latter. He goes on to say that "what is required here is evidence. And the evidence is that where he can be tested John is remarkably accurate." Throughout his commentary, Morris brings forth such evidence. In his discussion of background (1971:60) he states that "we must know the kind of milieu in which author moved if we are to be sure we understand his meaning." Throughout his commentary he presents what he thinks is relevant grammatical, literary, and historical background for interpreting the meaning of sayings and events recorded in the gospel.

<sup>2</sup>In a footnote (1971:254 note 13) Morris does suggest his use of an evangelism narrative when he quotes with approval Ephrem the Syrian's summary of the event: "Jesus came to the fountain as a hunter... He threw a grain before one pigeon that He might catch the whole flock...At the beginning of the conversation He did not make Himself known to her...but first she caught sight of a thirsty man, then a Jew, then a Rabbi, afterwards a prophet, last of all the Messiah. She tried to get the better of the thirsty man, she showed her dislike of the Jew, she heckled the Rabbi, she was swept off her feet by the prophet, and she adored the Christ."

Sandra M. Schneiders (1995) pursues the aim of exposing and critiquing the ideology that dominates most interpretations of the text (she only examines western scholars) and constructing an alternative interpretation that realizes the liberating potential of the text for women and for society. She pursues this aim with feminist interests in a ministry of liberating oppressed women through the transformation of society, liberating the biblical text from its participation in the oppression of women, and transforming the church from supporting the oppression of women to the discipleship of equals. Based on the silence of the Synoptic Gospels in regard to a Samaritan mission and the recounting of what appears to be the first evangelism of the Samaritans in Acts 8, Schneiders understands the episode to be a symbolic encounter rather than a historical one. She further supports this by the implausibility of a peasant woman marrying and divorcing five times. She perceives the purpose of the story to be the recognition of marginalized Samaritan Christians as full disciples and the establishment of the equality of the Samaritan Christians with the Jewish Christians in the Johannine community. The dialogue between Jesus and the woman is understood as the New Bridegroom (Jesus) “wooing” Samaria (the woman) to enter into full covenant fidelity in the New Israel. The dialogue reveals to the woman Jesus’ messianic identity in terms of Samaritan theology. Jesus presents Himself as one greater than the patriarch Jacob, as the new prophet like Moses who reveals true worship that transcends Jewish and Samaritan divisions, and as the “I am” of the Mosaic revelation.

The contexts Schneiders examines and employs to arrive at her interpretation are largely literary and intertextual. She observes how the episode follows a biblical pattern of meeting future spouses at a well (Genesis 24:10-61, 29:1-20, Exodus 2:16-22). She sees the location of the episode in a Cana to Cana sequence (John 2-4) which includes the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11) and John’s words about bride and bridegroom (John 3:27ff) to be further support for the possibility of a marital “wooing” motif. Jesus’ declaration that the woman (Samaria) has had five husbands and currently has no husband fits prophetic use of marriage infidelity language for denunciations of false worship (Hosea 2:2). The woman’s evangelism of the town following her conversation with Jesus fits the pattern of the word of one person bringing another to Jesus who then comes to believe in Him because of Jesus’ own word (John 1:35-39, 41-42, 44-51). Schneiders uses a historically reconstructed narrative of tensions in the Christian community between Samaritans and Jews as the situation she sees the episode to be addressing. She (1995:366) makes a point to say that her interpretation “allows the woman to function symbolically and theologically rather than merely sexually in the episode.” It “seems to



make better sense of the pericope than the hypothesis of a long digression on the woman's morals for the sole purpose of displaying Jesus' preternatural knowledge."

Bruce Bradshaw (2002) pursues the aim of interpreting the story from the perspective of the narrative of Christian redemption. He pursues this aim with interests in a ministry of community development that transforms oppressive cultural narratives and the social structures they support so that they bear the values of the narrative of Christian redemption. Bradshaw (2002:153-156) perceives the episode to be a redemptive historical event where Jesus challenges the cultural narrative of the Samaritan woman's community and empowers its transformation. In Bradshaw's perception of this narrative, women in that historical setting depended on marriage for economic support. The foundation of a woman's worth lay in her ability to bear a child. A man could and often would divorce a woman who could not bear children. The woman Jesus met at the well had repeatedly married because of her dependence upon men for economic support. Due to infertility she had been repeatedly divorced and was forced to finally live with a man without the dignity of marriage. She was an embarrassment to her family and community and was so ostracized that she came to the well at noon, several hours after the other women came to draw water and socialize. Jesus' interactions with her at the well empowered her to receive a new identity through the narrative of Christian redemption that restored her dignity and worth. When Jesus asked her about her husband and told her that she had had five husbands and was currently living with one who was not her husband, He was exposing the social injustice of the community rather than her immorality. It was a way of affirming her and confronting the injustice of her situation. The woman was transformed through her encounter with Jesus and received a new identity. She was empowered to return to her community and convince them and herself of her new identity in the narrative of Christian redemption. She challenged the community that she was worthy of inclusion within it, thereby initiating transformation in the community narrative.

Bradshaw employs at least three contexts to help shape his perception of the episode. He uses historical materials that indicate the role of women and the importance of child-bearing in first century Palestine. He enlists a cultural narrative pattern existing in many contemporary peasant villages to help construct the cultural narrative he thinks existed in the Samaritan village. He also draws upon his understanding of the narrative of Christian redemption to guide his perception of the sequence of the episode.

All three of the above interpretations were written by scholars with western cultural heritage and reflect academic dimensions of that heritage in the way they examine biblical materials and construct their interpretations. They also all address concerns that are in part raised and structured by their cultural frameworks, i.e., the concern for personal evangelism, the concern for liberating women from oppression, and the concern for transformation of communities so that people bear the identity and are characterized by the values given to them by the kingdom of God. The diversity of their interpretations raises a number of issues in regard to the intersection of Scripture with culture and ministry. I will just name two that have embedded within them a complex of issues:

**1. Do the interests of God and the way those interests are expressed in Scripture permit, encourage, and/or give validity to more than one interpretation of a biblical text?**

The episode of Jesus' interaction with the Samaritan woman only provides limited details, prompting all three of the above interpretations to fill in additional details in order for the passage to speak to their cultural and ministry concerns. For example, the text does not explicitly say whether or not the woman was sexually immoral, whether she divorced or was divorced by her husbands, whether she was unable to have children, or whether the episode is representative or symbolic. Is the text written in a way that invites "gaps" in the text to be filled in by those reading them? Are the gaps an invitation to interweave our world (culture and ministry) with the world of the text and to respond in our world to the call of the text? May John 4 validly be understood by some readers to be calling them to be personally evangelized by Jesus and become His disciples in our world? May it validly be understood by others to be calling us to accept the full discipleship Jesus gives to the marginalized (Samaritans, women, etc.) in our community? May it validly be understood by still others as a call to recognize and enter into Jesus' transformation of our communities (that victimize people such as infertile women) so that people bear the identity and are characterized by the values given to them by the kingdom of God?

**2. What interpretation strategies will permit God and the interests of Scripture to stimulate and constrain the questions, resources, and engagements we bring to our interpretation of a biblical text so that the interpretation facilitates a God-directed ministry in our culture?**

All three interpretations have employed selected personal experiences in a culture, elements of tradition, and reasoning strategies to construct their interpretations. Do the biblical text, the Spirit of God, and the experience of the Christian community (both local and global, past and

present) provide cues, questions, patterns, and insights that can guide our perception of and engagement with what is being said in a biblical passage? Do the various communication modes (e.g., narrative, instruction, hymnic, prophetic, experiential, etc.) found in Scripture call for ways of engaging with texts that permit the mode to bring about its communicative effect? Are there environments that we should create (through prayer, singing, community interaction, etc.) that can facilitate our listening to what God is saying to us through the Scripture? Are there questions such as “What is God doing in this text?” or “What response from us is this text seeking to elicit?” that are of primary importance to the interests of God and Scripture? Should we initially seek to suspend our experience (both cultural and ministry) or actively employ it as a resource for picking up cues that guide our listening to God and the biblical text?

These two questions do not exhaust the issues raised by these interpretations. You may also know of other ways that John 4 has been interpreted that raises further questions. I offer the above as a means to provide a concrete focus to initiate dialog.

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# **The Scriptures as the Book of Sacred Drama of God's Holy People:**

## **Interpreting the Scriptures in Japanese Context**

Ishida, Manabu

### **I. Interpreting the Scriptures Today**

#### **A. An Alternative Way of Reading the Scriptures**

As Stephen Bevans remarks, it is often said that the contextualization of theology, or according to the purpose of this paper, that of biblical hermeneutics, is “a theological imperative” [Bevans, 1]. Traditionally, biblical hermeneutics has functioned as a theological tool to explicate the central theme of the gospel. In this sense, the major task of hermeneutics has been to extract the essence of the gospel from the Scriptural texts, and, that of theology was to systematize and/or theorize what was thought to be the contents of the gospel. Historical and critical methods of biblical study in the modern period brought about some difficult issues in the church. Though they were highly productive methodologies, the critical study of the Scriptures created an abyss between pastoral usage of the Scriptures as the canon of the church, and scholarly research in academic institutions. This is one of the issues we are facing today in biblical educational field. In spite of the gap between churches and universities, the traditional concept of the Scriptures was presupposed in common. Scripture was treated as the source of the authentic teachings of the gospel. Scripture was, in the western Christian world, the sacred book from which all Christian doctrines and ethics are drawn.

Today, such a highly theological proposition is losing its plausibility. It is crucial for modern biblical students to find an alternative way of re-establishing credibility of the Scriptures, unless a church become more sectarian in its nature in the way that they are virtually separated from the realities of the rest of the world and retreat into their own peculiar worldview. Even in the western society, the relevancy of the Christian worldview and its value systems are in eclipse. The Scriptures is, at best, one of the great literary masterpieces of the world. It is needless to say that most of the Asian people with no Christian background either socially or personally, have never shared such a religious milieu in any way. If, as

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George Lindbeck defines, “to become a Christian involves learning the story of Israel and of Jesus well enough to interpret and experience oneself and one’s world in its terms” [Lindbeck, 34], we Asian people have to have faith in the Scriptures first, then to get accustomed to the contents of it, then to accept its plausibility, before we become Christians! The faith in the Scriptures as the Word of God, which has long been presumed in the Christian world but is simply not in the non-Christian world, is needed prior to believing in Christ, because the doctrine of Christ is based on the authority of the Bible. Thus, a set of faith, the faith in the Bible and in Christ, is required for people in the non-Christian world like Asia to become Christians, as a verse of a famous hymn says: “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

Today, the task of biblical hermeneutics is considered not to extract the kernel of the gospel from its own cultural framework. So called “translation model” of theology [Bevans, 27] is not a realistic theological model any more, simply because there is no such “kernel” or “core” of the gospel distinguishable from culture. The gospel is, in its very nature, inculturated. It means that the gospel is manifested in the real life of human beings in a certain culture, society, and history. There is no culturally and/or socially “neutral” gospel. We cannot presuppose, contrary to Paul G. Hiebert, “the gospel belongs to no culture” [Hiebert, 30]. We should speak, not of “contextualization of the gospel” but of “contextualized gospel.” The gospel is incarnated in the reality of human life and experience. The gospel that is manifested in the real life of people is the only gospel we can encounter. This fact indicates that “reasoning is not the original form of theological expression, which is above all that of narrative” [Metz, 252f]. The Scripture is, in its very nature, the book of sacred narratives of God’s people. It tells us the stories of the activities of God among the biblical people, in their way of life and experience as God’s holy people in their particular socio-historical realities. If God’s revelation is, in its very nature, manifested in human experience, is understood by human interpretation, and is transmitted through human language and behavior, the expression of the revelation must be cultural and linguistic, i.e., in form of narratives. In this paper, I will use the term “sacred drama” rather than “narrative” or “story,” as I explain later. Reading the Scriptures as the book of sacred drama of God’s holy people makes it possible for the modern readers to correlate the biblical drama with our own realities in dialogical way.

## **B. The Scriptures as the Book of Sacred Drama**

In every human society, narrative form has been a common way of exchanging and transmitting people’s experience, wisdom, fear, belief and hope. It is particularly so in Japanese culture. Among such stories, human

experiences of God or revelatory acts of God were considered sacred stories because they told extraordinary events that transcend human understanding and experience. God's revelation is essentially a new experience and/or a manifestation of what has never yet been. It comes to humans not in a form of theory or theology but in the life experience of God's people. In this sense, the revelation can only be introduced and communicated in narrative form, as Johann Baptist Metz suggests [Metz, 253].

I chose the term "drama" rather than "narrative" or "story" because the term expresses the nature of the biblical texts more properly. The biblical texts are recited again and again in Christian rituals in a way that the events and experiences of the biblical people are reproduced and appreciated in the imagination of the congregation in highly dramatic manner. The readers of the text are initiated to seek correlation between the biblical drama and their own drama in the way that their life is transformed and formulated as God's holy people in their own days. The readers of the drama find themselves, who they really are, through the sacred drama. In this sense, it can properly be said that the text interprets the interpreter [Perrin, 181]. Our life is a drama that is transformed and formulated through imaginative participation in the biblical drama. This is how drama is supposed to function. A certain event or experience is reenacted, transcending time and space in drama. The readers empathize with certain characters of the sacred drama, often with the protagonists. What is narrated in the Scriptures is the drama of God's holy people, the stories of how they were called, transformed, succeeded or failed, and what they hoped for. We virtually participate in the drama in the way that we empathize ourselves with God's holy people in the sacred drama. The readers are simulating, in the drama, how to behave or not to behave, and what to hope or not to hope. The biblical drama becomes the model for us to live our own drama as God's holy people. We are actually re-experiencing the sacred drama in our own socio-historical context.

Here, I would like to recall an attention of the readers that I am presenting "an alternative way of interpretation." I do not negate all other hermeneutical possibilities and methodologies, much less the canonicity of the Scriptures. I simply would like the readers to know that drama has functioned as a quite important media to transmit and let people realize the depth of human experiences of God, religious truth and wisdom in most of the cultures, including that of the Japanese.

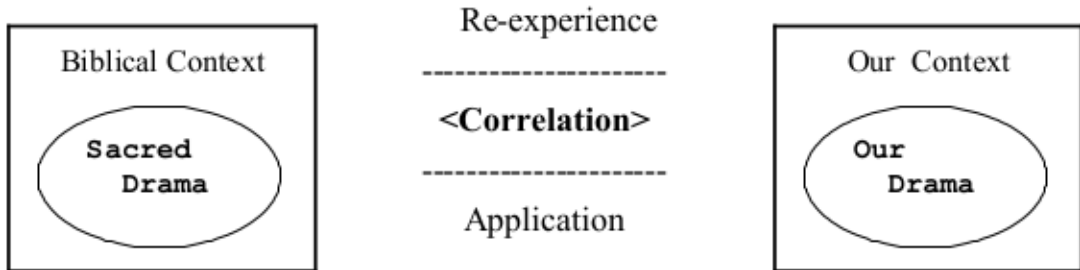
## **II. Interpreting the Scriptures as Sacred Drama**

### **A. Function of the Sacred Drama**

There are at least three strata or stages in reading the Scriptures as sacred drama. The first stratum is a historical event as an original drama. This stratum is not accessible to us in a strict sense. What we read in the Scriptures is the second stratum which is the result of re-structurization(s) of the original drama, through a series of interpretation and re-presentation in faith community/communities. HAGA Tsutomu calls this biblical story as the second stratum "Proto-Story" [Haga, 44-51]. Though our main hermeneutical concern is the second stratum as a sacred drama, it is in the third stratum, in our life experience that the meaning of the sacred drama is manifested. A sacred drama in the Scriptures as proto-story has its own historicity and sociality in it. There is, in other words, a context of the faith community behind every text. A drama was interpreted and re-presented again and again in the faith community and transformed the community to live as God's people in particular reality. It means that the historical context of the text is crucial to appreciate the story as sacred drama. Every drama in the Scriptures has its own context. The sacred drama is written, not to tell what had really happened in phenomenological sense, but to express that there was the hope to be held, belief to be reminded, life to be followed in the faith community. A sacred drama has its own historical and social context in which the drama expresses and transmits such faith, hope, and the way of life. Critical knowledge of the text is, therefore, important. It is the critical study that provides us the knowledge of the settings and historical background of the drama. Here, historical and critical study of the Scriptures has its important function in order that we appreciate the drama. It will relieve us from treating the Scriptural texts as if they are a historical source of Christian doctrines and ethics.

The main theme of the sacred drama is to narrate how God's holy people lived in relation to God in a certain socio-historical context. The task of biblical hermeneutics is to let the readers re-experience the sacred drama in a historical context in order to correlate the biblical drama with our own drama in our socio-cultural context. We may not experience the death and resurrection of Jesus, betrayal of Peter, miracles of Jesus and so on, as what had really happened. What we do is to participate in these stories in a dramatic way that we have quasi-experience of the sacred events. The effective correlation requires good analytical knowledge of both biblical and our own socio-cultural contexts. Thus the theme of the sacred drama is applied to the life of present readers in the way that they too act as God's holy people.

### *Biblical Hermeneutic as Sacred Drama*



To correlate the sacred drama with our drama, we need not only to know the biblical context but also to know our own socio-cultural context. The sacred drama must be applied to our own life in the way that the gospel is incarnated. Only then is the process of hermeneutic concluded. Every drama requires the readers to appreciate and apply it by correlation. The correlation of the biblical drama and that of our own becomes meaningful to us when we carefully analyze both contexts. When we have basic understanding of each context, that of the biblical drama and of our own, we will be able to recognize the relevancy and applicability of the sacred drama to our life.

The sacred drama is, in its nature, a communal story that was formulated and transmitted in faith community. It is the church that has read and appreciated the story as the sacred drama in the Christian rituals. It is the task of the church as the hermeneutical community to read and interpret the text as the sacred drama. The readers re-experience the sacred drama in their imagination and apply it to their life so that they too are encouraged, edified, and guided as God's holy people in their socio-cultural context.

To read the Scriptures as sacred drama is, therefore, not a hermeneutical method relevant to specific culture or region peculiar to a certain culture. It is not a Japanese way of interpretation. It is universal and applicable to any culture. Minjung theology in Korea, for example, is one of the best hermeneutical examples of reading the Scriptures as sacred drama. As a matter of fact, most liberation theologies are based on the direct correlation of the biblical story and the people's experience. But, this interpretational method takes place only in a concrete socio-cultural and historical context. In other words, reading the Scriptures as sacred drama is a highly contextual theological activity. It is, by its very nature, contextual.

In the next section, I will use 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 as a sample text as sacred drama from a modern Japanese socio-historical view.



## **B. Reading 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 as the Sacred Drama**

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, Paul is interpreting the historical narrative of the Israelites' journey in the desert after the Exodus, as a sacred drama.

Paul calls the Corinthian Christians "the saints" (1:2), nonetheless their condition was far from what the term "saints" would imply. The Christians in Corinth failed to live sanctified lives as members of the body of Christ. They were split into some groups by sectarianism and some moral issues. While some of them were proud of their spiritual gifts, they had neither spiritual unity nor mutuality. Paul reminds the Corinthians about the experience of Israelites in the desert "as an example" (10:11). The Israelites are, according to Paul, "our ancestors" (v.1) by faith. It is obvious that the Gentile Christians are included in the first person plural "our." The journey of the Israelites is correlated to the spiritual journey of the Corinthians in a typological way to indicate that the Corinthian Christians too are traveling in a desert as God's holy people. Paul reviews the story of the Israelites as a sacred drama in which the Corinthian Christians appreciate the experience. What they re-experience as the drama is the story of failure. Paul describes how and why the Israelites failed in desert. Then Paul applies the drama to the life of the Corinthians so that they would learn how to live their own drama as God's holy people. Since the drama of the Israelites is that of failure, it was "written down to instruct us" (v.11). The drama illustrates the failure of the Israelites and the horrible results of it. The Corinthian Christians can realize the miserable result they would face sooner or later by appreciating the sacred drama. They will fall into the similar fate if they do not learn from the experience of the Israelites.

Four problems prevented the Israelites from traveling in the desert as God's holy people successfully. They committed idolatry (εἰδωλολάτραι), indulged in immorality (πορνεία), tempted (ἐκπειράζω) Christ, and they grumbled (γογγύζω). Those were not the issues peculiar to the Israelites. The Corinthian Christians were in essentially the same crises as the people of God. That is why Paul calls those problems the "examples for us" (τύποι ἡμῶν). What the Christians in Corinth were experiencing is not new at all. It is a rather well known old story of their spiritual ancestors in the Scriptures. Thus Paul can claim that the failures of the Israelites are "examples for us." The nature and the result of the difficulties in Corinth would be understood in the light of the correlation between the experiences of both congregations. The Corinthian Christians can re-experience the failure of the Israelites by appreciating the sacred drama. The application of this quasi-experience to the life of the Corinthians would instruct them not to fall into the same failure in their

own journey as God's holy people. This is what Paul expected to happen in Corinth. But Paul is not referring to mere similarities between the Israelites' and Corinthians' experiences. The narrative of Israel is an example in an eschatological sense. "The old Testament narrative has an eye to the last age" [Conzelmann, 168].

If we are God's holy people traveling in a desert today, how should we read the text of 1 Corinthians? In order to correlate the biblical drama with our own drama, we should discern our socio-cultural and historical context.

### **C. Japanese Context**

Let me describe the historical context of the Japanese Christians briefly. For almost eighty years from 1868 to 1945, Japan was under the control of a highly militaristic totalitarian government. The imperial system was the center of Japanese polity and the emperor was regarded as the national god (idolatry). Shinto was the state religion in a way that the emperor was the divine father of all citizens. The imperial troops invaded all Asian countries to establish the so called "Co-Prosperity Sphere," i.e. colonization of the regions, to exploit people politically and economically (immorality). Christian faith was only allowed under the condition that it did not disturb the social order and national polity. Emperor worship was forced for all the citizens to promote national unity and loyalty to the nation. Christians were labeled spies of the United States and England. In such difficult circumstances, the church in Japan failed to stand firm in its faith. The Japanese church developed a kind of contextual theology that synthesized Christian doctrines and the national polity of Japan. The church supported the imperial system and taught that Japan was the kingdom of God. The church under persecution separated spiritual matter from secular matter so that it could easily avoid from being involved in the socio-political struggle. The church taught that Christian faith was to do only with individual and spiritual matters. It made possible for the Japanese Christians to consider themselves faithful Christians, while supporting the military government and its colonialism (temptation). They eagerly supported the national policy in the name of Christ. It was nothing but to make Christ the servant of the nation. Japanese Christians had failed to live in the way that God's holy people should have walked. Today, we hardly can say that it is just an old story because we are experiencing the same difficulties that our ancestors had experienced. Neo-nationalism is gradually gaining power in Japan. National pacifism is rapidly fading away. The society as a whole is becoming more rightist, and militarism is gaining wider support. This is the present social context of Japanese churches. So, the experience of the Christians in Japan up to the end of

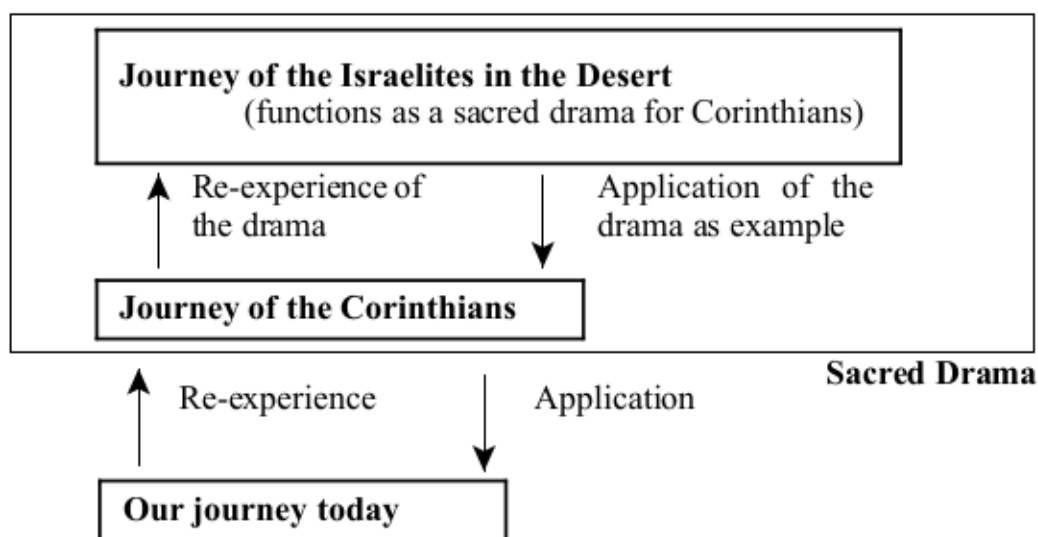
World War II is an example for us just as Paul used the story of the Israelites as example for the Corinthians.

We are still traveling in a desert today. Our difficulties and temptations would be well understood in the light of the sacred drama of ancient Israelites and Corinthian Christians. The issue is not mere individual morality and holiness. It is to do with our communal ethics and socio-political behavior.

#### D. Our Agenda

Historically speaking, the church and the state in the Christendom were in complementary relationship with each other. The authorities of both the church and the state were believed to come from God, the former to rule the spiritual realm, and the latter, the secular. Secular authority was considered to be, in western society, essentially good in its nature. In Japan and in most of the Asian countries, we cannot take that simple presupposition. Japanese Christians paid extremely expensive tuition to learn how the government and the society could be structurally evil, and how the church would theologially and biblically justify the cooperation with the structural evil, if we were not aware of the danger. The churches in Japan are, as were the Israelites and the Christian community in Corinth, traveling in a desert today.

As the story of the Israelites in the desert was a sacred drama to instruct Christians in Corinth, the Pauline text is, for us, a sacred drama to instruct us as examples. It will lead us to construct a theology of repentance, and alert us to continue the journey of God's holy people.



Our journey is both personal and communal. We are traveling as God's holy people in an essentially anti-Christian society. Our struggle to

live a holy life in such a society cannot be reflected without considering its socio-political dimensions. Holiness and social justice, sanctification and pacifism are inseparable especially for Christians in Japan.

The task of biblical hermeneutics is to correlate between the Scriptural sacred drama in the biblical context, and our sacred drama in our context. Such hermeneutical activity must be contextual. Or rather, it can only be contextual, because there is no hermeneutic without a particular context of those who engage in hermeneutics. If the church is the community of memory and hope, and the Scriptures the book of sacred drama of the holy community that experienced God and God's revelatory activities, we are to succeed the memory and hope, and the sanctified life of the holy people of God, through correlation of the sacred drama of the Scriptures and our own drama.

Finally, one of the important task for those who engage in biblical hermeneutics today is, to restore credibility and authenticity of the revelatory nature of the Scriptures. It must be done without retreating into a sectarian plausibility structure which can be accepted only by the members of such sectarian community. In this sense, historical-critical study of the Scriptures is important.

Let me remind the readers that the method of correlation is not a "Japanese method." It is, rather, a universal. But the result of the correlation must be, by its very nature, highly contextual.

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*A Response to***Dr. Ishida, Manabu's Paper, "The Scriptures as the Book of sacred Drama of God's Holy people: Interpreting the Scriptures in Japanese Context"**

Gilbert Montecastro

The multiple contexts in Asia and the Pacific suggest and require multi-forms of biblical hermeneutics and multi-reading of a biblical text. One reason is that hermeneutics cannot be confined to a specific methodology. For instance, in addition to the traditional historico-grammatical approach are other approaches which are necessitated by the very nature of the text.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, hermeneutics is not confined and provincialized to biblical studies: it is a long dominant concept and pursuit in philosophy as the latter searches for meaning and understanding of life and existence, hence, being.<sup>2</sup> One dominant theme of post modernity is respect to personal ideas and understanding—precisely because one can no longer claim a totalized perspective of reality.<sup>3</sup> Human being that is thinking is situated and limited by his or her own being-there. Thus, humans are finite, and to understand each other's dialogue is necessary.

Dr. Ishida proposes an alternative way of reading the Scriptures, that is, reading the Scriptures as a drama, a literary approach whereby contemporary readers correlate the biblical drama with his or her own communal and existential realities. The goal of this eclectic approach is

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<sup>1</sup>See Jonathan V. Exiomo, "The Significance of Paul Ricoeur's Theory of Text and Interpretation for Selected Christian and Missionary Alliance of the Philippines Pastor's Orientations to the Bible Taken as Religious Text Necessitating the Task of Interpretation" (Th.D. diss., Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary, 2002), 86, 129, 159-164.

<sup>2</sup>Eunjoo Mary Kim noted hermeneutics is not confined to biblical hermeneutics. It is used in the broader sense that is in philosophy, literature, aesthetics and theology (Eunjoo Mary Kim, "Hermeneutics and Asian American Preaching," *Semeia* 90/91: 271).

<sup>3</sup>For an analogy, see Roy I. Sano, "Shifts in Reading the Bible: Hermeneutical Moves Among Asian Americans," in *Semeia* 90/91 (2002): 117.

transformation. Readers become participants as the drama is being “read.” To suggest that the Scriptures be read, as drama does not negate the significance of understanding the historical context of the text, that is, to know how the faith community of the text experienced God in its particular context. However, this endeavor is meaningful when the contemporary reader/interpreter is also aware of his or her socio-cultural and political context. It is to this effect that Kim writes, “The preacher-interpreter is not a private, independent reader of a biblical text, but a representative of a community of faith that is eager to hear the word of God in its particular context.”<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Ishida demonstrates his methodology choosing I Cor. 10:1-13 as the model which he correlates with a Japanese socio-historical perspective, employing three strata in reading the Scriptures as a sacred drama. The first stratum is the Israelite context, which is remote. The second stratum is Paul and the Corinthians. Paul utilized the story of the Israelites in the desert, as it was a story of failure, in order to teach the Corinthian believers the lesson from the story of the Israelites. Thus, Paul correlated the Corinthian’s spiritual dilemma with that of Israel. On the third stratum, Dr. Ishida brought into the story his own socio-political and historical context, making a parallel of his story with that of Israel. He noted that the issue and problem were not the same: it was not “mere individual morality and holiness,” but it has to do with the Japanese Christians’ “communal ethics and socio-political behavior.”

Such correlation is commendable for two reasons. First, Dr. Ishida shows a dynamic interplay of pre-critical and post-critical nature of understanding, with a “fusion of horizons,”<sup>5</sup> that of his and that of the text. Such endeavor was honest and void of pretension, for each interpreter of the Scriptures cannot be void of “bias” regardless of the claims and assertions to that effect. Second, Dr. Ishida demonstrates a critical analysis of his own context. He lives in his “ministry-world” and lives with his people. He is aware of their story as a people, and he used the text with a view of “correcting” their ethics and behavior with an intention to bring about a correlation between holiness and social justice, and sanctification and pacifism.” As a method of interpretation, reading the Scriptures as drama assumes that the “first” reading of the text brings the reader into the world of the text. The initial correlation that takes place then is an entry point that leads to a greater awareness that what one reads has greater

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<sup>4</sup>Kim, *Semeia* 90/91: 272-3.

<sup>5</sup>Anthony T. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 333.

correlation with that of his or her perceived context. Hence, this presupposes the dynamic nature of the biblical text in its essence.

As a method, reading the Scriptures as Sacred drama has limitations. It is my assumption, however, that this method sits at par with others on credibility. Because the ultimate goal of hermeneutics is that of transformation into Christ likeness, drama has to be given credence. Dr. Ishida testifies to a life that is in grace, enlightened to see the “dramatic” nature of the biblical text in a way that his people, and perhaps many of us here, identify with. Limitations do not negate validity. Rather, they evoke freedom and respect. The limits will be considered accordingly using an analogical framework.

In reading the Scriptures as a drama of God and God’s people, a certain analogical relationship is given.<sup>6</sup> First in this analogical relationship is that correspondence. As indicated, this relationship emphasizes similarities. As Dr. Ishida notes, there was an identification of the biblical story with that of the Japanese Christians. By reading a drama in Israel’s story, Japanese Christians, with their own distinctive history, are enabled to see a direct correspondence with their own story. He agrees that the point of correlation the Apostle Paul identified can also be said of the Japanese Christians. The second is that of synthetic relationship. This relationship emphasizes shared and interrelated characteristics. Part of the biblical drama was viewed by Dr. Ishida as part of his socio-political context. Despite the “historical gap”, some interrelated features are apparent. The third is that of contrastive relationship. This, obviously, focuses on the differences and discontinuity. The biblical drama can stand by itself, and while not everything in the “cultural drama” needs to be correlated, the socio-political context too can exist independently. The goal here is to appraise the differences and not to craft unseemingly parallels in the story. This area can be an entry point for “eisegesis,” but hardly could be “judged” as such when the interpreter brings his or her world and the world of the text together in honest pursuit to “enliven” God’s word to the hearers.

With its aim at transformation, the reading of the Scriptures as drama is an appropriate alternative. We, in Asia and the Pacific, have been seeking for ways and methods to articulate and communicate the Wesleyan understanding of holiness. Although not always, our statements remain

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<sup>6</sup>I am indebted to my mentor, Dr. Tereso Casino, for exposing me to the role of this “model” in reading and interpreting the Scriptures.

academic and propositional following Aristotelian logic.<sup>7</sup> Our people understand it by head, although confusion remains. However, there seems to be a lack of drive and pursuit to holy living, and connection and association with biblical text. Dr. Ishida challenges us to retell the story of salvation, or, if I may say, the “story of holiness” which might bring our people to a quest and hungering for holy living and thereupon be filled (Matt 5:6).<sup>8</sup> If, and because, reading the Scriptures as sacred drama motivates Nazarenes in Asia and the Pacific to shun sin—be it social, political, religious, personal and communal—and pursue obedience and growth into Christ likeness, which is the fulfillment of being, then as method it deserves respect.

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<sup>7</sup>Obviously, many biblical texts are propositional in nature, such as some of Paul’s letters, some of the Psalms and Proverbs, just to name a few. Sano considers the “selection” of texts as “functional canon.” See, Sano, *Semeia* 90/91 (2002): 105, 117.

<sup>8</sup>See, Michael Lodahl, *The Story of God: Wesleyan Theology and Biblical Narrative* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1994).



*A Response to***Dr. Manabu Ishida, “The Scriptures as the Book of Sacred Drama of God’s Holy People: Interpreting the Scriptures in Japanese Context”**

Simson Sihombing

**Introduction**

Reading Ishida’s paper reminds me of the experience of learning *Biblical Hermeneutics* and *Asian Christian Theology* at Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary in Taytikling, Taytay, Rizal, Philippines. Moreover, one of the subjects that I am teaching now in Indonesian Nazarene Bible College is *Biblical Hermeneutics*. So, these experiences of learning help me to respond to this paper. This paper is really intriguing for me to give a response to. Sometimes, I question myself: “Am I just Master of Divinity qualified to give a response to Doctorate paper?” Nevertheless, I thank the committee who trusts and invited me to do this.

For practical needs such as delivering a sermon, I agree with Dr. Manabu Ishida’s contextual interpretation. However, substantially and normatively, in preparing a sermon and Biblical Hermeneutics, I may be different with Ishida. Here are my responses to Ishida’s paper, which will be divided in two parts.

**I. The Presupposition to the Bible as the Sacred Drama**

Generally speaking, the Bible is known as the story of God’s people. It is reasonable if Dr. Manabu Ishida agrees with Johan Baptist Metz who says that the major theme of the Bible is the book of the narratives of God’s People. This is true just from the human view. Moreover theologically, in my presupposition, the Bible is not only the drama of God’s people, but also the drama of God. Properly said, “The Bible is the drama of God with His People.”

Dr. Manabu Ishida also presupposes that the very nature of the gospel is inculturated. But the task of biblical hermeneutics is considered not to be to extract the kernel of the gospel from its own cultural framework. Therefore, he speaks “contextualized gospel” (not context-

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ualization of the gospel). So, the gospel that is manifested in the real life of people is the only gospel that is encountered. It is true that the gospel (the good news of God in the incarnation of Jesus Christ) firstly or originally emerged in Bethlehem, in the midst of Jewish Culture, not in our own culture, but we still need to extract both context and text of the gospel itself because context and text of the gospel cannot be separated, though they can be distinguished. The fact is, God gives Jesus not only for the Jews but also for all people in the world (John 3:16). The gospel exists not only in the Jewish culture, but also in Greco-Roman culture until all over the world. So, the gospel is above the culture of all people. It is universal. The message of the gospel is “contextualizing,” not “contextual” or “contextualized,” into the culture. There is one message of the Gospel for the whole world. Therefore, the first task of biblical hermeneutics is to find the original intention of the writers of the gospel in their own context, and then, to expose or make it become significant to all of today’s cultures. It is very dangerous to reduce the gospel to mere cultural or local or personal experience, such as in “contextual gospel,” because there will be a chameleon gospel (theology), changing color of the gospel according to cultural context, as Dr. Moltmann said.<sup>1</sup>

I can understand Dr. Ishida’s contextual interpretation. All of us have a presupposition/preunderstanding before interpreting the Bible. As the Bible emerges in the process of the history of God’s People, Israel and Christians in their own context as readers/interpreters of the Bible also emerge in their own context. Because of that, every interpreter has a presupposition which influences him to interpret the Bible. Therefore, I agree with M. Silva, who says, “The moment we look at a text we contextualize it, but a self-awareness of that fact opens up the possibility of modifying our point of reference (preunderstanding) in the light of contradictory fact. It is possible for readers to study and determine the original meaning of the text.”<sup>2</sup> G. R. Osborne says that when readers and the text contact each other, preunderstanding, which is the starting point, can change to the understanding in “his hermeneutics spiral.”<sup>3</sup> For example, when my brother-in-law was a teenager, his older brother questioned him: “Who was Jesus Christ?” He answered: “Jesus Christ

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<sup>1</sup>Shoki Coe, “Contextualization as the Way Toward Reform,” in *Asian Christian Theology* (Quezon City: New Day Publisher, 1976), 52.

<sup>2</sup>John H. Hayes, Ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, s.v. “Evangelical Biblical Interpretation” (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 360.

<sup>3</sup>William W. Klein, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word Publisher, 1993), 113-116.

was a *Batak* male,” one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia. This answer could happen because the brother is a *Batak* male also. But when my brother-in-law knows the Gospel, his preunderstanding about who is Jesus Christ may be willingly tested and even become understanding. Now, he knows Jesus as the son of Mary, the Only Son of God, the Savior of all who believe in Him (John 3:16). This means our wrong preunderstanding must be willingly changed according to the original intention of the writer in the text of the Bible. So, William K. Klein says that in order to find the correct interpretation, an interpreter should have the correct presupposition of the nature of the Bible and of the interpreter and of the goal of hermeneutics.<sup>4</sup>

## II. The Tasks (or Goals) of Interpretation of the Scripture as the Sacred Drama

Dr. Manabu Ishida gives at least three strata in interpreting the Bible as the Sacred Drama:

a) *The first stratum is a historical event as an original drama, which is not accessible to us in the strict sense.*

Though we do not witness with our own bare eyes the historical events in the drama of the Bible, this is not to say that the Bible is just the theoretical narrative of God’s people. We must believe, acknowledge and say that the Drama of God with His people is really the historical events, otherwise, we are self-defeated about the authority of the Bible as the Word of God.

b) *The second stratum is the re-structuralization of the original drama through a series of interpretations and re-presentations in faith communities.*

Dr. Manabu Ishida agrees with HAGA Tsutomu about this second stratum as a sacred drama of the Bible (“Proto-Story”). It is true that we know the sacred drama of the Bible from the final form, such in the second stratum as the proto story. I agree with Dr. Manabu Ishida who says that the task of biblical hermeneutics here is first, to make historical-grammatical study for knowing the biblical context of the drama, and second, to let the interpreters re-experience the sacred drama in its historical context in order to be able to correlate or to apply it into the historical-social-cultural context of today’s readers or listeners. E. Hirsch says that the first goal of interpretation is to find the original intention of the writer in the biblical text, and then to make it become significant to

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 87-116.

various contexts of today.<sup>5</sup> Substantially and normatively, these two steps in the tasks of biblical hermeneutics are in order, inseparable, yet distinguishable. However, in modern biblical hermeneutics, in order to be relevant, contextual, dynamic, relevant “eisegesis” can be done first and then to “exegesis.” For practical needs such as in delivering a sermon, it is okay, but in substantive or normative way, it is different with “exegesis” first, then to “eisegesis.” I do not know whether Dr. Manabu Ishida applies first “eisegesis” (historical- social-cultural context of struggling Christian in Japan) and then to accord with the experience of Israel in the desert and the Christian Community in Corinth, or otherwise. The experience of Israel in the desert (1 Cor. 10:1-13) is not merely an example of warning, but also as the “message of God in that text” that is proclaimed and applied by St. Paul to the new situation in the Christian Community in Corinth. The text is not speaking about the struggling Christian Community in Corinth or the struggling Israel to the anti-Christian Government like in the Japanese Context, but about avoiding worshiping idols. So, this analogical model is incomparable. It seems to me that the method of Dr. Ishida’s interpretation is a kind of contextual interpretation, using first “eisegesis” and making “the text” of the Scriptures’ just as “referential” to the particular situation of social-cultural Christian in Japan. The strength of this contextual interpretation is that it is relevant, contextual, applicable and dynamic to the listeners. But its weaknesses tend to neglect the historical meaning of the text, and so it becomes subjective.

To become contextual, it is okay, but an interpreter must understand the text at most. Though there are some barriers for the readers to interpret the text of the Bible, such as the distance of geography, language of the Bible, etc., the Bible is still to be relevant to readers because it is not only historical, but also God’s book, where God has relations with His creation. A. Thiselton’s action theory begins with a “transformative power of the Bible,” which is able to change readers to the world of meaning and understanding. So, the Bible functions both as “static (absolute) propositional truth” and as “message” that is able to change the life of its readers and listeners.<sup>6</sup>

*c) The third stratum is that in our life experience, the meaning of the sacred drama is manifested.*

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<sup>5</sup>John Hayes, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, s.v. “Evangelical Biblical Interpretation,” by G. R. Osborne (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 360.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 360.

In this third stratum, I have a question: “Is the meaning of the sacred drama manifested in our life experience or in the Word of God? What are the relations between experience and the Word of God?” The meaning of the sacred drama is manifested in our life experience if our own experience is lighted and confirmed by the Word of God. I agree with Richard S. Taylor who says that our life-religious experiences, either personally or communally, as the second source (not primary sources) to interpret the Bible, must be in the light of the language of the Word of God because the Word (Language) of God precedes, explains and sharpens our life-religious experiences so that our life-religious experiences will not be mere subjective. So, the written Word of God takes priority over experience as an authority base for theology.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the meaning of the Bible as the sacred drama remains in the written Word of God; its significance may happen in our life-religious experiences.

### **Conclusion**

Generally speaking, for practical needs like in delivering a sermon, I agree with Ishida’s alternative way of contextual interpretation of the Scripture as the sacred (narrative) book, especially in the Old Testament, because I myself often do this kind of method in delivering a sermon in our pioneering church in order to be relevant, contextual and dynamic. Nevertheless, in preparing a sermon, I do first “exegesis” of the biblical context of the narrative (for example, the story of Yusuf’s forgiveness to his brothers), and then to correlate (expose) it, which is similar to today’s context of listeners. However, in the method of delivering a sermon, in order to be relevant, contextual, and dynamic, I can start from the historical-social context of today’s listeners and then to the biblical context, or I can mix/unite both of them. Besides knowing the biblical context, its correlation and application to our today’s context, in order to be thoughtful, powerful and life-transforming, the interpreter must exegete and expose the content or message of the narrative itself to listeners.

In my standing in biblical hermeneutics, I follow “the evangelical interpretation.” The means by which two goals of biblical hermeneutics (finding the original intended meaning of the text, and correlating it to the life of today’s readers and listeners) are accomplished are the classic grammatical-historical method supplemented by modern hermeneutical theory:

- 1) to have a correct and positive preunderstanding

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<sup>7</sup>Richard S. Taylor, *Biblical Authority and Christian Faith* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1980), 23-26.

- 2) to do exegetical methodology for finding the original intended meaning of the text
- 3) to study the background of the text
- 4) to use Biblical theology for discovering author's intention
- 5) to use Systematic Theology for making biblical theology which is descriptive, become normative for the Christian Theology and the life of the modern church.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>John H. Hayes, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, s.v. "Evangelical Biblical Interpretation" (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 360-361.

## Caution from Biblical Apostasy

### Matthew 13:24-30

Julie M. Detalo

*“In Christian faith whatever is new is not true; whatever is true is not new.”*  
~ John Wesley

Apostasy is simply defined as “departure from faith.” Back in the early centuries of the Christian church, when denominationalism was yet unknown to Christian vocabulary, apostasy was extremely considered a serious sin capable of excommunicating a believer from the Church. Back then, everyone was afraid to be excommunicated. Not now, however. Today an erring member in a certain church will just hop to a neighboring church to escape discipline. Sometimes the neighboring church will not even care to investigate the cause of the transfer but with open arms accommodate anyone, especially when one can teach Sunday School and pay a good amount of tithe.

In our time apostasy is more complex and subtle. It comes in many forms, e.g. music, scientific criticisms, modern theologies, Eastern ideas, Marxism and the like. The worse thing is that the battle is now fought not necessarily outside but within the parameters of the Church. Today there are highly respected church leaders “who suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Rom 1:18), i.e. church appointing gay leaders or churches that used to be forerunners of the message of holiness but now de-emphasizing holiness. “For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and foolish hearts were darkened.” Paul added, “Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools . . .” (vv.21-22).

We are gathered today as stewards of the great gospel of Jesus Christ that has the power to save and purify people from the bondage and penalty of sin. I think it is just appropriate for us to be reminded of the words uttered by our great theological father John Wesley, “In Christian faith whatever is new is not true, whatever is true is not new.” Paul reminded us from Galatians 1:8, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach

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a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned.” So serious, isn’t it? Why? Because the truth is, the Scripture is already complete with everything pertaining to faith. We do not need to add or subtract but simply commit to be faithful to the Scriptures.

Today let me identify one word that is threatening much of the gospel truth: SECULARISM, a subtle way of introducing worldliness inside the boundaries of our church. So subtle that we find secularism sprouting inside our churches without noticing it until its smell stinks. In the parable of the weeds, we find Jesus cautioning us of this subtle trick of the enemy. “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared” (Matt. 13:24-26, NIV).

Notice in this parable that the church is faced with an ongoing battle within. No matter how good our intentions are, how much we try to do good, we have to be aware that we have an active enemy. He is sowing weeds among the good seeds. God has wonderful plan for us, for our institutions, in our theological formulations, and for His Church. But together with this is the need to understand that the enemy has subtle schemes (Eph. 6:11). Therefore let us, with all sincerity and sensitivity in God’s Spirit remain faithful to the Scriptural truth.

The reality is secularism is polluting our church doctrine causing many to depart from the faith. Let me cite an example (I hope this will not sound offensive to you but I’m just quoting from a source). The first college in America, HARVARD, was established for “Christ and the Church.” Thus, 52% of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Harvard graduates became ministers. However, “HARVARD permitted freedom in matters of theology and made no religious requirement of college officers,” thus giving way to secularism. One observer commented: “You don’t go to Harvard to know God. You go there to know that there is no God.” Pardon the exaggeration of this commentary. Far be it for me to criticize an institution. What I intend is to simply site dangers that may lead our institutions and theologies to secularism if we will not be extra watchful.

What I am citing is not only true today but even in the patriarchal days. Moses warned the Israelites before they entered the Promise Land: “If you ever forget the Lord your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed” (Deut. 8:19). The Lord complained through the prophet Isaiah about Judah and Jerusalem, “I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his



owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand" (Isa. 1:2-3, NIV). Ezekiel, referring to the religious leaders of his time, said: "Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean" (Ez. 22:26, NIV). Paul in his first letter to Timothy 4:1 predicted: "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons." These are but few scenarios of apostasy even in Biblical times and the ball rolls up to now. That is why it is extremely necessary to be extra watchful of our steps. Take note of three major teachings from the Parable of the weeds:

### **Laxity**

Verse 25 says, "while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came...." Notice that it is when we as guardians of the gospel truth are lax and even unconcerned that the enemy comes and sow these bad seeds of secularism. I think it is just but appropriate that conferences such as this will address this very concern.

The enemy works in our unguarded moments. Before we know it, we find our churches infiltrated with theologies and practices that are not consistent with the scripture. We heard about this "holy laughter" phenomenon followed by "animal sounds" phenomenon. These may sound ridiculous to us but we can see how many thousands upon thousands of Christians buying these new ideas. In the Philippines there is one influential movement called SOAR movement. They believe that becoming a Christian makes one an exact representation of Christ. Therefore they call each other Jesus. They greet one with another, "Good morning Jesus," or "Hello Jesus."

### **Subtleness**

The second major point of the parable is the subtleness of the enemy's trick. Scholars suggest that Darnel weeds are referred to here which weeds look exactly like wheat and almost impossible to distinguish especially when they are still young.

Darnel represents the subtleness of the enemy's scheme. The enemy will not just give an obvious trick so easy to solve. But he comes with his craftiness twisting the truth of the gospel letting it appear almost similar to the truth. This is where we need guiding principles of measuring the truth. In our theological formulations I hope we will not fall under the trap of the enemy's schemes, impressing us with theological terms only heavenly beings understand. Sometimes with terminologies we find only

theologians talking among themselves, too detached from the language the world understands.

I recall in the Garden of Eden. Out of the craftiness of Satan, Eve and Adam fell under his scheme of theological discussion. Notice in Genesis 3 that Satan actually did not attack the theological understanding of Adam and Eve. He pretended to know more. “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from the tree in the garden?’” This is a theological discussion, isn’t it? It is just like asking somebody about contextualization, or orthodoxy, or orthopraxy, etc. But notice that Satan introduced himself here as somebody who is more knowledgeable than the first two theologians, Adam and Eve. Satan said, “You will not surely die, for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

If you observe closely, Satan’s theology here was not completely wrong at the same time it was not completely true. The problem is, Eve and Adam “who was with her” in this theological discussion, were highly impressed by the eloquence of the serpent and were convinced with his idea. Someone has said, “he who gets the mind gets the soul.”

My challenge is for us to be extra careful of Satan’s subtleness. It is useless to have dialogue with Satan when he intends to divert us from God’s real Word. We do not need to waste time conversing “with godless chatter” that will only pave the way for secularism to reign in our minds and hearts. Adam and Eve started to listen more to secular voice rather than the voice of God. The result was sin.

### **Unfruitfulness**

The last point I want us to see in the parable of the Weeds is fruitfulness. Darnel weeds are difficult to identify until the real wheat bears fruit. Our orthodoxy, correct belief, must result in orthopraxy, correct action. Theologians who cannot live what they teach, preach, or write are just like Darnel weeds which look exactly like the the real wheat but do not bear fruit. The best way to teach and contextualize theological truth regardless of culture is just to live Christ. Paul said to Timothy, “Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity” (1 Tim 4:12).

We have to remind ourselves that we do what we believe. Some people are willing to die through suicide bombing. Is it not because of what they believe? The same is true with us. We are identified by what we do, not much on what we say. No matter how impressive our

theological terms are, if our actions cannot agree with our words, we are nothing but weeds in God's kingdom.

I believe that modeling is the best teaching tool. In modeling, people of different age levels and cultures understand theological truth best. How do we react to circumstances and how do we handle extreme situations? There what we believe becomes the real issue. The wise builder is the man who does not only know theological truths but puts them into practice. He is like a man who built his house upon the rock. Storms come and go but he stands strong and steadfast because he is a doer of God's Word not hearer only.

### **Conclusion:**

I heard a story about the faded flag. Back in the old days, when traffic lights were not yet available, watchmen were assigned to give motorists signal in roads that cross the railways. Once an accident took place killing all the six passengers inside a car which collided with the train. The watchman on duty was asked these following questions: 1) "Were you on duty when the accident took place?" With full honesty he answered, "Yes, your honor." 2) "Were you in your post when the accident happened?" "Yes, your honor." 3) "Were you waving your flag?" "Yes, your honor I was standing on my post and waving my flag." The case was dismissed. The man was pronounced "not guilty."

Years later on his deathbed, he called his eldest son and confessed, "Son, remember that accident many years ago?" "Yes father," the son responded. "There was one question the judge failed to ask me," he muttered with his dying voice. "They did not ask the color of the flag I was waving." The father added, "I discovered that the flag I was waving was faded and I had given the wrong signal."

Friends, as we are gathered today with a noble task of contextualizing theology, let us make every effort to give people the right signal. May our endeavors cause people to be warned of the gravity of sin that lead to eternal destruction. May our churches be instruments of light and hope for those weary souls that need rest. May our lives advance the message of truth, hope, and holiness that only Jesus Christ can give. May we give the right signal. I hope it is your desire too.

"Let your light shine before men, that they may see you good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." God bless you all!

## Holiness Distinctives

Dwight D. Swanson

The purpose of this presentation is, first, to explore some of the issues which arise in thinking about the vocabulary of holiness, and, second, to look at two specific examples of translation issues.

### Once More on Context

Before thinking about vocabulary, it is useful to consider our shared context in which we think about holiness. In the tradition descending from the American Holiness Movement (AHM) of the 19<sup>th</sup> C, holiness is primarily an experience; this sort of experience can be defined more particularly as revivalist, with an emphasis on making a decision, and appropriating the benefits of redemption now. Early proponents spoke of “getting holiness.” The experience was parallel to that of “getting saved,” when a person became keenly aware of his/her sins, bowed at an altar or penitent form, repented, and came to an assurance of forgiveness of sins and new life in Christ. The second crisis arose out of a subsequent keen awareness of the continuing power of sin in one’s life, in which the individual came to make a full commitment of his/her life to the Lordship of Christ and invited the Holy Spirit to come in His fullness. Each of these crises was usually accompanied by much weeping, and the moment of crisis would bring about a great sense of the relief of guilt, and peace with God.

There were two key components of this experience: negatively stated, through sanctification there was cleansing *from* sin; positively, there was the filling with the Holy Spirit with power *for* holy living. It may be fair to say that in the days of the Movement, the positive aspect of the experience was predominant. But, perhaps related to the rise of the Pentecostal movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> C, the AHM began slowly but steadily to place more emphasis on the cleansing than on the empowering. The key concept was “separation from” specific sins. Holiness became a

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matter of morals, leading to a long era in which the distinctive note of holiness preaching was highly legalistic.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas these manifestations of the AHM may not be prominent, or even widespread, today, the essential concept of holiness as experiential and revivalist remains. This, perhaps, is the “distinctive” of the Church of the Nazarene: holiness as an experience of cleansing and Spirit-filling to be sought and found here and now. It is our distinctive in relation to much of Wesleyan theology, and it certainly is in relation to the rest of Christianity as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

As we consider a hermeneutic for communicating holiness, *we need to ask whether we begin the process from the point of our distinctive, or whether we begin from Scripture and proceed to our distinctive at a later point.* To put it another way, do we start from tradition, or from Scripture? I state this point explicitly before proceeding further, because I think this has to be clear to us all. In my estimation, that much heat has been generated in our Church over concern by some that the Church’s theologians are not safeguarding the tradition derives from the failure to understand that each are beginning from different points. Church leaders (this is a generalisation) are most concerned with preserving distinctives, and so begin with tradition. Speaking as a biblical theologian, I must begin my work from Scripture, and relate my tradition to Scripture. If these respective starting points can be recognised and taken into account, and if

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<sup>1</sup>This is undoubtedly a simplification of the history of the Movement, and somewhat presumptuous of a biblical scholar to tread on historical territory. However, having lived through half of the Nazarene century, I feel I have a certain amount of direct experience of the Movement!

<sup>2</sup>The term “distinctive” denotes that emphasis which distinguishes our denominational “brand” in relation to the rest of Christianity. It needs to be considered in relation to William Greathouse’s use of the term “distinguishing tenet” in his inaugural address as President of NTS, *Nazarene Theology in Perspective*, Nazarene Publishing House, 1970. His two main points bear renewed attention. On one hand he stressed that in *doctrine* (“theological stance”) the Church of the Nazarene is “catholic” (“in the classic tradition of Christian thought”), conservative, and evangelical. On the other hand, the “distinguishing *tenet*” of the Church of the Nazarene, fully in the Wesleyan tradition, is “Christian perfection.” In this discussion, then, I go one stage further with the term “distinctive” as our *emphasis* on entire sanctification; and that, particularly, as a second, instantaneous work of grace. In this regard, I also differ with J. Kenneth Grider’s use of the term “distinctive doctrine” for entire sanctification (*Entire Sanctification: The Distinctive Doctrine of Wesleyanism*, Beacon Hill Press, 1980). This is a mixing of Greathouse’s careful separation of the terms “theological stance” and “distinguishing tenet.”

we can trust each other that we are each working within that same tradition, perhaps we will not find ourselves speaking at cross purposes.<sup>3</sup>

For our purposes here, as we consider holiness theology moving across cultures, this remains the question: whether we begin from our distinctive tradition, or whether we start from Scripture. It seems clear to me that we must start from Scripture.

**The Holiness Words: ἅγιος/שׁוֹדֵשׁ (Hagios/Qadosh)**

There is no need here to discuss the origins of the Hebrew and Greek words, and their root meanings. Rather, it is useful in this paper to move back one step, and think of the primary *context* of the vocabulary: the biblical word groups come essentially from *cultic* vocabulary: i.e., of gods, temples, and priests.

This religious context is not argued in the Bible; it is assumed as the normal human situation. In every ancient culture, all of life related to the gods in some way. The chief concern was the nature of that relation. The biblical focus, which is abundantly clear in the Torah, is on *how to live in/with the presence of God*. For example, the organisation of Israel at Sinai begins with provision for God's dwelling in their midst (Exod 25). Then, it moves on to provision for how people may enter God's presence (Lev 1:2).<sup>4</sup> This makes holiness a key, if not *the* key concept of the Torah, for one has to be holy to be in the presence of the holy God. This would be true of other ANE religions, as well, but the nature of that holiness would differ.

This context presents a challenge for my context, the European Church, because of the advanced secularisation of society. Religion is no longer viewed as the normal condition of humanity. The concepts related to religion no longer have a content. Even though we can point to a high degree of interest in "spirituality" at the popular level, we struggle to find the concepts within post-Modern and post-Christian Europe to communicate the idea of "holiness." There is, in fact, often an active antipathy to the Holy, perceived as belonging to Christianity.

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<sup>3</sup>I do not wish to belabour this point, having brought it up in my opening address. But, because the tension does exist, it seems to me better to articulate it openly so that we can address it openly, rather than to tip-toe around it in avoidance. Avoidance does not lead towards resolution of mis-understandings!

<sup>4</sup>The general nature of this paper does not give room to spell this out in detailed documentation. Much of this has been done in the *Re-Minting Christian Holiness* project at NTC, available in electronic format upon request.

For many cultures on the Asia-Pacific Region, it would seem to me, the situation will be virtually the opposite: there are already deeply ingrained ideas of the holy present.<sup>5</sup> When I was in India a few years ago, I found a “daily devotional” column in *The Times of India* newspaper which was encouraging the readers to pursue holy lives. Much of the article could have come from *Holiness Today*. The article reported how, at a Hindu conference, a religious leader “gave a call for a life of holiness in thought, word and deed for the next one year,” and many hands raised in response. What is this holiness? “. . . Holiness is defined as living above the world while living within it.”<sup>6</sup> The words sound the same as we might use, but we cannot assume that they mean the same. A closer look suggests that such holiness comes through a particular Hindu group, positive thinking, and “holistic health.”

*It is not enough for us simply to use the translated vocabulary, we must examine how the words work in the cultic sphere of each religion and culture, and compare these to the scriptural context.*

This means, of course, looking once again at the scriptural context. Let me give an example of the sort of results this may bring. Some years ago I began a study of Genesis with the question in mind, “Where does one find holiness in Genesis?” The word “holy” occurs only once, referring to a cult prostitute—I wondered what form/s the idea of holiness would take in Genesis. One factor which recurred in the meetings of God with humans was the sense of *fear*, whether terror or reverent awe, when the Lord revealed Himself.<sup>7</sup> Rudolf Otto, in his landmark work *The Idea of the Holy*, described this experience of the Holy with the terms *numinous* and *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.<sup>8</sup> These terms have entered into the common vocabulary of theology, and the standard textbooks on Christian holiness (if there are such things) were influenced by Otto to one extent or

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<sup>5</sup>Discussion during the conference revealed that the problem of Postmodernity (however we are to define this difficult term) is not confined to the West. So, the challenge will not be greatly different for many who are working in Asia. And, if this is not now a problem for some Asian contexts, it is likely to become so at some point.

<sup>6</sup>M. P. K. Kutty, “Inner Space,” *The Times of India* (25 February, 1998).

<sup>7</sup>E.g., Gen 3:10, 18:15; 20:8; 28:17; 35:5.

<sup>8</sup>*The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational* (Oxford University Press, 1923).

another.<sup>9</sup> The appearance of a book which examines the place of “feeling” or experience in religion at a time when the Holiness Movement, grounded in experience, was finding its theological feet is significant.<sup>10</sup> What was not picked up by the adaptation of Otto to holiness thinking was the place of fear/terror/awe in our concept of God.

This is one aspect of the biblical evidence which deserves revival. So theologians today, affected by the de-sacralisation of their own societies, may reconsider the concepts of transcendence and mystery when incarnating the holy into theology. And, there is usefulness for theologians within societies which still recognise the activity of the divine in human relations to consider the ways in which discourse about the meeting of the human and the divine takes place in each culture.

What all of us might consider in relation to our own tradition is, how does our tradition relate to the aspect of the awesome presence of the Holy One? From Genesis 3, when the man and woman hid from God, to Acts 2, when the early Church was profoundly aware of the wonders of God being worked among them, the Scriptures speak of the *fear of the Lord*. There is little fear in *our* approach to God! Perhaps we have not grasped all there is to understand of holiness. Perhaps this may be rediscovered in societies which retain awe in the presence of God.

### The Semantic Field

Of course, Rudolf Otto is not our starting point. But neither is the simple vocabulary enough for a full-orbed understanding of holiness. The clues to how to relate the idea of holiness will be found in cognate terms, and in the wider semantic field—the contexts in which we find the language of holiness. *What happens when the human comes into contact with God?*

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<sup>9</sup>The continuing influence of this work was evident during the conference, where Otto was cited more than once. For a broad spectrum of “standard” treatments, see, W. E. Sangster, *The Path to Perfection* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1943); O. R. Jones, *The Concept of Holiness* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1961); G. A. Turner, *The Vision Which Transforms* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1964); D. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1971); and W. T. Purkiser, *Exploring Christian Holiness, Volume One: The Biblical Foundations* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1983). Contemporary discussions of purity and holiness in academic literature are likely to refer early on to Mary Douglas’ equally landmark work, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966). The sociologist has taken over from the psychologist of Religion!

<sup>10</sup>The book appeared in English in 1923, but it takes time for such discourse to filter through to general awareness. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first note of its influence is twenty years after its publication.



In looking at the OT, alone, key terms and concepts which we find are such as: image and likeness; blamelessness/perfection; fear/dread; sin/purity; cleanness/uncleanness; righteousness/justice; covenant faithfulness; love. This is not an attempt to provide an exhaustive list, but to highlight areas where the human and the divine meet, in which holiness is at stake and is thus filled out in meaning.

There are rich mines of theology to be probed in every culture, to fill out our understanding of holiness. The kind of theological work that we are trying to do here reminds me of the image presented in 1 Peter 4: "...Maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins...Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received..." (vv 8-10). We are working together, serving one another with the gift each of us has received. We are stewards of the grace of God: the "pluriform" (ποικίλης) grace of God. This word evokes in me the picture of God's ways of dealing with each of us in keeping with our own backgrounds and understanding. Each of us, part of His image, come together to work together. The result of our work is not simply that of one version of grace; but, when each of us brings our unique part of the spectrum of the rainbow of grace, we are made full. Without all of us, the picture of the image of God in the human would be incomplete. So it is with the doctrine of holiness.

### Translation

In all of this, we are but vessels of clay, treasures in earthen pots, and subject to much misunderstanding in our best efforts. I close with a consideration of two key words in the holiness vocabulary, to highlight the need for us to think about how we translate Scripture both in vocabulary and in concept.

#### 1. *Righteousness*: ἰσχυροδίκη/δικαιοσύνη

This example is given to point out some of the dangers which we may face in translation, and thus in doing theology. The biblical words for "righteousness," *tsedeqah* (OT) and *dikaioσύνη* (NT), with their verbal stems, both cover a wider semantic range than tends to be realised in translation, and certainly in interpretation. Modern English translations are aware of this to the extent that they vary the translation between "righteousness" and "justice," and occasionally terms such as "vindication."

The first translation, "righteousness," has connotations in English of "goodness," and so supposes a moral aspect to the term. God is righteous, true and good. All his actions are "right." We, in relation to Him, may be made righteous, or good and right. The second translation, "justice,"

brings a primarily legal, or forensic, connotation to the fore, and leads to the interpretation of the verb, “to justify,” as a matter of being declared right, as in a court of law.

The fact is that neither ingredient can be done away with. The Hebrew concept of *tsedeqah* can be seen as the standard by which *shalom*, peace, is known. When all creation lives according to the *tsedeqah* of God, then *shalom* exists. Righteousness is the road to restoration to the first intention of creation;<sup>11</sup> the Righteous are renewed in the likeness of Christ. From this standpoint, the relational aspect of *tsedeqah* can readily be seen to be important. *Tsedeqah* is right relationship to Yahweh. Yahweh reveals the norm for this relationship in the Torah, or Law, and by living according to the norm a person is vindicated.

When we move from the Hebrew to the 3<sup>rd</sup> C BC Greek translation, the Septuagint (LXX), a shift takes place in which the forensic, legal, aspect becomes predominant. The Hebrew *tsedeqah* is translated a number of ways, e.g., true, mercy, gladness, pure, faithful, reverent. But the largest percentage of the time the word *dikaiousune* is used with the meaning of “judgement.”<sup>12</sup> This shift is in keeping with the predominant sense in which the term is used in Greek literature. However, this translation runs the risk of what Gossai describes as “the creation of a sharp dichotomy in the nature of God,” picturing Him principally as a God of judgement.<sup>13</sup>

This shift is important for us to consider, since the LXX was the version of the Bible used by the first Christians. Native Greek-speakers and -readers would be likely to think first of the forensic connotation when coming across this work. However, the fact that the LXX would have been used primarily within the teaching of the synagogue, and so any native Greek-speaker would be a seeker, or God-fearer, and would surely be taught the relational aspect of the concept. Olley confirms this, and describes this use of *diakaiousune* as “Greek words with some new associations added due to the Jewish context.”<sup>14</sup> We shall consider this

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<sup>11</sup>This shows through most brightly in Isaiah. This is the “good news” of 52:7; also, 53:5, 54:13 60:17, and of course, 9:6-7.

<sup>12</sup>The fullest treatments available in monograph are from a Lutheran scholar, Hemchand Gossai, *Justice, Righteousness and the Social Critique of the Eighth-Century Prophets* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), Ch 1; and John W. Olley, “Righteousness” in the *Septuagint of Isaiah: A Contextual Study* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 24.

<sup>14</sup>Olley, 126.

idea again later when discussing *agape*. For now we note particularly the journey a word can make when crossing into new languages.

This shift took another step with Jerome's translation of the Bible into Latin, the *Vulgate*. Jerome translated directly from the Hebrew for his OT, but used the same Latin legal term for the Hebrew *tsedeqah* as for the Greek *dikaiosune*—*iustitia*. Roman law became the primary connotation.

It is no surprise, then, that the Protestant Reformation, under the lead of Martin Luther, understood the forensic interpretation of *dikaiosune* to be the primary understanding of the term. For Luther, *justification* was seen as a legal change of status which does not, of itself, have an affect on the actual justified. Thus, one can be *simil justis et peccator* (simultaneously justified and a sinner).

The modern missionary movement has been led by European and American churches, all heirs of the protestant Reformation. Hand in hand with this has come the forensic interpretation of justification, with little attention paid to the wider semantic field of Scripture, particularly the OT. I give an example.

It was my privilege to be involved in the earliest days of setting up Nazarene theological education in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. I taught the first New Testament Introduction in Russia in 1994. When we came to the discussion of righteousness in Romans, I realised there was some difficulty in understanding what I was trying to say (always a possibility, but made more likely when teaching through a translator whose theological vocabulary was limited). I asked what the Russian word for righteousness meant, and the explanation for the meaning of the Russian word was the narrow aspect of legal acquittal. I asked if there was any other word which would include the meaning I was trying to explain—and they said there was a very good word for this. The translation is one done under the direction of the British and Foreign Bible Society (if the 1970 Bezobrazov translation) and/or Western Hebrew and Greek scholars (if the 1989 “Good News” Bible produced by the Church of Christ).<sup>15</sup>

This sketchy overview of the translation history of a single key theological term serves to highlight the inescapable role of theological interpretation in translation. The problem of transmission of the full sense of such a term is compounded when the translation is done by a non-native speaker. All translation is interpretation. Whereas the work of

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<sup>15</sup>See Mark Elliott, “Translating the Russian Bible,” *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 7 (Spring 1999), 7-9, for an overview of Russian Bibles in translation.

contemporary Bible translators such as Wycliffe/SIL to make the Word available to every language and dialect is vital (and I personally assist in supporting one Wycliffe missionary), we have to be aware of the risks. Many earlier translations of the Bible have been done by people who were in the process of learning the language they were translating *as* they were translating, and without first-hand knowledge of the biblical languages! This makes emphatic the need to accept that the task of fully sensitive translation will have to go on constantly, and that the people best suited for the task will be mother-tongue theologians—those who know both the biblical world and languages, and their own. Thus, the need for more theologians!

**b. Love:** אהב /ἀγάπη

I bring this essay to a close with another example of the influence of the LXX on the NT, looking at the biblical terminology for *love*.

The Hebrew word for love, *'ahav*, occurs over 200 times in the OT, and is used for the full range of human relationships (sexual love, friendship, family affection, etc) and attachment to things (food, wealth, God's law, etc.). What is, perhaps, surprising to find is that its use of the relationship between God and people accounts for less than a quarter of all occurrences. *Love* does not have the extensive theological significance that we find in the NT, or in other OT terms such as *hesed* (covenant faithfulness, or lovingkindness) and *tsedeqah*. The theological significance of *'ahav* is found in primarily in two books. Firstly, the heart of Deuteronomy is in the *Shema*, 6:5, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and might." Everything regarding the relation of God to the people of Israel flows out of this command. Secondly, Hosea's love for his adulterous wife Gomer is given as an example of God's love for Israel. On one hand, Israel's love is seen as prostituted in all its objects; on the other, God's love for Israel is deep, passionate, and compassionate.<sup>16</sup>

When the Hebrew was translated into Greek, *love* took on new proportions of importance. Of the Greek terms for love available, the translator/s chose to use two. One, *philein*, refers in Greek usage to friendships, particularly their obligations.<sup>17</sup> In the OT this word is used for

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<sup>16</sup>Gerhard Wallis, in his *TDOT*, I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), article draws a clear distinction between the use of *'ahav* and *raham* (compassion). I believe he does not take Hosea adequately into consideration.

<sup>17</sup>See E. Stauffer's article on *agapao* in *TDNT*, I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 21-55, and 36 for this point, and the Walther Günther and H-G Link article, with Colin Brown, in *NIDNTT* 2 (ed. C Brown; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 538-551. C. S. Lewis'

'*ahav* a handful of times in this way, and for family love (e.g., Isaac's love for Esau). The second term used for '*ahav* is *agapao*. In Classical Greek this word was little used, and all writers on this subject find its origins to be vague. It is virtually unknown as a noun, and the verb refers primarily to "being fond of someone," or "being contented."<sup>18</sup> Nowhere in pre-biblical Greek literature is the word treated at any length as a virtue, as is the case with *eros*. *Eros* is predominantly associated with passionate desire of another for oneself. However, the philosophers, particularly Aristotle and Plato, sought to spiritualise this term, making it the source of human creativity, the true good, or the ideal of humanity,<sup>19</sup> in ways that come near to the later Christian development of love. This term appears only twice in the LXX, both times of sexual love (Esther 2:17 and Prov 7:18). The LXX translators chose to use *agapao/agape* almost exclusively (over 340 times) for the Hebrew '*ahav*, including the majority of uses for love between a man and woman, clearly rejecting the sexual emphasis of *eros*.

This translation decision had far-reaching effect. The LXX took a word which had vaguely nuanced connotations and linked it firmly to the Hebrew content of '*ahav*. It is only after the LXX translation that *agape* begins to appear, as a noun, in Greek literature. The translators took a Greek word and stretched it to a new definition that took in the biblical meanings.

But the word *agape* was to be stretched to an even greater dimension by the New Testament writers. In the NT *agape* becomes a wholly theological term—every usage has to do with some aspect of the relationship of the person and community to God through Jesus Christ. The *agap*-word-group appears as many times in the NT as in the whole of the OT, and more than half of the time as a noun. The unmistakable impression gained is that only two passages of the whole OT mattered—Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:19. Deuteronomy's "you will love the Lord your God with your whole being," and Leviticus' "love your neighbour as yourself," are both cited in the Gospels on the lips of Jesus. Outside of the Gospels, only Lev 19:19 is cited.<sup>20</sup> The overwhelming

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classic work, *The Four Loves* (London: Collins Fontana Books, 1960), is showing its age.

<sup>18</sup>Liddell-Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, 1897 (8<sup>th</sup> Ed). Stauffer suggests "to be satisfied with something," *TDNT* I, 36.

<sup>19</sup>Stauffer, 35-36.

<sup>20</sup>24 NT citations, either explicit or in clear allusion, compared to the three direct quotations of Deut 6:5.

number of instances of “love” in the NT are in a context of relationships between people, and particularly within the community of faith. This is obviously the case with the Apostle Paul, who took up Jesus’ command as the heart of his instruction throughout his letters. It is not the purpose of this paper to do so, but it could be argued that all of Pauline, and perhaps non-Pauline as well, use of *love* is an extension of Leviticus 19:19—the heart of the Holiness Code.

So, a little-utilised Greek term became the heart of Christian theology and practice—and that word was transformed, even sanctified, in the process.

What, then, does *agape* mean? Finding proper terminology for this critical word is important. The answer cannot be found in word-studies (like the one I have just done). The answer is in careful exegesis of the NT usage of the word. The answer is a theological one.

How, then, shall we translate it? The English language is poverty-stricken here, and “love” has become sadly diminished in its potency to communicate. It has not always been so. The Authorised Version (or KJV) translated *agape* as “love” 86 times, and as “charity” 28 times. The latter is derived from the Latin Vulgate use of *caritas*, introducing the nuances of “costliness” and “benevolence”;<sup>21</sup> and that is the sense of English “charity.” This word, too, has lost its strength over the centuries. The English-speaking world is in need of a new coinage.

Other languages are not as limited, as we see in Dr. Im’s paper.<sup>22</sup> The semantic field for *agape* does not limit us to using words that translate for “love.” Another recent example of ways to translate *love*, from Myanmar, comes from Stephen Bennett, Din Thara, and Jubilee Thanga, as reported in the *APNTS Mediator*, April 2002. There the common word for love amongst the Mizo people has been found to be limiting, because it refers only to human relationships. However, another term is available which is commonly translated into English as “chivalry”—another archaic English concept—which includes the connotations of mercifulness, self-sacrifice, humility, faithfulness, loyalty, and also helpfulness to the poor and needy. It is the “highest standard of human conduct in the Mizo community.”<sup>23</sup> The suggestion of the authors is that this term may provide

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<sup>21</sup>Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

<sup>22</sup>Im, Seung Am, “A Dialogue between Wesley and Confucius on the Theme of Sanctification.”

<sup>23</sup>Bennett, et al., “*Tlawm-ngaih-na*: Holiness in the Mizo Context of Myanmar,” *The Mediator* 3:2 (April, 2002), 79.

the means of entry to the hearts of this community, as they see Jesus as the supreme example of this virtue, and thus find the heart of God.

This is a promising direction of investigation, which can be done in many places—as is evident from other papers appearing in this publication. Such concepts must now be brought back to the touchstone of Scripture, to be examined in light of the full range of the NT teaching, and in relation to the full range of holiness teaching. Then, the result can go out and transform that term into the Christian virtue of *agape*.

This is where we return to consider our “distinctive.” The heart of Wesleyan theology is perfect love. The heart of holiness theology is love expelling sin. The Great Command *is* central. It is our love for each other (not theologising about it) that will be Good News. Therefore, it is our urgent task, as theologians, to find adequate vocabulary to proclaim this Good News.

As we work “towards an Asia/Pacific hermeneutic of holiness,” such searching out of our contexts will only serve to enrich our own understanding of the manifold grace of God, and our understanding of how to do our own theology.

## **The “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model: A New Methodology for Contextualizing Theological Education in Thailand**

**Daniel Saengwichai**

The “Khit-Pen” Theological Model is in a sense an adaptation of the Thai indigenous concept of adult learning developed by Dr. Kovit Vorapipatana, former Deputy Director General, Department of Educational Techniques, Ministry of Education. It is an educational model that was successfully launched by the Ministry of Education in Thailand in the 1970s with the purpose to encourage common people to be more willing to accept innovation in their daily lives, and to teach them technical skills. The model was later adapted to fit the needs of developing countries (such as the Philippines, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Ghana) because it is essentially problem-centered, and works well in a problem-posing training program.

The term “Khit-Pen” literally means “to think” or “to be able to think.” The assumptions underlying the development of the “Khit-Pen” Theological Model reflect two philosophies which have played a major role in characterizing who we are, first, as Thai people, and second, as Thai Christians. First is the Buddhist philosophy about life. [Life is suffering; this suffering can be cured; in order to cure this suffering, the origin of the suffering must be identified.] The belief “Life is suffering” is central in Buddhist teaching. As a Buddhist country, Thailand finds its identity and origin in Buddhist beliefs and practices. Every aspect of the Thai life is deeply rooted in Buddhist thinking. Though Buddhism provides a way or ways to counteract suffering, too often the people have the tendency to shut out frustration and take refuge in the common Thai idiom “*Mai Pen Rai*” (or “never mind,” or “it is nothing”) which is characteristic of the average Thai. In other words, such a philosophy has implanted deep within the people a sense of passive resignation to fate, thus impairing their ability to counteract the problems and to seek for solutions. In short,

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the Buddhist philosophy of life has prevented a Thai from being able to take proactive steps toward finding solutions for his or her own problems. It intrinsically has a paralyzing impact on the people, thereby depriving them of their intellectual strength to resist suffering in life.

Second is the Greek-influenced Western philosophy of education, deeply embedded in both the nation's educational system and the imported traditional Western theological education program. This philosophy has characterized both the church's training methodology and the system of Thai education in the past and in the present. The influence of Western traditional philosophy in the national school system and the uncritical transmission of theological knowledge from the West to the Thai context have resulted not only in the detriment of the leadership potential of the learners, but also in their ability and freedom to read and reflect upon the truth of the Scripture for themselves and their community.

The "Khit-Pen" Theological Education Model, then, may be explained in terms of a contextual theological endeavor that proceeds with different theological priorities and criteria than those on which current theological education is based. The model is capable of being adapted to all levels of church leadership and addressing various issues of concern. It sets out to tackle theological questions and issues found within a unique context of the Thai churches which have not been adequately discussed by the traditional Western educational models. It is a "synthetic model" that attempts to balance the insights and ways of thinking from different educational and theological models presented in this study and reaches out to incorporate them into developing a methodology that deals with prevalent issues confronting the Thai churches. In essence, it is a "middle-of-the-road," a "both/and," theological education model that takes pains to maintain the integrity of the Scripture, while seriously acknowledging the importance of integrating the scriptural and spiritual insights with truths found outside the scriptural and theological realm (Bevans 1992:81f).

Following Wesley's inductive method of doing theology and the ecumenical spirit of the Wesley Quadrilateral which "calls for greater induction, integration, contextualization, and contemporarization" (Thorsen 1990:231), the development of the "Khit-Pen" Theological Education Model is based primarily on important features from Groome's model, Elmer's model, Freire's model, Pazmiño's model, Hiebert's model, and Vorapipatana's model.

Methodologically, these models lie in the same level as each is descriptive of how to deal with the components of the contexts in the learning process. While making a dichotomy between the secular models

### Stage One: Preparation

About two weeks before the first semester began in June 1997, I conducted an in-house "SEANBC Poll" among the new students to secure information about their life stories, their callings, and expectations. The inquiry had seven questions: How did you become a Christian? What is one tangible evidence of your new life? What are your expectations in coming to SEANBC? What teaching and learning styles do you *most* enjoy? What teaching and learning styles do you *least* enjoy? What courses of study do you think would be *most* helpful to your future ministry? What courses of study do you think would be *least* helpful to your future ministry? The responses have helped greatly to shape not only the content and method of teaching; they have also helped prepare the students and teachers for meaningful teaching/learning process.

Preparation refers to the activity that Thomas Groome calls "an invitation to the students to name their present action in response to the particular focus of the unit" (1980:208). Such an invitation to the students may be in the form of questions. The use of questions has proven to be a helpful method of preparing the students to become active participants in the teaching/learning process. According to Robert H. Stein, Jesus was successful in eliciting responses (verbal and nonverbal) from the audience through the use of questions. Raising questions in a variety of ways and within a variety of situations, "Jesus forced His audience to become involved in the learning process" (1989:23). As a result, Jesus was not only able to prepare His students to participate in the learning process, He also forced them to think about what He or they were saying using questions on many occasions. As the teaching/learning process progresses, the students express their reactions, feelings, sentiments, overt activity, valuing, meaning making, understanding, beliefs, relationship, and the like. The goal here is to elicit an expression (verbal and nonverbal) of the students' knowledge which arises from their personal engagement in the world. Such an invitation to the students to participate in the teaching/learning process helps pave the way for the teacher to create a friendly and relational environment that is conducive for learning to take place.

In the Thai context, a friendly and relational environment is normally initiated by *Khune Kruu* or the educated one, a Thai word for teacher. Suntaree Komin, a Thai educator says when the teacher begins to show the "humanistic oriented values" such as gratefulness, care-consideration, kindness, forgiveness, mutual helpfulness, and obedience-respectfulness, the students have confidence and feel empowered to participate in the teaching/learning process. This is because, according to Komin, such values shown by a teacher are usually characteristic of the common people,

the less educated ones. The highly educated people are often perceived and characterized by “a concern for self, striving for success in life, and a high sense of ego esteem” which suggests a widespread social gap between the two (1990:60). When a teacher makes an attempt to bridge such a gap and shows the reversal of their role and status, he or she, in effect, creates within the students what Freire calls a new sense of “partnership in learning” (1995 [1970]:56-61).

In other words, preparation involves the recognition of the reality Pazmiño calls “a larger framework” of the students on the part of a teacher (1992:132). It is the teacher’s attempt to know *what* and *why* he or she is teaching as well as *when*, *where*, and *whom* he or she is teaching. Understanding the larger framework of the students not only enables a teacher to appreciate the diversity and the complexity of the students and their backgrounds, it also helps a teacher to consider a variety of approaches, methods, and techniques in his or her teaching. Preparation is a result of a teacher’s recognition that authentic learning takes place best in a friendly, nonthreatening, and mutual environment.

In the “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model, preparation includes participants’ (teacher’s and students’) acknowledgment of the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit, the divine resource, and the dependence upon His leading of men and women “into all truth” (John 16:13-15). Knowing the diversity as well as the complexity of the students can lead a teacher to discouragement and despair. Reliance and trusting on the power of the Holy Spirit leads to a sense of wonder, awe, and reverence for the workings of God in and through the lives of all participants. It leads to a dependence on prayer before, during, and after the actual teaching. It leads to the teacher’s openness to the re-thinking, re-designing, as well as revising his or her teaching agenda in response to the work of the Spirit and to the sharing of the students’ stories. In this stage of preparation, the teacher makes certain that students feel comfortable, welcome, equal, and empowered to participate in the teaching and learning process.

### **Stage Two: Exploring the Issues**

One of the most difficult questions confronting Christian churches in Thailand both in the past and present is the question of whether or not Christians should observe the Thai calendar,<sup>1</sup> which marks mainly

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<sup>1</sup>The Thai religious calendar includes several special days marking Buddhist holy days. *Asalha Puja* coincides with the full-moon day of the eight lunar month, and for the Buddhists is a special day of religious significance. It commemorates the day when the

Buddhist religious events. The question is occasionally raised. But the churches in Thailand have not been able to provide any practical directions on the whole issue, thus leaving it perpetually unanswered.

A question came up in one of my classes regarding the *Songkran* day, or the water festival, on April 13. Like other Buddhist religious events, *Songkran* day remains unaddressed by the Christian community as a whole. Although it is traditionally considered the Thai new year, Christians usually do not observe this day at all since it appears to convey heavily [a Buddhist] religious connotation. The students were invited to investigate the *Songkran* festival in order to understand fully their own culture and to be able to draw some implications for living a Christian life in the society. From the exegetical study of the *Songkran* day, students have learned to select elements to adapt from a wide variety of meaning in the festival. While it is generally considered the Thai new year, *Songkran* is also the day of cleansing the spirit and refreshing the soul. The Thai Buddhists will pour water on Buddha's image and on one another on that day. It is an opportunity to gain merit and fun as it is full of celebration. It is the day of relationship renewal among family members as many will visit their parents and other elderly people in order to pay respect to them on this special occasion. One ritual commonly performed which signifies one's respect to his or her older relatives and friends is the pouring of water on their hands. While performing this ritual, family members will ask for forgiveness (*Kor Aho Si Kaam*) if they have done anything to offend their relatives in the past year; and they will expect a good wish, a sign of forgiveness (*Aho Si*), in return.

One outcome that grew out of the discussion was the recommendation of the class to adapt good and neutral elements to be used in Christian rituals. From the study, the class has submitted that while the

Buddha preached his first sermon to his first five disciples more than two thousand five hundred years ago. *Khao Phansa* which coincides with the rainy season that starts around July and last for about three months. This is a time when it is very inconvenient for people to travel. It was recorded in the Buddhist Scriptures that some farmers complained to the Buddha that his disciples damaged some of the crops when they walked through cultivated fields. The Buddha thus made it a rule for all his disciples to refrain from traveling during the three months of the rainy season. *Makha Bucha* is an important religious day for the Buddhists in Thailand. It is the *Makha Bucha* day or the day to commemorate the occasion when 1,250 disciples of the Lord Buddha voluntarily came to visit their spiritual master without prior appointment. In the full-moon night of the third lunar month, the Lord Buddha reached to them what is now known as the Heart of Buddhism, which can be summed up as the three principles. First, to refrain from sinful acts, speeches and thoughts. Second, always to engage in virtuous conduct. Third, to endeavor to purify one's own mind. The way to achieve all these is to practice *Sila* (Moral Conduct), *Samadhi* (Meditation), and *Panya* (Wisdom).

Christian community may refrain from performing religious activities on the *Songkran* day, the Thai churches should strongly encourage the practice of *Aho Si Kaam* ritual among believers. The *Songkran* festival can be a day the Thai Christians express their respect, reconciliation, and appreciation to others in the society. For example, a local church leader may perform foot washing on that day by clustering around each member to wash his or her feet. The water used on this occasion may be adorned with flowers petals and perfume similar to the water the Thai use for their elders. This ceremony can be done meaningfully as it is a good reminder of our servanthood to one another.

The “exploring the issues” stage refers to what Paul Hiebert calls the “exegesis of the culture” where the teacher and the students will study local questions and issues from an objective, nonjudgemental point of view (1994:88). This study also technically is called a phenomenological study of issues which the teacher and the students uncritically gather and analyze traditional values, patterns, and practices within the students’ community with a purpose to understand them, not to judge them. Groome calls this stage of exploring of the issues “an invitation to the students to begin making a critical reflection,” done from their own perspectives (1980:211). The teacher and the students look discerningly at present situations to see what are obvious [the issues and questions] and also to attempt to go below the obvious to become aware of their sources and development. The purpose here is to have an overall picture of the concerns and questions prevalent within the context in which they live. In short, it is an attempt to enable students to identify and to express their opinions on situations confronting them.

The exegesis of the culture is crucial to the task of theological education because it helps Thai students to understand their own cultural and traditional issues in the light of the Scriptures. I agree with the remark of Darrell L. Whiteman that being born [in Thai culture] does not guarantee a thorough understanding of one’s own culture as we often have assumed. “Until non-Western Christians learn how to exegete their own cultural context as well as they exegete the biblical text,” no amount of theological knowledge “will automatically enable and encourage church leaders to plant and grow indigenous, contextualized churches” (1997:5).

In Thai context, exploring of issues begins when the teacher and the students take time to look at some prevailing questions the people are asking inside and outside the church. Such questions may be cultural (e.g., questions about ancestral worship or traditional rites and rituals), religious (e.g., Buddhist ceremonies and practices), social (e.g., AIDS diseases or poverty), and political (e.g., participation in the demonstrations for

democracy). The goal is for the teacher and the students to be informed of the realities of life and to be able to accurately raise the issues, needs, and problems that should be addressed. Also, the students should be more ready to seek for answers and learn when they focus on the real issues and questions within their situations.

The "exploring the issues" stage also may refer to observation, one of the methods Wesley regularly used in the formulating of his theology. Discussing the inductive character of Wesley's writings, Thorsen points out that Wesley's method of writing consists of "observation, investigation, written record, comparison, and induction from experiments" (1990:103). In observation, Wesley would attempt to "understand the need" in order to direct careful analytical attention toward noted facts (1990:105). He would then try to familiarize himself with facts [in the world] so as to find some constructive explanation of such facts. Wesley's observation, however, extends beyond merely having knowledge about the fact in the society. As a "Bible-Christian" or "a man of one book" (Wesley's statements, quoted in Thorsen 1990:67), his observation usually would lead to an attempt to understand and respond to concerns in the society based on his investigation of the truths available in the Scripture. This brings us to third stage of integrating the scriptural truths with issues and questions confronting people in the society.

### **Stage Three: Integrating with the Scripture**

Paul and Frances Hiebert refer to this stage as "the recognition of the authority of the Scriptures and a thorough knowledge of their teachings" (1987:16). It involves a careful study of the biblical message within its own historic and cultural contexts. Consequential to our knowledge of the cultural issues and questions, it is the Scriptures that stand in judgment on all cultural elements. Scriptures affirm that which is good and condemn that which is evil. Elmer calls this stage a "recall" or "mastery" of important information from the Scripture which is foundational to learning (1984:235). (The new model is in contrast to the traditional theological model in that the prior theological education model normally used the Scriptures at the outset. It also varies from the regular "Khit-Pen" model which does not consider Scripture.) The Scripture is the standard of truth upon which all other issues are reflected and judged. An attempt to understand one's circumstances in light of the scriptural truth at this stage may also be referred to as an "exegesis of the Scriptures," and the attempt to bridge the truth of the Scriptures to the realities of one's own circumstances (Hiebert 1994b:89). In this stage, the teacher will take the lead in helping the students understand what the Bible has to say regarding

issues and questions confronting the community. The teacher's task is neither to impose on the students his or her own conclusion nor to force biblical meaning to fit local cultural categories, thus distorting the biblical message. Rather, the teacher's role is to help the students grasp the scriptural truth so that they may grow in their abilities to discern the scriptural truth in light of their own circumstances. This is in contrast to the traditional model in which the students were told what the Scripture said and meant; whereas in this model the students are involved, with the guidance of the teacher, in studying Scripture and finding God's answer for themselves and their communities.

Groome calls this stage a "critique of the Story [Scripture] in light of the stories [realities] and a critique of the students' present stories in light of the past Story" (1980:220). In other words, it is the students' attempt to explain the realities of their circumstances in light of the Scripture.

In Thai context, the process of integrating with the Scripture begins when the teacher and the students, having familiarized themselves with prevalent issues confronting the church, commit themselves to investigating the Scripture with the hope to find answers from the Word of God. With the help of the teacher, the students begin to make sense of local issues and questions confronting them in the light of the Scripture. For example, Christians in Thailand have relied heavily on the missionaries' opinions regarding how to respond to the questions of ancestral and traditional practices in Thai society. The words of the missionary have become the primary source of religious authority by which the cultural issues are judged and evaluated. The students should be encouraged to study the Word of God to gain their own "heartsight" regarding issues confronting them instead of relying on someone's "hearsay."

This process of "integrating with the Scripture" may also refer to what Thorsen calls "Wesley's inductive approach to Scripture" that is used in the Wesleyan Quadrilateral model of theology (1990:128ff). While affirming the primacy of Scripture as "the only sufficient source commonly available to people for investigating the nature of God and of life," Wesley also recognizes the importance of tradition, reason, and experience. Tradition, reason, and experience play a vital role in understanding, interpreting, and applying the truth of the Bible to one's life. In other words, the truth of the Scripture becomes most meaningful and relevant when it addresses the immediate needs at hand. Since learning and ministry do not occur in the abstract, the task of investigating the Scripture in light of the students' whole lives involves not only the students as

individuals, but also involves the community as whole. This leads us to consider the role of the community in the teaching/learning process.

#### **Stage Four: Interacting with the Community**

The word "community" here refers primarily to the people both inside and outside of the church. Interacting with the community then means becoming involved in the church ministry and in the service of the community. Interacting with the community turns out to be a major emphasis of the SEANBC teaching curriculum. In the 1997/98 school year the school committed itself to maintaining "the continuous mingling of cognitive and behavioral activities—the relationship between knowing and doing, rhetoric and behavior, reflection and action, theory and practice, cognitive and psychomotor, truth and experience, witness and life" (Elmer 1984:226-243).

To accomplish this goal, nearly half of the total course requirements involves students' interaction with the people in the community. In addition, a required classroom session for all students doing the course "Supervised Ministries," a good learning counterpart is designed for those assigned to field practicum in each given semester. To interact with the community is, in a sense, an attempt to demonstrate the students' "street credibility" by relating to the people where they are, as opposed to simply showing one's "library credibility" which is often out of touch with the realities of life (Griffiths 1990:11-12).

In the process of attempting to understand life from the biblical perspective, it is important that the students interact with the church in which they serve and with the surrounding community in which they live. The students' involvement in the community not only helps them see the connection between theory and practice. It also helps the people in the community to feel empowered to reflect and interact with themselves and their contexts. According to Hiebert, the involvement of the people in "evaluating their own culture in the light of new truth draws upon their strength" (1994b:89a). He perceives the community involvement to be a move to encourage people to make a "critical response" to prevalent issues and questions confronting them, since the people have better knowledge of their own culture and are in a better position to critique it (1994b:89b). He goes on to point out that to involve the people in the community (by engaging in dialogue in an attempt to respond to issues) is to help them to grow in the discernment of the scriptural truths in light of their own circumstances. An act of involving the people in the process of investigating and applying Scripture to realities in their lives puts into



practice the biblical teaching of the priesthood of believers within the community (1994b:90).

“Interacting with the community” may also be explained in terms of what Outler calls “experience,” the fourth component of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral which plays a crucial role in Wesley’s theology (1985:31f). The scriptural truths are confirmed by experience which reflects an immediate relationship of the Bible to people’s lives. Experience helps the students to see the relation of what Elmer calls “recall and application” in which the students now make decisions about what to do with the information they have learned in the classroom with the help of the community (1984:237). Through their commitment to dialogue, students are encouraged to live interdependently with God and with the people in the community. They are to demonstrate the embodiment of what Pazmiño calls a “new reign of Jesus Christ” with a distinctive call to serve other fellow human beings (1992:50). It is an awareness of the connection between theory and *praxis* in education that implies getting involved in social issues and problems. In this stage, teachers and students have the responsibility to show the connection between their “commitment to God’s reign and the dominant virtues and ideals of their community or society” (1992:52).

In Thai theological education context, the “interacting with the community” occurs when the students become actively involved in the ministry of the church and in the service of the community. During the semesteral break in October 1997, I took a group of thirty students from SEANBC and other schools to the Leoy province, about three hundred miles from Bangkok. The goal was two-fold: to help a local church in an evangelistic effort and to take part in the ongoing community development program. The trip was an experience altogether new to the students. Traditionally, seminaries in Thailand spend the semesteral break preaching the gospel with little concern for social responsibility. At the evaluation meeting the students testified as to how their lives had been profoundly changed and shaped by the field trip. The trip not only gave them the opportunity to share and show the gospel message; it also gave them a memorable life experience of learning from people in the community.

In this stage, after the students have learned about the truth of the Scripture, they then decide how they should act when guided by biblical principles and focused on insights they have received from their involvement with the church and the community. Such input affirms and attests the reflection as well as decision they make, which results in the formulation of their own theologies regarding the issues and questions in the context in which they live. This leads us to consider the fifth and final

stage of the teaching/learning method introduced in the "Khit-Pen" Theological Education Model.

### **Stage Five: Implementation**

Implementation occurs when the students carry into effect the insights they have learned from the previous stages. They have been equipped to think, reflect, and act upon issues from a biblical perspective and from the perspective of their own worldviews, cultures, values, and social and historical situations. It is the result of critical integration with the Scripture and an interaction with the community. The students are enabled to reflect on the teachings of the Scripture in the light of their socio-cultural frameworks and to see the relation between their faith and the contexts in which they live. It means learning the truth, applying the truth to one's life [and the life of the community], making adjustments and refinements until there is a confidence in making such an arrangement a pattern in his or her own life and the lives of the people in the community.

Shortly after the conclusion of the second semester, a group of three students came to talk to me about their vision to put into practice the term project they had previously developed. The paper was part of the requirements for the course "Church Planting in the Thai Context" which I was teaching. They recognized the importance of the principles they have learned from the class and felt that they had collected a good deal of helpful information about the people in their designated area. During their frequent visits to the people in the community, relationships were built and contact made. They saw great potential for starting a new church among the people within that community. In a real sense, these students had taken initiative to implement the knowledge and information they obtained from the course and intended to apply such insights in the communities in which they lived.

Implementation, then, refers primarily to the students' ability to integrate, to re-invent, or to reproduce the truth they have learned and to incorporate it into their personal as well as their communal lives. In the "Khit-Pen" Theological Education Model, implementation may be explained in terms of the students' attempt to put into practice the insights they have learned from their investigation of the Scripture and interaction with the community. In a sense, because they have formulated their own theologies regarding the issues—based on the reflection of the biblical message in the light of their own situation—they are able to attempt to "blend" text with the contexts. According to Hiebert, such an attempt is considered Christian, for it explicitly seeks to express biblical teaching. It is contextual, for it is created by people in the context, using forms they

understand within their own culture (1994a:90-91). Elmer calls this stage “recall and resolution,” the task that requires a life-long interactive cohabitation between orthodoxy and *orthopraxis* (1984:238). It is an opportunity for the students to do what needs to be done in response to the issues and questions of the context. The students come to recognize that “Christian” is a whole way of being in the world, a lived response rather than a theory about. And for this reason, as Groome maintains, our religious education should invite people to decision—a decision that is guided by the church in the community (1980:221).

Central in the “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model is the primacy of the Scripture upon which the five stages are founded. Flexibility, as opposed to rigidity, inherently permeates the whole operation of this indigenous theological education model. Since the “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model is intended to be used, or placed, in any educational setting, with any curriculum structure, and by any theological traditions, it is therefore highly flexible as well as adaptable. In a culture where the teaching/learning process is often characterized by rigidity and legalism, flexibility allows the students freedom and creativity to respond immediately in new varied and contextually appropriate ways. Flexibility is a whole new paradigm of living and serving, because the students are thinking and interacting. Therefore, flexibility or adaptability, as opposed to rigidity, is a key feature of the way the “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model operates. The flexible quality of the new model is illustrated in the institutional mission statement of the South East Asia Nazarene Bible College. This document states the school is committed to

developing national lay and ministerial leaders who are prepared in both academic and applied theology through holistic, integrated [“Khit-Pen”] theological education. . . . This education should be built upon strong biblical and theological foundations with major concern for the educational and sociocultural differences of the students. . . . It will be delivered in multi-level, multi-schedule, multi-location, multi-language, and multi-delivery systems. . . . SEANBC emphasizes the integration of theory and practice. The academic study of theology, Bible, and ministry must be applied to the life and work setting of the minister.

This integration is accomplished through a series of Supervised Ministry courses. . . . SEANBC emphasizes contextualized curriculum in order to develop a strong indigenous church. Our goal is to equip students to

understand Christian faith in terms of their own cultural context. Instruction will be structured to help the students to think, reflect, and act upon beliefs and practices from the perspective of his or her own worldview, culture, and social and historical situations (Report to the Commissioner of Education 1997:1-3).

In this case, then, many levels of flexibility are envisioned in the new institution.

While Vorapipatana's "Khit-Pen" model of education has its focus primarily on nonformal adult education, the "Khit-Pen" Theological Education Model adapts its methodology to be used in other educational settings. With flexibility being a key feature, the "Khit-Pen" Theological Education Model enables the teachers and the students to fit biblical truths to any persons, in any place, and by any church denominations. While putting flexibility at the center of the process, it by no means implies diminishing the centrality and the primacy of the Scripture as the source of authority in the task of theological education. Rather, the process infers that if the truth of the Scripture is to be truly and effectively relevant in responding to the issues and questions confronting the Thai churches, the methodology on which the theological education is based has to be highly and uniquely flexible.

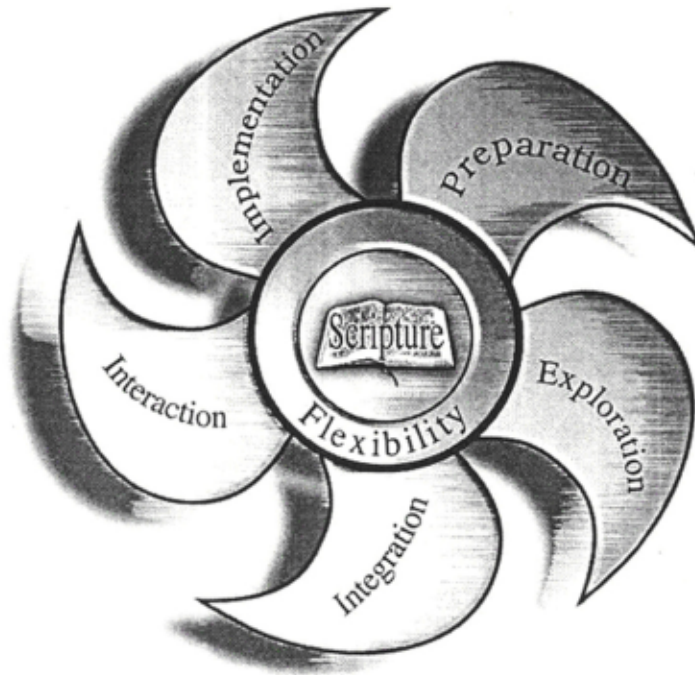
Also, it should be noted that the model's consistent emphasis on problem-solving, interaction, cohabitation between theory and *praxis*, as well as its adaptable quality, is cherished overtly not only by theological educators in Thailand, but also by some in North America. Among them is Christine E. Blair, Director of the Doctor of Ministry program at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, who perceives educational models with such an emphasis to be the "answer to the problems" of theological education. In her insightful article, "Understanding Adult Learners: Challenges for Theological Education," she writes:

I favor a dialogical, problem-solving educational model, in which teachers and learners are co-investigators into the practice of ministry. Teachers bring the expertise of their discipline, their religious faith, and their experience of the church into this dialogue to guide students, while in turn honoring their students' knowledge, faith, and experience; teachers know that in teaching they also learn. This model . . . seemed to be the answer to the problems we professors were encountering. . . . I do believe faculty members can be helped to understand adult learners better, and to develop more effective teaching models and strategies (1997:21).

As this new model sets out to equip and encourage teachers and students to use their thinking ability in reflecting and integrating biblical truth in the light of their own situations, the “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model can be implemented in settings other than the formal classroom. In fact, it can be adapted in residential theological institutions, local churches, Sunday schools, lay training institutes, discipleship training centers, as well as any other extension learning programs. The “Khit-Pen” characteristics are adaptable.

The way in which the “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model functions may be diagrammed in terms of an Eastern image of religious activity common to Asians, a wheel spinning or “spinning wheel.” The spinning wheel is of great cultural significance to the Thais in a variety of ways. First, it signifies the “cyclical” thinking pattern of the people, as opposed to the “linear” thinking pattern traditionally held in the West. According to Koyama, the Thai people live in a world of “many-timeness,” of recurring seasons, of life being renewed at regular intervals which reflects the sense of harmony and recurrence of time. This worldview is in contrast to the Christian worldview (with Western influence) which has a linear concept of time (1974:41). The perpetual rhythms of living and learning are not separated or thought of in different sequences. Second, it represents the continuousness of life activity (as in the wheel of Karma). And third, using the spinning wheel as a diagram of the “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model points to the fact that the task of the “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model is a process, an ongoing, life-long commitment. The “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model strongly emphasizes the value of life-long learning. It firmly holds that as long as the wheel of one’s life keeps spinning, there is always need for one to learn by being a “Khit-Pen” man or woman.

One point for evaluating the lessons in the first year at SEANBC was to see whether or not the “Khit-Pen” Theological Education dynamics were present in the life of the students. As it is shown in the diagram, if the full understanding, appreciation, and effectiveness of this model is to be realized, the five stages must be functionally connected. The diagram of the “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model may be drawn as follows:



*Diagram Showing the Connection Between the  
“Khit-Pen” Model’s Five Stages*

### **Observation**

When successful, the “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model will increase the effectiveness of Thai pastors in relating the gospel to the realities of life, and the problem will be solved. Thai students in Bible schools and seminaries will learn to exercise their intellectual ability in reflecting the scriptural truths in light of the issues and questions in the context in which they live. They will learn from, and interact with, the people with the intent to understand the cultural context in which they minister. As a methodology for contextualizing theological education, the “Khit-Pen” Theological Education Model will help students to know the Scripture and their people, and to be able to blend text with the context.

It is quite difficult to comprehend fully why Vorapipatana’s “Khit-Pen” model of education was not widely caught on by Thais. I notice, however, that resistance to innovation and reluctance to take risks on the part of Thai educators in the past seemed to be one of the main reasons for such refusal. Since the primary concern of Vorapipatana’s “Khit-Pen” was essentially to enable learners to break away from traditional fatalism and passivity (or to “think outside of the box”), it was unlikely to gain wide popularity from traditional educators who were accustomed to maintaining their bureaucratic structure and status quo.

However, the demands for the country's development have given Vorapipatana's "Khit-Pen" model a new appreciation of nonformal ways of providing education for those who either have not had access to formal schooling or whose formal education has proved inadequate or irrelevant. In the wake of a push toward industrialization and development which demands the participation of large sections of population, the formal system of education fails to give them the skills they need to compete in technological societies. The existing formal institutions are incapable of undertaking a task of such magnitude.

Likewise, the "Khit-Pen" Theological Education Model steps outside anything that has ever been done before in Thailand. As an integration and interaction between the West and the East, this model synthesizes and applies concepts and principles in line with successful contemporary models. It sets out to answer specific questions and issues that have been raised for leaders in Thai context. It helps leaders to think through the issues and problems in light of the scriptural truth. Through this model Thai church leaders are equipped to exercise their intellectual ability and creativity, thereby formulating their own thinking pattern in applying biblical truths in the light of the issues and questions within their life context.

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*A Response to*  
**The Khit-Pen Theological Education Model:  
 A New Methodology for Contextualizing Theological  
 Education in Thailand**

Neville Bartle

Daniel's paper on Theological Education, which is derived from his Doctoral dissertation at Asbury Seminary has made me think. At first I thought, "This paper does not really deal with hermeneutics, but theological education." But then I thought, "Is it possible to deal with theological education and not deal with hermeneutics?" Daniel's paper certainly does deal with the issue "How much should culture influence our hermeneutics?" Daniel raises the question of spiritual authority, which is certainly a hermeneutical issue. He says that for many theological students, "The words of the missionary have become the primary source of religious authority by which the cultural issues are judged and evaluated." Regardless of how saintly or orthodox the missionary is, that is not acceptable hermeneutics.

The Khit Pen model "sets out to tackle theological questions and issues found within the unique context of the Thai churches which have not been adequately discussed by the Western educational models." This is in contrast to the traditional educational model where students were trained to "memorize the information they have received from their trainers and to transmit the information to their local congregations, irrespective of its relevance." Unfortunately this problem is not unique to Thailand. Too many students have been placed in a passive, receiving, container-like role.

Daniel presents an interactive dialogical approach to theological education that involves five stages. His paper is quite long so it may be helpful to summarize the five stages.

1. *Preparation.* Through a questionnaire, the teacher learns from the student basic information concerning the student's Christian life and their expectations in relation to the college. They are also asked

concerning the learning styles they prefer and the courses of study that they think will be most helpful and least helpful.

This gets the student actively involved in the learning process right from the beginning. This helps to develop a training program that is relevant and related to the student's needs and learning styles. The usual system is that students are "trained to memorize the information they have received from their trainers and transmit it to their congregations irrespective of its relevance" (p. 125).

2. *Exploring the Issues.* The "teacher and students study local questions and issues from an objective, nonjudgmental point of view" (p. 129). They look at prevailing questions the people are asking inside and outside the church. These questions may be cultural, religious, social or political. The student starts therefore with issues of everyday life that are both familiar and relevant, and moves towards the unfamiliar.
3. *Integrating with Scripture.* The teacher and students study the Scripture within its own historic and cultural contexts and see how it relates to the cultural and social issues that have been studied in part two. "The Scripture is the standard of truth upon which all other issues are reflected and judged" (p. 130). This is a need-centered approach to theological education in which the students help to set the agenda, and seek with God's help to study scripture and find God's answers for themselves and their communities. This is in contrast to a teacher-dominated approach in which the teacher tells the student what the Scriptures said and meant. As noted earlier, "many times the words of the missionary have become the primary source of religious authority by which the cultural issues are judged and evaluated" (p. 131).
4. *Interacting with the Community.* Community refers to the people both inside and outside of the church. This interaction is accomplished by requiring student involvement with people in the community as part of the course requirements. In addition there is a required "Supervised Ministries" course. Daniel equates this interacting with the community with the "experience" component of the Wesleyan quadrilateral. The truths they have learned in the classroom must now be lived out in the church and community. Students connect theory with praxis, by getting involved in social issues and problems.
5. *Implementation.* Implementation is the final segment of the cycle. Implementation is the student's ability to integrate the truth they have learned and to incorporate it into their personal as well as their communal lives. They have been encouraged to put into practice the

insights they have gained from their investigation of scripture and interaction with the community.

Central to this model is the primacy of scripture upon which the five stages are founded. The whole program is very flexible, thus giving the students freedom and creativity to respond.

There are a number of features in the third stage of "Integrating with Scripture" that are especially related to hermeneutics.

- \* The importance of the recognition of the authority of the Scriptures and a thorough knowledge of their teachings.
- \* A careful study of the biblical message within its own historic and cultural contexts.
- \* Scriptures stand in judgment on all cultural elements.
- \* The teacher takes the lead in helping the students understand what the Bible has to say regarding issues and questions confronting the community.
- \* In traditional models the *students were told* what the Scripture said and meant. In this model, the *students are involved*, with the guidance of the teacher, in *studying scripture and finding God's answer for themselves and their communities*.

This model is a definite departure from a teacher-dominated model of education that many of us grew up with. It has a number of strengths that I will mention. There are also a number of questions that I have, which are not addressed in the paper.

### **Strengths**

1. The Khit Pen model takes culture and the life situation very seriously. The focus is very much on Christianity as a life to be lived. Theology that ignores culture will be considered by many to be both foreign and irrelevant. If theology is to be relevant it must relate to people's lives.
2. This model emphasizes doing theology rather than learning theology. It is certainly opposed to the students passively learning a prepackaged theology.
3. The model emphasizes social transformation. Ministry is done in community, which consists of people both within and outside the church.
4. Daniel has emphasized, and rightly so, that we need to contextualize methods of theological education and not just the content of theology.
5. Daniels circular model is quite appropriate, for the issues arise within the life and experience of the community and pass through stages of

exploration, integration, interaction with the community and finally implementation. Implementation does not take place in an artificial learning environment, but back in the social setting where it began. This naturally raises other questions, which start the learning cycle all over again.

### Unanswered Questions

Dr Saengwichai's paper leaves me with some unanswered questions. Perhaps Daniel can help to answer them.

1. Integration with Scripture. In the second stage, the students are encouraged to explore the issues and look at questions that people are asking inside and outside the church. This then leads to integrating with Scripture. Scripture is clearly given a central place in the model, but how do we approach scripture? Unless there is a solid foundation of scriptural knowledge, how can the integration with Scripture take place? It seems to me that there needs to be a foundation of Biblical knowledge to be in place before the integration can take place. How do you address this?
2. You quote Groome, "a critique of the Story [Scripture] in light of the stories [realities] and a critique of the students' present story in light of the past Story." Does this mean that you use a narrative approach in your theological education? Do you approach the Bible as being God's Story and teach from Genesis to Revelation as one continuing story, with numerous themes and sub-themes? Or do you follow a traditional systematic approach to learning Bible and theology?
3. To what extent do the needs of the students or the issues they raise control the curriculum? It appears that in the Khit-Pen model, theological education does not always begin with an established agenda, but often arises from within the life situation of the students. This has the advantage of helping people see the Bible as relevant, for it relates to issues they are facing in their own lives and social situation. It also makes students think deeply and does away with memorizing a theoretical knowledge. However how does one work this out practically in a college setting? It would be good to hear how this has been accomplished as an ongoing experience.

Thank you Daniel, for being bold and innovative. This model challenges us to involve our students in looking at prevalent issues confronting the church, and then commit ourselves to finding answers from the Word of God. Hopefully we will be able to help the students combine theological learning with life experience, so that communities will be transformed by the Gospel.

*A Response to***“The ‘Khit-Pen’ Theological Education Model: A New Methodology for Contextualizing Theological Education in Thailand” by Daniel Saengwichai**

Hong, Ki Young

The author discusses the “Khit-Pen” theological education model which he adapted from the indigenous concept of adult learning originally developed by Dr. Kovit Vorapipatana who had worked for the Ministry of Education in Thailand. To put it another way, he develops a contextualized theological education model based on Dr. Vorapipatana’s “adult education” program. In this sense, the “Khit-Pen” model would be a contextualized theological education model. Healthy contextualization calls for keeping the balance between the need to communicate the Gospel effectively and relevantly within a given culture and the need to maintain the integrity of the Gospel itself, so that the message received is both meaningful and convicting (Keith E. Eitel 1998:312). The author maintains well the balance between the Gospel and Thai culture in that as Darell L. Whiteman (1997:2) stressed, “contextualization attempts to communicate the Gospel in word and deed and to establish the church in ways that make sense to people within their local cultural context, presenting Christianity in such a way that it meets people’s deepest needs and penetrates their world view, thus allowing them to follow Christ and remain within their own culture.” The author affirms following Christ in Thai ways.

Literally the term “Khit-Pen” means “to think” or “to be able to think,” to solve any problems confronting Thai people in various life situations. As the author implied, the model is problem-centered, namely, “problem-posing and problem-solving” so that the people can take proactive steps toward finding solutions for their own problems. The “Khit-Pen” model with that connotation is well applied to SEANBC’s theological education in terms of “field education” by the author. Both the teachers and the students at SEANBC need to be able to think of some effective ways to solve their own teaching/learning problems in Sitz im

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Leben. The author is one of them who took into serious consideration the issue of contemporary education methodology in terms of a theological education model. As the author said, “[the model] is designed to be an interactive, dialogical approach to theological training which calls for active learners who are learning to think and takes into account the learners’ unique and diversified need and potentials and the cultural relevance.” He actually put the education model into practice inside and outside SEANBC. Based on the components of Wesley’s Quadrilateral (Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience), the “Khit-Pen” model operates around the five stages, as the figure illustrates. In this paper, he seems to discuss more descriptively rather than analytically the five stages: preparation, exploring the issues, integrating with the Scripture, interacting with the community, and implementation. At each stage, he deals with the issues through the Scripture and emphasizes implementation. Sometimes he illustrates what he experienced and reported.

At stage 1, he discusses “preparation” and stresses raising questions as an effective method of teaching/learning. It is a kind of “question and answer” method which has turned out to be effective especially when a seminar type of education is attempted in the classroom. It is effective when a teacher tries to attract students’ attention concerning a specific unit. The author stresses the work of the Holy Spirit among the participants so that they can feel comfortable, welcome, equal, and empowered to participate in the educational process. He maintains that the Holy Spirit leads them into all truth (Jn 16:13).

At stage 2, he discusses “exploring the issues” in which he deals with the Buddhist event, *Songkran* day (Thai New Year). He holds that this day can be taken as the day to commemorate the Christian event of cleansing the spirit and refreshing the soul by performing foot washing. In addition, this ceremony signifies Christian servanthood to one another (Mk 10:45). Likewise, he wants the students to collect their traditional values, types, and practices to theologize them in their historical and cultural contexts. He quotes Darrell L. Whiteman’s statement: “Until non-Western Christians learn how to exegete their own cultural context as well as they exegete the biblical text, [no amount of theological knowledge] will automatically enable and encourage church leaders to plant and grow indigenous, contextualized churches” (1997:5). Here, the concept of “critical contextualization,” developed by Paul G. Hiebert (1987:109-110), can be applied in terms of developing local theology. The students need to listen to culture and bring Christ to the culture (Robert J. Schreiter 1985:28-29). The author understands clearly the importance of “listening to culture” so as to develop contextualized theologies by articulating the Gospel, church, and tradition. His discussion of stage 2 reflects careful

research and reveals his consistent endeavor to explore the key issues related to constructing local theology. At stage 3, he discusses "integrating with the Scripture" which includes also interpreting the biblical texts within their own unique historical and cultural contexts. This stage involves "a careful study of the biblical message within its own historic and cultural contexts" while recognizing the authority of the Scriptures and a thorough knowledge of their teachings. Here he stresses the Scripture as the standard to judge the historic and cultural contexts. This emphasis demonstrates his theological position, that is, the evangelical theology of mission. He asks the students to study the Scriptures in light of ancestral and traditional practices ("realities of one's own circumstances") in Thai society. He stresses students-oriented education, that is, audience-oriented communication in terms of cross-cultural missions. In addition, he suggests the employment of Wesley's theological interpretation model based on "tradition, reason, and experience" to study the Scriptures. Further, he affirms that it is appropriate to interpret the Scriptures not only individually but also communally. In other words, a canonical approach to the interpretation of the Scriptures is needed.

At stage 4, he discusses "interacting with the community" while introducing the teaching curriculum of SEANBC which maintains "the continuous mingling of cognitive and behavioral activities—the relationship between knowing and doing, rhetoric and behavior, reflection and action, theory and practice, cognitive and psychomotor, truth and experience, witness and life" (Duane H. Elmer 1984:226-243). According to the author, SEANBC operates "Supervised Ministries" in each semester. By means of this system, the students can meet with the people in the community and build up their "street credibility" rather than their "library credibility." It is one of the ways for them to have dialogues with the people in the community outside SEANBC. The author describes vividly the picture of cooperation between the students and the people, as they are involved in evangelism and community development work. Here, also he points out "experience" the fourth ingredient of Wesley's Quadrilateral which plays a crucial role in Wesley's theology, to explain the stage of "interacting with the community." For example, during the semester break, he made a trip with his students to the Leoy province. As a result, they not only shared the Gospel message with the people, but also learned from the people in the community. According to the students' evaluative reports, such an involvement results in lifting up both social concern and social service.

At stage 5, he discusses "implementation" in which the students are "equipped to think, reflect, and act upon issues from a biblical perspective and from the perspective of world views, cultures, values, and social and



historical situations.” For him, “implementation” refers to the students’ ability to integrate, to re-invent, or to reproduce the truth they have learned and to incorporate it into their personal as well as their communal lives. They practice the insights which they learned from biblical interpretation and interaction with the community. At this stage, flexibility, as opposed to rigidity, permeates the whole process of the contextualized theological education model. The “Khit-Pen” theological education model is flexible and adaptable to respond in new varied and contextual ways. The author experimented with the model in the course of “Church Planting in the Thai Context.” The results turned out to be great in that his students discovered a great potential for starting a new church among the people they had visited frequently. They implemented what they had learned theoretically in the classroom. This philosophy of education is reflected in the mission statement of the SEANBC as follows: “SEANBC emphasizes the integration of theory and practice. The academic study of theology, Bible, and ministry must be applied to the life and work setting of the minister.”

Meanwhile, the author observes that the “Khit-Pen” education model was not widely accepted and applied by the Thai people. He presents several reasons for such refusal in Thai society, although these reasons are not discussed in details. Why was the “Khit-Pen” model not accepted and applied largely in Thailand while it was adapted to meet the needs of developing countries like the Philippines, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Ghana? The author would need to investigate more accurate reasons for resistance and reluctance to the “Khit-Pen” model in Thai society in order to make the “Khit-Pen” theological education model more adaptable and appropriate at least in Thailand. He projects what he wants to be done in the future through the “Khit-Pen” model. He says, “When successful, the ‘Khit-Pen’ theological model will increase the effectiveness of Thai pastors in relating the Gospel to the realities of life, and the problem will be solved . . . the ‘Khit-Pen’ theological education model will help students to know the Scripture and their people, and to be able to blend text with the context.”

However, the author summarizes some features of the “Khit-Pen” theological education model. “It sets out to answer specific questions and issues that have been raised for leaders in Thai context. It helps the leaders to think through the issues and problems in light of the scriptural truth. Through this model, Thai church leaders are equipped to exercise their intellectual ability and creativity, thereby formulating their own thinking pattern in applying biblical truths in the light of the issues and questions within their life context.”

As reviewed, this paper has greatly contributed to developing a contextualized theological education model which can be applied in Thai cultural context. Still, it needs to be time-tested to be applicable in a different cultural context. The "Khit-Pen" theological education model is very worthy in terms of contextualization. This model strikes the balance between the Gospel and culture. As a result, it maintains the identity of the Gospel itself and the flexibility of communication methods. This is an excellent paper which deals with theological education models in terms of contextualization.

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## Evangelism

Robert C. Donahue

### Introduction

Evangelism is the proclamation or telling of the good news of the death, burial and resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ on the third day (see I Corinthians 15:3, 4). It is a concept that has become clouded with adjectives and add-ons in recent times. Today we hear of personal evangelism, compassionate evangelism, holiness evangelism, lifestyle evangelism, evangelism *and* church growth, and many more. What about just simply *evangelism*?

Evangelism is a term with many synonyms in both the *koine* Greek of the New Testament and the English language. David B. Barrett comments on the related word, “evangelization”: “The Greek verb, *euangelizo*, found 25 times (with cognate) in the OT, and 132 times in the NT—means ‘to spread the good news of the gospel—to preach, to persuade, to call to faith in Christ’—has 42 synonyms in biblical Greek, and the English verb has 700 synonyms in current English, which can be reduced to 400 distinct and different dimensions of evangelization.”<sup>1</sup> But the core idea is the announcing of the good news about Christ. The New Testament Scriptures give considerable insight into the idea of evangelism.

### Insights from Scripture

In Matthew 4:19 and the parallel passage in Mark 1:17 we find the words: “‘Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’” Jesus’ point of inviting His disciples to follow Him so that He will make them “fishers of men” is an invitation to do evangelism. Notice that the methodology of fishing referred to was with boats that took fishers out where the fish were, and that nets were used so that large numbers of fish were brought in at the same time. Note that *anthropoi* is used in this

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<sup>1</sup>David B. Barrett, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 346-347.

passage indicating that all people—all of humanity—is included in the view of “fishing.” The “fishers of people” alluded to here may well have Old Testament references in Jeremiah 16:16 and Habakkuk 1:15. It is interesting that these particular disciples fished on the Sea of Galilee which had the reputation of containing many different kinds of fish—153 different kinds according to ancient tradition which was supposed to represent all the other nations of the earth. Perhaps this reinforces the wide variety of humanity envisioned. Galilee itself was known from ancient times as Galilee of the Nations. Adam Clarke notes that it was

so called, because it was inhabited by Egyptians, Arabians, and Phoenicians, according to the testimony of Strabo and others. The Hebrew *goyim*, and the Greek *ethnon*, signify nations; and, in the Old and New Testaments, mean those people who were not descendants of any of the twelve tribes. The word Gentiles, from *gens*, a nation, signifies the same. It is worthy of remark, that it was a regular tradition among the ancient Jews, that the Messiah should begin His ministry in Galilee.<sup>2</sup>

In John 4:35 (KJV) Jesus is quoted as saying: “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.” The fields being “white unto harvest” is a reference to the people who are ready to come into the kingdom of God announced by the preaching of Jesus and His disciples. This passage refers to evangelism, and the white fields represent the magnitude of the work and the vast numbers of people to be gathered in the harvest. One of the main points Jesus makes about gathering the harvest is the urgency and the timeliness for gathering the harvest, i.e., gathering people into the kingdom of God presently—not waiting until some later time.

There is an evangelism problem which Jesus discussed in the ninth chapter of Matthew’s gospel, verses 37 and 38: “Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field’” (NIV). The crux of the evangelism problem is the lack of laborers for the fields. The solution is the command of Jesus to pray to the Lord to send more laborers into the fields.

Much is made of the Great Commission found in the 28<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew, verses 18, 19 and 20: “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All

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<sup>2</sup>Adam Clarke, *Commentary, Vol. I - Matthew to the Acts* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, n.d.), 60.

authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (NIV). It is interesting the this passage was not the motivating factor for the early church nor for the much of the church ages to follow. The imminent biblical scholar of the Reformation, John Calvin, though personally promoting missionary activity, did not understand this passage as the command for the world evangelization for the believers of his day.<sup>3</sup> John Wesley, while acknowledging the passage for commanding the making of disciples, chooses to emphasize the teaching and baptizing aspects of the passage and does not tie it to any universal command for world missions.<sup>4</sup>

The early Christian certainly did not seem to use this passage as a reason for doing world evangelization. It was hardly quoted by any of the church writers in the first few centuries of the church. Perhaps the reasons lies in how evangelism was understood and what motivated the early believers to spread the gospel. Michael Green points out that “It is important to stress this prime motive of loving gratitude to God because it is not infrequently assumed that the direct command of Christ to evangelize was the main driving force behind Christian mission.”<sup>5</sup>

It has become popular with some to link the Great Commission of Matthew with the Great Command to love God and neighbors of Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; and Luke 10:27—“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind’” (Matthew 22:37). There is nothing wrong in linking these two passages, but there is nothing particularly compelling to do so. Some seem to imply that the emphasis upon loving neighbors must not be lost in the doing of world evangelization. The implication is that this emphasis can be lost if only the Great Commission is held up as a model for doing world evangelization. This is can hardly be so in that all the teachings of Jesus are stressed in the Matthew passage.

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<sup>3</sup>John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelist, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, Reprint, Volume Third, translated by Rev. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999).

<sup>4</sup>John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London: The Epworth Press, 1950), 138.

<sup>5</sup>Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 239.

The dynamic of the Christian witness grew out of a loving focus upon Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus proclaimed this focus in Acts 1:8: “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (KJV). Whether one understands this as the KJV has it, implying the witness is about Jesus, or understands it as the NIV has it (“my witnesses”), that the witnesses belong to Jesus, the focus is still upon Jesus Christ. That focus was infused with a strong current of loving devotion and thankfulness. Roland Allen notes that the Great Commission is not a new legalism to be obeyed, but a spiritual command based upon the promise of His divine presence with His disciples. His presence “is not a reward offered to those who obey; it is rather the assurance that those who are commanded will be able to obey.”<sup>6</sup>

In the book of Acts we find a wonderful paradigm of the simple presentation and spread of the gospel among the nations in the New Testament church. Acts 11:19-21 records: “Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.” Note that the passage speaks of “telling the message”—a reference to proclamation of the gospel. The “message” is the gospel or the God-story of the coming of Jesus, His death, burial, and resurrection. “In short, the evangelistic message is based on the Word of God; it seeks to tell the story that God has already acted out.”<sup>7</sup> They “began to speak” to the Greeks—another reference to evangelism. They spoke about the “good news”—the *evangelium*.

While they were evangelizing, “the hand of the Lord was with them.” This indicates demonstrated power that the people could see and feel. “Symbolically, ‘hand’ expresses strength and power, especially God’s great power (e.g., Ex 3:19-20) when that power is used to perform His will.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Roland Allen, *Missionary Principles* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 22 ff.

<sup>7</sup>Walter A. Elwell, editor, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 383.

<sup>8</sup>Lawrence O. Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 324.

### Theological Reflections

Let us consider that many people respond to displays of power as they did in Jesus' ministry. Much theological orientation today seems to assume that people will respond to a logically reasoned presentation about personal guilt and salvation. In reality many cultures are not guilt cultures and will not readily respond to such presentations. Other cultures are not oriented toward the use of logical but rather intuition and emotion. Melba Maggay, for instance, has made some interesting observations about Filipino society: "Fully 80% of people attracted to the Four Square Church in the Philippines . . . came through interest in personal healing. Filipinos are interested in potency (power), not in guilt and salvation."<sup>9</sup>

The power of God, expressed as the "Lord's hand" was a significant factor in the results that are reported in this passage of Acts. The results were: the people believed, and they turned to the Lord. Apparently the telling of the message and the power of God worked together to bring the people to the point of faith, and a turning of their lives toward God.

This is, of course, the teaching of Paul found in Romans 1:16,17: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (NIV). The Greek word for power in this passage is *dunamis*. This is not the power of authority but the power of dynamism. This is an explosive, moving, generating kind of power. It is inextricably bound up with Jesus Himself and His death and resurrection. "Jesus Himself becomes the model for God's exercise of power. Jesus was 'declared with power to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead' (Ro 1:4)."<sup>10</sup>

John Wesley understood from this Roman passage that the gospel was indeed "The great and gloriously powerful means of saving all who accept salvation in God's own way. As St. Paul comprises the sum of the gospel in this epistle, so he does the sum of the epistle in this and the following verse [17]."<sup>11</sup> That power is also always to be understood in relation to the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>9</sup>Robert C. Donahue, "International Symposium on Asian Mission" in *The Mediator*, vol. 3:2 (April 2002), 114.

<sup>10</sup>Richards, *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words*, 583.

<sup>11</sup>John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1950), 519.

It is the Spirit of God who raised Christ from the dead, and is therefore at the very center of the gospel power. The promise is found in Romans 8:11—“And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you” (NIV). The Holy Spirit is at work as the source of the dynamic power in the gospel to make Jesus known in an intimate and saving way by the peoples of the world. Donald Metz points out that “Holiness is the dynamic of spiritual power. . . .”<sup>12</sup>

George G. Hunter III comments about the Holy Spirit: “He gives the power for the spread of the gospel. We do not organize or engineer the work of the Holy Spirit . . . Indeed, where the people of God are most receptive, seeking that power with all their hearts, we are assured that the power will come in God’s good time.”<sup>13</sup> The dynamic of the power of the Spirit within the believer works itself out in a kind of “natural” evangelism that simply flows from the believer’s new life.

Something should be said about the place of the doctrine of the Trinity in regard to evangelism. The explicit formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity was a reaction to non-apostolic teaching that was rampant in the fourth century.<sup>14</sup> However, the doctrine of the Trinity was also central to the evangelistic efforts in the Irish Celtic church of the fifth century and beyond. This is especially illustrated in the “Confession” of Patrick of Ireland that shows Patrick made constant use of the trinitarian formula in his evangelistic efforts among the Irish.<sup>15</sup>

Much of the reason for this seems to lie in the area of understanding. If the hearers of the gospel can understand the God of the gospel story and His Son, Jesus Christ, they will more readily respond to Him. John Wesley was also eager to make salvation understood. He was careful to anchor his evangelistic preaching in a thoroughly orthodox Trinitarian understanding

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<sup>12</sup>Donald S. Metz, *Studies in Biblical Holiness* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1971), 205.

<sup>13</sup>George G. Hunter III, *To Spread the Power: Church Growth in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 212.

<sup>14</sup>Roderick T. Leupp, *Knowing The Name of God: A Trinitarian Patestry of Grace, Faith & Community* (Downer’s Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 67 ff.

<sup>15</sup>See St. Patrick, *Confession*. See also, E. A. Thompson, *Who Was Saint Patrick?* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985); and especially R. P. C. Hanson, *The Life and Writing of the Historical St Patrick* (New York, 1983).



of Scripture. His explanations of salvation were especially careful in this regard.<sup>16</sup> Kenneth Grider has made this point:

A more-or-less correct understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity will help us in our winning people to Christ. It will help people understand the offices of the three Persons of the Godhead if we say that it is the Father who sent the Son and who actually does the forgiving of us; if we say that the father is enabled to forgive us and still Himself remain just (Rom. 3:23-26) because of Christ's function of dying on our behalf and being raised from the dead; and if we tell people that the Holy Spirit's special function is to apply what is said to specific persons in specific ways, to convict individuals of sin, and to help those who are forgiven of their acts of sin to yield themselves up to God in order; by faith, to receive both cleansing from Adamic depravity and empowerment.<sup>17</sup>

### Early Church Example

There was a very large degree to which the early Christians were influenced and affected by the "press and pull" of the ideological, material, and political ethos of their day. Certainly Jewish social and religious customs had become highly exclusionary by practice. This exclusiveness brought bitter disunity among the Jews themselves. Edersheim says, "The Pharisees and Sadducees held opposite principles, and hated each other, the Essenes looked down upon them both."<sup>18</sup>

All the Twelve Apostles and Paul were imbibed of this attitude to some degree or were affected by it. It is clear that Peter was hindered by the strong separatist social notions of the Jews (see Acts 10), as were many in the Jerusalem church. This attitude did not go away, for Paul was constantly harassed by Jewish elements within the churches insisting upon adherence to current Jewish religious and social ideology.

At first Peter seems to have represented those who strongly supported the status quo. Paul, on the other hand, seems to have been representative of those who were willing to challenge the prevailing Jewish status quo in this area of separatist attitude for the sake of Christ and the

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<sup>16</sup>Albert C. Outler, editor, *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 124 ff.

<sup>17</sup>J. Kenneth Grider, *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1994), 159.

<sup>18</sup>Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life In The Days of Christ*, Reprint (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 25.

furtherance of the gospel. Paul's attitude was: "I am made all things to all, that I might by all means save some" (I Corinthians 9:22b).

It appears in Acts that the early church tended to be made up of the poorer classes. Yet, in Acts 4, there is a description of a community of believers sharing their wealth. There were those of more substantial means; Barnabus is an example of a wealthy believer who sold land and presented the proceeds to the apostles for distribution to help the work of Christ. The church among the Jews was less Sadducean, with an emphasis on this world, its pleasures, and its material comforts. It tended to be more Essene with an emphasis on spiritual matters and other-worldly concerns. Paul expressed this thought in Philippians 4:11: "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." Jesus had instructed His first evangelists (the seventy) not to take extra provisions with them. This attitude toward material things probably led to the very aesthetic lifestyles made famous in the following centuries.

The early Christians were evangelists within the context of their political realities. There is some speculation that Simon Zealotes had been connected with the radical nationalistic Zealot movement. Political involvement was expected of the church by most Jews. However, Christians did not participate in the Jewish rebellions of A. D. 70 and 135. This refusal to be involved in nationalistic political action caused the Christians eventually to be viewed as traitors to their own Jewish people.<sup>19</sup>

This was true also of many of the Gentile Christians as well. Both Paul and Peter pointed toward the reign of Christ which would put an end to the political system of the world. The *Revelation* seems to paint this same theme in broad strokes. The Christian evangelists and their converts were looking for the collapse of the whole world political system, and although they might use it and even honor its leaders as Paul did, they generally did not seem to be much interested in it.

Political terminology was used in relationship to evangelism: king and kingdom, rulers and powers. *Ekklesia*, a term referring to the political body of citizens in a city-state, was used in connection with God's people. Jesus is referred to as a "king," yet His kingdom is not of this world.

The cultures and civilizations in which the early Christians lived had a strong influence upon their perceptions. In Philippians 3:5 Paul makes a special proud, and approving reference to his own personal Jewish background. He seems to accept his Jewish culture and civilization as

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<sup>19</sup>Leonhard Goppelt, translated by Robert A. Guelich, *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times*, Baker Book House edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 121.

superior. On the other hand, Paul was appreciative of the cultures of others as seen in his reference to a Greek writer during his speech on Mars Hill. As to the Gentile cultures, Paul intimates their origin was in grave ignorance of the living God (Romans 1). Roland Allen has observed that demon worship was really the “operative religion of the vast mass of people of the empire.”<sup>20</sup>

In reference to the Gentile nations, Matthew speaks of them as those “which sat in darkness saw great light . . .” (Matthew 4:16). Paul understood the nations to be morally corrupt and spiritually blinded (Romans 1). “The Gentiles have no excuse for their ‘ungodliness . . .’”<sup>21</sup> The nations were perceived as unable to find God, and hence were in need of the good news of Christ who came to bring God and humanity together in His own person. The hope of salvation is held out to the nations. It is not just a personal spiritual salvation of the soul alone which is offered. “Redemption is total: body, spirit, structure, world, cosmos.”<sup>22</sup>

Making the gospel known to the peoples of the world means that the written gospel is essential. It was so in the first centuries of the early church. The gospels written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were the “tracts” of that day which presented the gospel of Jesus in a marvelous way. They told the story from different vantage points of the life, death, burial and resurrection of the Christ. These gospels were early translated from the common “trade” language, koine Greek, into the vernaculars of peoples everywhere. This continues today and has had a profound effect in spreading the gospel among multitudes of people all over the world. The translation and re-translation of the gospel is necessary to help people make sense of the divine story of God. “Evangelism is never proclamation in a vacuum; but always to people, and the message must be given in terms that make sense to them.”<sup>23</sup>

There was a burning zeal to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to others. This was evident in the records of the churches of the book of Acts. It continued for a long time as characteristic of that early church

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<sup>20</sup>Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St Paul's Or Ours?* American edition (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 28.

<sup>21</sup>Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 327.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 115.

period. Writing about the fervor of evangelists of the second century, Michael Green comments:

Then they set out on long journeys, doing the work of evangelists, eagerly striving to preach Christ to those who had never heard the word of faith, and to deliver to them the holy gospels. In foreign lands they simply laid the foundations of the faith. That done, they appointed others as shepherds, entrusting them with the care of the new growth, while they themselves proceed with the grace and co-operation of God to other countries and other peoples.<sup>24</sup>

The evangelists of that early church gave a basic model for evangelism that was world-embracing and Spirit-led. The model was free flowing, deeply spiritual in nature, and totally dependent upon the unction and power of the Holy Spirit. It is most significant that “the early Christians depended less on human wisdom and expertise, more on divine initiative and guidance.”<sup>25</sup> The itinerant ministry of roving evangelists, supported by the local congregations, and directed by the Spirit of God was the model of early church period. This model was to be largely revived in the Evangelical Awakening in which John Wesley played such a large role.

### **Wesleyan Roots**

Perhaps we should look back at the story of our own Wesleyan roots in regard to evangelism. Perhaps here we may discover the dynamic and simplicity of the power of evangelism. John Wesley’s own conversion to Christ may provide an important illustration of evangelism for us to consider.

It was a troubled young missionary named John Wesley who took note of the calm assurance and bold witness of a group of Moravian believers. They were on board ship during a storm while crossing of the Atlantic Ocean. These joyfully committed Moravian believers had set sail to be missionaries, motivated by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 169.

<sup>25</sup>J. Herbert Kane, *Christian Missions in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 73.

continuous prayer which eventually propelled them across the world as heralds of the good news of Christ.<sup>26</sup>

These Moravians apparently did not give up on even this young Anglican priest, for members of their group continued to meet with John Wesley upon his return to England. It was to a largely Moravian society meeting that John Wesley went on the evening of May 24, 1738 for a reading from Martin Luther's preface to Romans. It is instructive to read the account of this evening given by Wesley himself in his *Journal*:

About a quarter before nine while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for my salvation: And an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death. . . .<sup>27</sup>

For Wesley the gospel became applicable personally through faith in the merit obtained by Christ through His death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit was the divine agent working through faith in the human heart to give a new heart and a witness of assurance of the divine work and acceptance. Until the evening of May 24, 1738, the evangel had not been operative for salvation in Wesley's personal experience. It was faith in Christ which he heard from the reading based upon Romans which was instrumental in his inward conversion. John Wesley's personal conversion experience is a powerful reminder of the central place of faith in Christ. That faith is based upon the hearing of the Word of God. We are also reminded of the importance of the Word of God. It is the Word of God that the Holy Spirit takes to human heart to create that faith. This idea is expounded in the tenth chapter of Romans verses 13-17. James Moffat gives this translation:

Everyone who invokes the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how are they to invoke One in whom they have never heard? And how are they ever to hear, without a preacher? And who can men preach unless they are sent?—as it is written, How pleasant is the coming of men with glad, good news! But they have not all given into the gospel of glad

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<sup>26</sup>Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), 70-71.

<sup>27</sup>John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley: A Selection*, edited with an Introduction by Elisabeth Jay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 34, 35.

news? No, Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed what they have heard from us? (You see, faith must come from what is heard, and what is heard comes from word of Christ.)<sup>28</sup>

A. Skevington Wood sites Dr. Henry Bett as one who traced the exact passage in Martin Luther's preface to *Romans* which John Wesley heard the night of his conversion. Luther was dealing with the idea of faith in Christ:

“Wherefore let us conclude that faith alone justifies, and that faith alone fulfills the law. For faith through the merit of Christ obtains the Holy Spirit, which Spirit makes us new hearts, exhilarates, excites and influences our heart, so that it may do those things willingly of love, which the law commands; and so, at the last, good works indeed proceed from the faith which works so mightily, and which is so lively in our hearts.” Thus John Wesley was converted by reading in *Romans*—and the Evangelical Revival was inaugurated.<sup>29</sup>

The faith that worked so mightily in John Wesley in conversion and consequently in the great Evangelical Revival itself was faith in the work of Christ—His death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead. This “gospel of glad news” is the Word of Christ set forth in Scripture. “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (*Romans* 1:16,17; NIV).

Wesley apparently did not have just the saving of the soul in mind, but holiness of life was his object. The goal of evangelism for Wesley was holiness. He fully expected the converts to experience the sanctifying grace of God not only initially but entirely. A. Skevington Wood quotes from John Wesley's letters to his brother Charles:

If we duly join faith and works in all our preaching, we shall not fail of a blessing. But of all preaching, what is usually called gospel preaching is the most useless, if not the most mischievous; a dull, yea or lively, harangue on the sufferings of Christ or salvation by faith without strongly inculcating

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<sup>28</sup>James Moffat, *A New Translation of the New Testament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1922), 197.

<sup>29</sup>A. Skevington Wood, *Life by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), 10-11.

holiness. I see more and more that this naturally tends to drive holiness out of the world.<sup>30</sup>

This holiness was not a purely individual matter. It was a personal lifestyle of righteous living which was to be accomplished within the framework of a community of like-minded persons pursuing holiness. It was to be a lifestyle which directly affected the larger society. In Wesley's view, "The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness by social holiness."<sup>31</sup>

The idea of what is preached in evangelistic proclamation was all encompassing for Wesley. It was a view which brought all things under the Lordship of Christ and aimed at holiness of personal life and in society. He brings the whole of gospel to bear in his evangelistic preaching with a conclusion of sanctified living held out before the people. In a letter to Ebenezer Blackwell, dated December 20, 1751, Wesley writes in this vein:

There must be clear association of God's sovereignty with man's responsibility; of Christ's sufferings on the Cross with man's involvement in what was purchased there for him; of the precious promises with the terrors of God's wrath; of the invitation to receive Christ with a deep conviction of sin; and of justification by faith with its scriptural corollary in newness of sanctified living. Only when all of these are held together and proclaimed together, is the whole gospel set forth. Otherwise . . . evangelism will be no more than a futile endeavour. . . .<sup>32</sup>

The idea of social holiness is well illustrated in John Welsey Bready's work: *England: Before and After Wesley—The Evangelical Revival and Social Reform*, which details the many applications of the gospel to slavery, education, prisons, penal code, war, use and abuse of money, liquor, politics, legal affairs, affairs of State, economics, dress,

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<sup>30</sup>A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart: John Wesley, the Evangelist* (Exeter, Devon, England: The Paternoster Press, 1967), 345. The reference is to Wesley's *Letters*, Vol. V. To Charles Wesley, 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1775.

<sup>31</sup>John Wesley and Charles Wesley, *List of Poetical Works with the Prefaces Connected with Them, 1738, 1739* (Albany, Oregon: Books for the Ages, Ages Software, The AGES Digital Library Collections), 437.

<sup>32</sup>A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart: John Wesley, Evangelist* (Exeter, Devon, England: The Paternoster Press, 1967), 150.

social work, recreation, medicine, children, labor and trade.<sup>33</sup> John Wesley's idea of evangelism seems to have been much involved with society reform and social righteousness.

While Wesley practiced a centripetal kind of evangelism at first as his almost exclusive approach, within less than a year after his Aldersgate experience he was preaching in the fields to the poor miners at Bristol. This was a practice he was to continue as his primary method of evangelizing.<sup>34</sup> Wesley was quite concerned to take the gospel to the people where they were rather than expecting them to enter a church building to hear the good news. He went out into the secular society to confront people with the gospel and proclaim its truth. David Watson reminds us: "The most effective method of evangelism in Wesley's day was in fact field preaching. . . ."<sup>35</sup>

Wesley was keen to associate with the poor even though he was a recognized scholar and an ordained priest in the Church of England, and therefore a member of the establishment of his day. This was something of a spectacle and a curiosity though a few others were known to do similar things as well.<sup>36</sup> He certainly made use of his position to do all he could to gain a hearing for the gospel he preached. "Surveying the unshepherded crowds at Bristol, he determined 'preaching the gospel to the poor' must take precedence over custom and 'propriety'. . . this was 'the very thing' the New Testament church was all about."<sup>37</sup>

### Application and Conclusion

A story is told about a watermelon vendor:

It was in a Korean village, and my wife came up to ask him how much a watermelon cost. He was so surprised at finding

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<sup>33</sup>John Wesley Bready, *England: Before and After Wesley—The Evangelical Revival and Social Reform* (London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1938).

<sup>34</sup>G. Holden Pike, *Wesley and His Preachers: Their Conquest of Britain* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1903), 15, 16.

<sup>35</sup>David Lowes Watson, *The Early Methodist Class Meeting: Its Origins and Significance* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), 149.

<sup>36</sup>George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne (Ireland), a contemporary of Wesley, was especially noted for his work with the poor Irish who were otherwise greatly despised by the English establishment of the time.

<sup>37</sup>Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley & Patterns for Church Renewal* (Downer's Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 38.



a long-nosed foreigner who spoke Korean that at first he was struck dumb. He even forgot to tell her the price. There was something more important he wanted to say. He asked, "Are you a Christian?" And when she replied, "Yes," he smiled all over. "Oh, I'm so glad," he said, "because if you weren't, I was going to tell you how much you are missing."<sup>38</sup>

The Christian watermelon vendor illustrates what Christian evangelism can be, and should be. Evangelism is simple; it is something anyone can do. It springs from the power of the Holy Spirit within, and from a personal inner joy of salvation that Jesus has provided. It is a joyful story of new life and wonderful new beginnings.

Today there is much focus on various methods of evangelism. Many of these methods demand memorization, such as the "Four Spiritual Laws," and the "Evangelism Explosion" program. There are any number of specialized approaches to evangelism each with its own special knowledge and techniques. There are many categories of evangelism as well. There is pastoral evangelism, crusade evangelism, small group evangelism, Sunday School evangelism, open air evangelism, lifestyle evangelism, vocational evangelism, visitation evangelism, camp evangelism, youth evangelism, radio and television evangelism, literature evangelism, Jesus Film evangelism, and personal evangelism just to name a few. All of these various approaches and categories may illustrate the breadth of the evangelistic endeavor but perhaps the simplicity of evangelism is obscured. It is the simplicity which puts the work of evangelism into the hands of the great general membership of the church, and keeps it from becoming the exclusive domain of the professionals.

Yet there is a need for considering a return to the itinerant preaching in the style John Wesley used so effectively in his day. Small groups who regularly go out and evangelize in ever growing circles from urban centers would make as much sense in today's increasingly urbanized societies as it did in Wesley's Britain which was just beginning to move toward large scale urbanization.

A modern Asian example of vigorous evangelism done in a largely Wesleyan frame of reference is the evangelistic ministry of the late Dr. John Sung of China. He itinerated through perhaps hundreds of cities large and small in China and Southeast Asia over a fifteen year period from

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<sup>38</sup>Samuel Hugh Moffet, "Evangelism: The Leading Partner," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, Third Edition, edited by Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 577.

about 1926 to 1941. Many thousands came to faith in Christ, and the fruit of his work remains with many prominent Christian leaders across the region tracing their conversion to his preaching. His preaching was strongly anchored in Scripture with an emphasis upon holiness. In every place that he preached, he organized gospel Preaching Bands of those who committed themselves to continuous evangelistic work and works of charity. Some of these bands are still active today.<sup>39</sup>

There is much confusion about the social versus evangelism models of gospel propagation. Some argue for a purely presence model of evangelism which emphasizes the doing of good deeds. This is contrasted with an often perceived obnoxious, objectionable or ineffective proclaiming of the gospel story and witness. Samuel Hugh Moffet has observed: "There is nothing quite so crippling to both evangelism and social action as to confuse them in definition or to separate them in practice."<sup>40</sup> Though the proclamation of the gospel may always be the leading partner, evangelism and social action always go together in the propagation of the gospel. The late Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple gave special attention to this issue in a lecture he delivered:

Our social witness, apart from its own intrinsic value as a contribution to social welfare, is an indispensable introduction to effective evangelism on a wide scale or as directed to those who stand quite apart from the Church.

Of course this must not be interpreted as a suggestion that it is a substitute for evangelism. On the contrary, a Christian approach to questions of social justice will lead us back to a renewed belief in the need for individual conversion and dedication. The essential Gospel does not change. From generation to generation, it is the proclamation of the Holy Love of God disclosed in His redeeming acts. Belief in that Gospel sends us forth to remedy conditions which degrade . . . The Gospel itself impels us to the task of social witness; our social witness leads us and all who hear us back to the gospel.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Timothy Tow, *The Asian Awakening* (Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1988), 51-53. See also, Leslie T. Lyall, *John Sung, Flame for God in the Far East* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954).

<sup>40</sup>Moffet, "Evangelism: The Leading Partner," 576.

<sup>41</sup>William Temple, *Social Witness and Evangelism* (London: The Epworth Press, 1943), 9.

Modern evangelism seems to emphasize an individualistic spiritual response to a proposition without much social concern or society application. Much of modern evangelism seems to be centripetal in nature, that is, unbelievers are expected to come to an evangelistic event or come into the church meeting in order to hear the gospel. There is danger both of these approaches. The mere propositional approach will fail to produce large numbers of serious imitators of Christ who are inwardly motivated by a Christ-centered, Spirit driven dynamic to spread the good news and change their societies. If we wait for the post-modern generation to come to our church meetings, we may well have a long and fruitless wait. As in the first century and as in Wesley's time, believers must move out in the dynamic of the Spirit to embrace the people of the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

It is not a propositional gospel that is needed. Rather, we need to return to the straight forward itinerant proclamation of a clear Scriptural presentation of the gospel. There is a need to create kinds of "religious orders" within our established church structures as Wesley did with his corps of itinerant preachers and his class meetings. Although the class meetings primarily for discipleship for Wesley, they are being adapted today by many for both discipleship and evangelism. The cell group and cell-church movements are manifestations of this phenomenon. A renewed practice of radical discipleship that "provides supportive affirmation for the alternative lifestyle offered by the gospel . . . is the decisive Christian challenge to the world."

"As Bishop B. F. Westcott once observed, the great danger of today is that we will allow the ministerial offices to supercede the general power bestowed upon the whole church."<sup>42</sup> We must beware lest the special offices of the church end up doing the work designed for the general body of believers, i.e., evangelism assigned almost exclusively to evangelists and pastors and not primarily to all of the members of the Body of Christ. In many of our churches today the idea is prevalent that evangelism is primarily the work of specialists. Many so-called lay members of our churches are afraid to become involved in evangelism. Evangelism has become one of the things in which many of our people fear to involve themselves personally. The early church had taken up the work of evangelism as an appropriate work for all. As Michael Green points out:

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<sup>42</sup>Robert Charles Donahue, "The Great Commission for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", in *The Mediator*, vol. 3:1 (October, 2001), 112.

“To spread the gospel was a task seen as common to all in the Church.”<sup>43</sup>  
This was the genius of evangelism in the first century, and can be the  
genius of evangelism for the twenty-first century as well.

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<sup>43</sup>Michael Green, 175.

## Expansion on Dr. Robert Donahue’s Paper about Evangelism

A. Brent Cobb

What could possibly be a higher priority for us than *evangelism*? I recall the time, many years ago, when the Church of the Nazarene had a great denomination-wide slogan that announced, “Evangelism First!”

In his paper’s opening statement—“Evangelism is the proclamation or telling of the good news of the death, burial and resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ on the third day”—I *hear* Dr. Donahue saying that this aspect of evangelism, drawn from 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, is foundational. Certainly, I do not hear him claiming that it is a complete definition for “evangelism.” We know an exhaustive one-sentence, one-paragraph, or even one-page definition is not possible. Dr. Donahue would likely say that his definition is a departure point for evangelism not a destination—a springboard not an all-encompassing, limiting definition.

God’s love for humankind moved His great heart to give His only begotten Son to save lost people. The grand Incarnation event was essential for God the Son to seek, find, and rescue unlimited numbers of “perishing” people from the peril of ultimately being forever lost from God and His love. Jesus—Immanuel, “God with us”—personified the right mindset, meaning, and methods for effective evangelism. Surpassing the costly rescue effort undertaken by the Good Samaritan who saw a man—hopeless, helpless, and dying—lying beside the road in the ditch, and did what he could, is Jesus’ painful participation in the plight of perishing people.

### 1. Further Definition and Focus for Effective Evangelism

Effective evangelism involves a winsome witness as well as the witness receivers’ personal responses to the Holy Spirit’s faithful work that precedes and accompanies the evangelist’s efforts. Witness-sharers must verbally, convincingly communicate with people about the wonderful

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Savior as well as make their own lives attractive advertisements of Christ's redeeming love. Personal *engagement* between witness-givers and witness-receivers should occur so that the human witness-givers and witness-receivers should occur so that the human witness-givers, along with the Holy Spirit's unseen confirming work and witness, may persuasively present to the receivers the Good News about Christ's love and power to transform *their* lives.

The noted Anglican (Episcopal) Church definition of "evangelism," by late Archbishop William Temple, first appeared at the beginning of a report titled *Towards the Conversion of England*. The definition states, "To evangelize is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, to accept Him as their Savior, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His church."

"Evangelism" is not merely the task of professional ministers. It is the task of every true Christian. All should seek to live out in everyday life the Good News in order to draw others to discipleship to Jesus. Salter advocates everyday-life, word-and-deed "lifestyle evangelism," a term made popular by Joseph Aldrich. It is evangelism accomplished in natural ways by all the people of God. "The greatest authority that a pastor has," Salter states, "is the right to commission men, women, and children for the work of ministry."<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Further Dynamics and Forms of Effective Evangelism

Watson describes supposed stages of evangelism that Peter Wagner and others presented as the "3 P's" of evangelism but that Watson expands with Snyder's help to the "4 P's" of evangelism. The following quote is from a website-uploaded article with my emphasis added to the four key terms:

**Presence Evangelism** is where the church by its worship, life, and witness brings to the world the sense of God's presence ... **Proclamation Evangelism** is when the truths of the gospel are proclaimed at every level to those who have already sensed the presence of God among His people. **Persuasion Evangelism** is when the evangelist endeavors to turn men and women to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith,

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<sup>1</sup>Darius Salter, *American Evangelism: Its Theology and Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 265.

on the basis of what they have by now sensed of God's presence and understood of the proclamation of His message . . . Howard Snyder adds a fourth—*Propagation Evangelism*. In His view, the ultimate goal of evangelism is not to see people converted to Christ, nor even made into disciples. "To do justice to the Biblical understanding of the church we must go one step further and say that the goal of evangelism is the formation of Christian community. . ." If disciples are not formed into the community of God's people, God's plan for the healing of creation cannot begin to be fulfilled.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Donahue brings the "persuasion" and "invitation" aspects of evangelism into view. He cites Barrett's statement about the New Testament use of the Greek term *euangelizo* and its cognates to mean "to spread the good news of the gospel—to preach, to persuade, to call to faith in Christ."

Father-and-son writers, Win Arn and Charles, incorporate the "persuasion" aspect of evangelism into their definition. According to them, effective evangelism requires "proclaiming Jesus Christ as God and Savior and persuading people to become His disciples and responsible members of His Church."<sup>3</sup>

Darius Salter emphasizes the "community" aspects of true evangelism, pointing up the reality that evangelism is not generally something done merely by individuals alone but by the people of God as a whole—the faith community. His working definition for *evangelism* is "whatever the community of God does to make people new creatures in Christ Jesus."<sup>4</sup> Sullivan would agree. He states, "To accomplish our mission, total participation is essential."<sup>5</sup>

Donahue's reference to the Greek word *anthropoi* (that appears in Matthew 4:19 and Mark 1:17 about Jesus calling His early disciples to leave their fish-catching business and enter the people-catching business)

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<sup>2</sup>David Watson, *Called & Committed* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1982) [The Howard Snyder quote comes from his book, *The Community of the King*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977)].

<sup>3</sup>Win Arn and Charles Arn, *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples* (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1984), 129.

<sup>4</sup>Salter, *American Evangelism*, 24.

<sup>5</sup>Arn and Arn, *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples* [The Sullivan quote is from the book's introduction by Bill Sullivan].

is helpful. I share his view that Jesus' use of *anthropoi* is an indicator that Jesus intended our fishing-for-people evangelism to occur among the whole of humankind. "The world is my parish"—John Wesley's oft-quoted statement—reveals that the founder of Methodism saw the "big picture."

I concur with Donahue's view regarding Jesus' words in John 4:35 about our seeing the fields as being "white already to harvest." The announcement Jesus made to His followers about the "whiteness" or ripeness of the harvest stresses, as Donahue says, "the urgency and the timeliness for gathering the harvest." Demographic data ought also to give enormous motivation and impetus to our evangelistic endeavors. Tens of thousands of people die daily without ever having heard one intelligible (to them) word about the world's only Savior. Paul of Tarsus, the great pioneer missionary, powerfully makes this point with his rhetorical questions recorded in Romans 10:14-15. One of them that we know well, in verse 14b, asks, "How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?"

I agree with Oswald J. Smith's statement at mission conferences, "No one has the right to hear the gospel twice, while there remains someone who has not heard it once." My former Asbury Theological Seminary evangelism professor, Robert Coleman, agrees about the dire necessity for people who have never heard about Jesus to hear the Good News so that they may be "saved" from eternal death. He writes, "Many churchmen have such an all-inclusive view of discipleship that the specific work of rescuing perishing souls from hell scarcely receives attention."<sup>6</sup>

We must never view evangelism merely as something human—as simply what *we* do. We must see true evangelism as resulting from vital, Spirit-enabled, Christ-exalting person-to-person relationships. "Give me one divine moment when God acts," writes Dennis F. Kinlaw, "and I say that moment is superior to all the human efforts of man throughout the centuries."<sup>7</sup> God is the sovereign initiator of all true evangelism. Kinlaw has sounded a clear note as to the supreme plans and power of God to guide and empower us in evangelism. When that occurs, questions about such issues as laity versus clergy relative to accomplishing the "supreme

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<sup>6</sup>Robert E. Coleman, *Evangelism on the Cutting Edge* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1986), 137.

<sup>7</sup>Robert E. Coleman, *One Divine Moment* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1970), 5. Note: The Dennis F. Kinlaw quote provides the title for this book and it appears in full at the beginning of the book.



task of the church,” as John T. Seamands calls our mission, become irrelevant.<sup>8</sup>

In a letter John Wesley sent to his brother Charles (dated March 25, 1772), he wrote, “You and I are called to this; to save souls from death; to watch over them as those that must give account!” In a later letter to Charles (dated April 26, 1772), John wrote, “Your business, as well as mine, is to save souls. When we took Priests’ orders, we undertook to make it our one business.”<sup>9</sup>

“You have nothing to do but save souls,” John Wesley told his pastors. He explained the task as “to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord.”<sup>10</sup> Wesley would say, of course, that it is the Lord who actually does the “saving.” But, he clearly meant that our *main* assignment is to bring people into the kingdom of God.

### 3. Further Depth and Features to Effective Evangelism

Wesley did not stress evangelism to the neglect of disciple making, “social holiness” that helped to meet the needs of whole persons as vital to the transformation that Christ and His church seek to bring to people and to society, theological education, or the rest of the gospel mandate.

To “save souls” is an all-encompassing assignment God gives to Christians. It includes for pre-Christian people the Holy Spirit’s work to help them become receptive, as well as to experience initial salvation, full salvation or “entire sanctification,” to grow in grace, and to be incorporated into the church as vital workers for our Lord. The motto of Asbury Theological Seminary captures the essence of John Wesley’s refusal to dichotomize or trichotomize persons or their life and work for Christ’s glory and for other people’s good. The motto is “Head and Heart go Hand in Hand.”

Bill Sullivan, while he was still the director of the Evangelism and Church Growth Department for the Church of the Nazarene, often said,

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<sup>8</sup>John T. Seamands, *The Supreme Task of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 1964.

<sup>9</sup>John Wesley, *Wesley’s Works*, 1872 Jackson edition (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1958), vol. 12, 138-139.

<sup>10</sup>Robert E. Coleman, *“Nothing to do But to Save Souls”: John Wesley’s Charge to His Preachers*, (Wilmore, KY: Wesley Heritage Press), 1990. Note: The title for this book and the full quote given at the very beginning of the book provides the quote.

“Evangelism is making disciples.”<sup>11</sup> The Master’s mandate to the church is a disciple-making mandate, not a mere convert-making one. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*,<sup>12</sup> Robert Coleman’s classic book on how Jesus intends His church to fulfill the Great Commission, shows the strategy Jesus Himself used and the strategy He intends the church to use for winning a world of people. It requires the church to devote itself to making converts into true disciples of Jesus.

This includes “the *oikos* factor.” Arn and Arn use this term to call us to practice the *oikos* evangelism that the early Christians “lived out.” You know that “*oikos*” is the Greek word for “household.” They explain, “In the Graeco-Roman culture *oikos* described not only the immediate family in the house but also included servants, servants’ families, friends, and even business associates.”<sup>13</sup> This “natural” environment for evangelism, based on people’s homes and existing relationships with extended family members and people in the community, “works” if we “work our webs.” By “webs” they mean networks of common kinship, common friendship, and common associates.<sup>14</sup> *Web* or *oikos* relationships offer us natural networks for sharing the Good News of God’s saving love and power in the normal context of our daily living and working.

Church of the Nazarene World Mission Department Director, Louie Bustle, promotes “natural church growth.” It is the main kind of evangelism and growth that is effective and that lasts. Arn and Arn push their point further to show, similar to John Wesley’s view of “parish,” that any church’s potential congregation is “the cumulative group of church members’ extended families and webs of influence.”<sup>15</sup>

The world’s largest church—that is an immense cluster of mini-congregations—grew to include hundreds of thousands of congregants by doing its “web work” well. In his book about Seoul’s Central Full Gospel Church, former associate of Dr. Cho, John Hurston, describes how hundreds of people are “caught” for Christ every week of the year. A man, standing in front of the church, said to some people: “Once you get into

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<sup>11</sup>Arn and Arn, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples*, 9.

<sup>12</sup>Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1963), 18.

<sup>13</sup>Arn and Arn, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples*, 28.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.

one of these home cell units, you can't get out, for you are caught in the web!"<sup>16</sup>

The church's vast, intricately organized "home cell unit system" observes principles and employs strategies that McGavran called "the bridges of God." Her people joyously keep their *kinship* and *friendship* bridges in good repair so that those they care about and naturally relate closely to in their daily lives may cross over those "bridges" to come to Christ. Particularly in Asia, and throughout the South Pacific for the most part, cultural factors and dynamics make the "natural" evangelism strategy, style, and lifestyle about as workable today as it was in the world of the first century.

Someone has said, regarding true teaching, "Tell them and they will forget. Show them and they will remember. Involve them and they will understand." To be genuine and enduring, evangelism must be "existential." By *existential*, I mean that we must wed theory and practice. Eugene Peterson, in his introduction to Ephesians for *The Message* translation of the Bible, aptly describes the essential unity that *belief* and *behavior* should share, illustrating the need to weave evangelism theories, methods, and strategies into a vital lifestyle tapestry of "doing" practical evangelism. About Paul's blending of belief and behavior, Peterson uses a medical metaphor to say, "He begins with an exuberant exploration of what Christians believe about God, and then, like a surgeon skillfully setting a compound fracture, 'sets' this belief in God into our behavior before God so that the bones—belief and behavior—knit together and heal."<sup>17</sup>

Christ commissions us to be real-life, Savior-and-salvation-bearing evangelists who "disciple," mentor, and equip others to be real-life evangelists. Christ's satisfied-customer, human-advertisement, authentic witness-bearers about His great salvation, with convincing urgency tell everyone they can the exciting Good News about what Christ can do that no other person or power can do. They tell it well and compellingly by highlighting what He has done for *them*.

A prime New Testament example of this is the woman who met Jesus at Jacob's well. The tremendous transformation that Jesus' unconditional love, acceptance, and forgiveness produced in her sent her

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<sup>16</sup>John W. Hurston and Karen L. Hurston, *Caught in the Web* (Seoul, Korea: Mountain Press, 1977), 12.

<sup>17</sup>Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 2125.

running to Sychar—her own village—joyously shouting to every available villager something like, “Come quick; meet a man who changed me completely. I can’t keep it a secret; what He did for me He can do for you!”

This it’s-too-good-to-keep-to-myself enthusiasm activated and energized Spirit-filled early Christians. In the Book of Acts—that powerful primer on personal and public evangelism—powerfully depicts the natural, Christ-revealing lifestyle of the followers of “the way.” People whose lives are living-and-breathing testimonies show the certainty and joy that spring from their personal relationship with the living Christ. They give silent and spoken witness to the saving, overflowing life of Jesus Christ.

The Book of Acts projects a fully animated “PowerPoint presentation” that shows the dynamic tension between the boldness of Christian witnesses and the blindness of Jewish status quo-preservers, plus an exciting evangelism environment in which entire communities sense that God is at work in their midst. Joy-filled heralds of Christ go from place to place gossiping the Good News about Jesus—God among us! Through them, God is speaking a language people understand—the language of unmistakable life change! God is acting in ways that heal, help, and save people!<sup>18</sup> The supernatural working of God through His people helps other people to open their hearts and lives to God. Soon, they too get in on the mighty acts of God as He lives in them and acts through them. This is effective evangelism in action!

The Church of the Nazarene has a Book-of-Acts-style evangelism plan that is easy to miss or to mistake for a modern “discovery.” Its names include “Each One Reach One,” “Each One Win One,” and “Impact Evangelism.” It contains components like “Each One Pray for Ten” and “Big Brother / Big Sister” disciple-making and mentoring strategies. In fact, it is as old as the Book of Acts and as new as the innovations Luz Tamayo’s Taytay First Church—east of Manila, Philippines—has made in allowing each person to pray for *more* than ten people and allowing small groups to operate differently than the “Impact Evangelism” plan describes.

A part of the genius of “Each One Win One” evangelism includes its being like the evangelism described in the Book of Acts in its simplicity and in its mobilization and utilization of the *laos* (all the people of God), plus the fact that it is workable in any culture. Though it needs little adaptation, it is quite adaptable. Louie Bustle, Bruno Radi, Jerry Porter,

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 1966.

and others designed key components of “Each One” evangelism to help draw everyone into personal participation regardless their talents, temperaments, or spiritual gifts.

The “Big Brother / Big Sister” strategy helps make converts into true disciples and harvest workers. In post-Christian, postmodern culture, according to Wes Tracy, “mentoring emerges as the most promising method of passing the Light to the next generation.” He explains, “That means spending more time with fewer people as we teach the faith by example, counsel, coaching, and modeling.”<sup>19</sup> Tracey asserts, “That means that we must become intentional about faith mentoring.”<sup>20</sup>

Timothy Jones calls this “The Friendship Factor” in his book by that title, stating, “Spirituality should always strengthen us for the battle of faith, not encourage a retreat into an insulated, isolated inner world. Helping another reminds us that the goal of Christian growth is greater than our own warm feelings. It reminds us that God cares deeply about a whole world of people.”<sup>21</sup>

Since this is a theology conference, I include an extended quote from Salter that abounds with sound theology. He writes the following:

Evangelism at its best is not defined as an activity but as a force for good, invading and beating back the powers of evil. It is the light where darkness prevails; it is the right where wrong dominates; it is the teacher where ignorance blinds; it is the truth where falsehood misleads; it is the liberty where self enslaves; it is life in the face of death; it is consolation in the midst of sorrow; it is bread in the emptiness of hunger; it is forgiveness in the grip of condemnation; it is the victor in the hour of defeat; it is peace in the rage of turmoil; it is the healer in the agony of affliction; it is the deliverer from the tyranny of oppression; it is the savior when all else in life has failed. Evangelism is

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<sup>19</sup>Wesley D. Tracy, Gary Cockerill, Donald Demaray, and Steve Harper, *Reflecting God* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 2000), 168.

<sup>20</sup>Wesley D. Tracy, E. Dee Freeborn, Janine Tartaglia, and Morris A. Weigelt, *The Upward Call* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1994), 179.

<sup>21</sup>Timothy Jones, *The Friendship Connection* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1993), 111.

the personification of the victorious Christ in life's every deed and word.<sup>22</sup>

Even with all of the colorful definition, description, and dynamics of evangelism that Salter has so vividly “paints” as word pictures we know that “the half has not been told.” In my conclusion and application section, I will let stories help tell more of the story of effective evangelism.

### Conclusion and Application

In my view, one may distill the essence of the theology of evangelism from biblical answers to the question: *From God's view, what is “evangelism”?* I believe it is—among other things—seeking what is lost, loving what is unloved, and rescuing the perishing. God cares about lost people!

In God's estimate, lost people are like *hidden treasure* of such exceeding worth as to send him searching and, when he finds it, make him willing to give up everything in order to buy the field in which it lies buried so he may make the treasure his very own. In the mind and heart of God, *people* are that treasure.

Lost people, to God, are like the *peerless pearl* a person pursues throughout a lifetime. The quest becomes his all-consuming passion and obsession, pushing him relentlessly onward to find the fabled pearl that is without peer. When finally he does find it, he gives up all that he has in order to possess that pearl of incalculable worth. In the mind and heart of God, *people* are that pearl.

To God, lost people are like one pathetic *sheep* that wanders off and becomes hopelessly lost, alone, in grave danger. The shepherd's compassion for the single sheep drives him—despite the fact that it is only one dumb sheep, and his unceasing care for many other sheep has left him exhausted—to search for it. He keeps searching, calling, and listening until finally he finds the sheep, and puts himself at risk in order to rescue it from certain death that would have come if *he* had not come. In the mind and heart of God, *people* are that lost sheep.

To God, lost people are like a single *silver drachma*, one of ten precious coins sewn into a young wife's bridal tiara. It came loose and became lost. Her search is anything but casual; it is desperate! She leaves no rug that is “unturned,” no piece of furniture “unmoved,” and no square inch of flooring in her house un-swept until she finally finds her special

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<sup>22</sup>Salter, *American Evangelism: Its Theology and Practice*, 378.

silver coin. Her spirit soars in having reclaimed what is so precious to her! In the mind and heart of God, *people* are that lost keepsake coin.

To the Lord, lost people are *two sons* lost from their loving father—an away-from-home son who has gone far and deep into sin; a stay-at-home son who has closed his heart to his loving father to cover his seething resentment. The father's deep, unconditional love for his sons moves him toward each of them. In the mind and heart of God, *people* are those two lost sons.

“Grove City Biker Ministry going full throttle” was the headlines for a NCN News on-line report about one of the many evangelistic outreaches of the church of which we are members.<sup>23</sup> Six years ago, the church observed its first “Biker’s Weekend,” bringing people on sixty motorcycles. Over 9,000 people came to participate in the latest “Biker’s Weekend,” and hundreds of people came to saving faith in Jesus. The Grove City (Ohio) Church of the Nazarene’s Biker Ministry operates every day of the year and has its own website.<sup>24</sup>

It is a church with 3,000 people in average attendance in its three worship services each weekend—one on Saturday night and two on Sunday morning. The congregation practices lifestyle evangelism as well as “event evangelism.” Even if there were no special events to draw pre-Christian people to worship services, still many people would come to the Savior because of the winsome witness during the week by the members with their lives and lips. But, there *are* many special events, each designed to draw people into the web of redeeming love.

Dramatic productions prior to Easter and Thanksgiving, as well as at Christmas time, attract thousands and make an impact upon entire communities. Easter dramatic musical performances drew over 20,000 this year. Monthly interactive worship music “concerts” are a major drawing card for the church. The church operates its own school that touches whole families for Christ. The church leaves little to chance. All the members help one another discover ways to get involved in a concerted effort to, as Wesley put it, “wins souls.” They know that God is not willing for one person to perish, and *they* are not willing to *be* or *do* less than their very best at introducing people to Jesus.

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<sup>23</sup>NCN News, September 12, 2003, website: <http://www.ncnnews.org>.

<sup>24</sup>Grove City (Ohio, USA) Church of the Nazarene’s “Biker Ministry” website: <http://www.gccn.org/virtual/bikerministry/index1.asp>.

Paul writes, in Colossians 2:6, “Now do what you’ve been taught. School’s out; quit studying the subject and start *living* it.”<sup>25</sup> The application for us with regard to evangelism is not that we should stop studying evangelism but that we must not merely *study* evangelism, we must *do* evangelism and do it well.

Dr. Donahue, in the beginning of his paper, listed a few of the myriad methods and strategies for evangelism that people seek to employ today. In ending this response paper, with its litany of words about evangelism, I leave you with a quote that suggests why we are not more successful, moving past mere evangelism principles and going farther into evangelism practice. “After all is said and done, more is said than done.”

I pray that it will not be true for us and for those we influence, but that we will be authentic pastoral educator-theologians who actually, effectively *do* the work of evangelism, and equip and empower others to do effective evangelism.

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<sup>25</sup>Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message*, (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 2146.



## Actualizing Evangelism as a Lifestyle

### *Response to Dr. Robert C. Donahue's paper on Evangelism*

Michael P. McCarty

*“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city.” Acts 8:4-8 (NIV)*

Those early disciples that were scattered in Acts 8 were fleeing persecution. Times were tough, and no one wanted to end up under the strong arm of Jewish law and in the hands of someone like Saul the Persecutor. So, they ran for their lives and spread out across their world.

It is interesting to note what those early Christians did as they ran away from Jerusalem. In Acts 8:4 (NIV) we read that the scattered disciples “preached (*‘euangelizómenoi’*) wherever they went.” Strong’s Concordance notes that the root word here (*“euangelizo”*) means simply, “to announce good news (*‘evangelize’*) especially the gospel.”<sup>1</sup> Thayer adds that the meaning of *“euangelizo”* is “to bring good news, to announce glad tidings:

- a) used in the Old Testament of any kind of good news, of the joyful tidings of God's kindness, in particular, of the Messianic blessings
- b) in the New Testament used especially of the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God, and of the salvation to be obtained in it through Christ, and of what relates to this salvation

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<sup>1</sup>Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright (c) 1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.

- c) glad tidings are brought to one, one has glad tidings proclaimed to him
- d) to proclaim glad tidings, to instruct (people) concerning the things that pertain to salvation.”<sup>2</sup>

So, what does all this mean to us who are gathered together for a theology conference? Permit me to add some of my thoughts to those of Dr. Donahue.

First of all, evangelism is “*good news*.” It is something about which we can rejoice! It has a message that causes the heart to leap and a smile to come on one’s face. It is the message of I Corinthians 15:3-4 that focuses on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, but it is also the message of John 10:10. Christ has not only come to do His mighty work in the defeat of sin, death and hell, but He has come that we “might have life, and have it to the full” (NIV). And this, indeed, is very *good news*!

Second, it is not grounded only in education or knowledge. This *good news* is not just the subject of a university lecture where one must earn a passing grade. This biblical term may also be researched in lexicons and commentaries, but those are only words written objectively and without the passion of life. While we can rejoice that the Christ-event did occur in history and that lives have been changed because of His coming to earth, yet this is not the essence of *good news* for us.

For this “*euangelion*” to be news for us that is truly “good,” we must also be able to “*experience*” it. This is what John was writing about in his first letter,

That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have *seen* with our eyes, which we have *looked at* and our hands have *touched*—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have *seen* it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have *seen* and *heard*, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our *joy* complete. (1 John 1:1-4, NIV, *italics* added for emphasis)

For it to be *good news*, it must make a difference in our lives and in our world. Thus, when the message of 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 becomes *good*

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<sup>2</sup>The Online Bible Thayer's Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, Copyright (c)1993, Woodside Bible Fellowship, Ontario, Canada. Licensed from the Institute for Creation Research.

*news* for us, then our lives will experience the John 10:10 kind of “abundance” and “fulfillment” that Jesus came to give His disciples.

Third, evangelism is to be “*spread*.” It is to be *shared* and *proclaimed* and *taught* and *preached* to others. It is not to be kept to oneself but is to be “lived out” in society. And often the hard circumstances of life (such as the persecution experienced by the young Church) are the very circumstances that become the occasions for the most effective “proclamation.” As an old farmer would say, “The hard soil has to feel the sharp edge of the plow blade before one can effectively plant the seed.” Or, as one of the classic definitions of evangelism describes it, “Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread (or, rice, as the case may be in our part of the world!)” If it is *good news*, we cannot keep it to ourselves.

But note, fourth, that the “*spread-ers*” in Acts 8 were not the apostles who had been trained by Jesus for three years and had graduate degrees in evangelism. The Word indicates that those who preached the *good news* were the laity of the Jerusalem church who were fleeing persecution. The preaching of the *good news* was being done by the “common folk” of Jerusalem First Church.

This does not mean that effective evangelism does not happen and cannot be done through anointed preaching, scholarly debates, structured programs or plans. (Dr. Donahue mentions quite a list of evangelism programs and categories throughout his paper.) However, at the root of it all, true evangelism is accomplished as “Spirit-transformed lives” impact “world-enslaved lives” in the context of the daily chores of making a living, raising a family, going to school and shopping at the local market together. Dr. Donahue makes an insightful comment when he writes, “It is the simplicity which puts the work of evangelism into the hands of the great general membership of the church, and keeps it from becoming the exclusive domain of the professionals” (p. 165).

Finally, the fruit of evangelism is based upon two conditions—the work of God’s Spirit and the obedience of those who proclaim this *good news*. There is no “perfect” or “best” method to “win the world for Christ.” Cultures are so varied, people are so different, and situations and responses are so unpredictable that there is no “one way” to do evangelism that will always produce the desired result, namely, a life transformed by the Spirit.

Yet there is a “constant” in every genuine effort that is made. And that is the promise that Jesus gave to His disciples in Matthew 28:20, “...And surely I will be with you always...” (NIV). It is *God at work* in bringing *good news* to those who need to hear and experience life-

transformation. It is God Who was praised when Luke wrote, "... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47, NIV). The Spirit is at work today, deepening a hunger in the hearts of those who will hear *good news* from us, as He was at work in the life of the Ethiopian eunuch that shared a chariot ride with Philip in Acts 8.

That event on the desert road brings us to the other necessary component to fruitful evangelism—*our personal obedience*. Just as Philip had to obey the prompting of the Spirit to avoid missing the Ethiopian eunuch, so we also are called upon to work in partnership with the Spirit in the spreading of the *good news*. Again, this is not just a matter of "memorizing a method" or "working a plan." It is a matter of living out an *obedient lifestyle* of sharing the *good news*.

Dr. Donahue notes the influence and ultimate effect of the Moravian passengers on the life of John Wesley during their storm-filled voyage together across the Atlantic. Wesley could not ignore their joy and faith in the midst of a storm that he felt would certainly result in his death on the open sea. Yet, just the Moravians living out their lives for Jesus in the middle of a treacherous ocean voyage made an eternal impact on the great Methodist evangelist.

One of the most effective methods of proclamation of the *good news* is that of simply "working our web." That "web" is our *web of influence* in the lives of those around us. We have four main contact points in our lives that give us opportunity to share the *good news* with others. These four areas of influence are (1) our family members, (2) our friends, (3) those with whom we work, shop or go to school, and (4) those in our neighborhood. These are the people who observe us often and look for the difference that the Spirit of Jesus makes in our lives. As we live consistently and obediently for Christ, we reflect our authentic Christ-enlivened lives to those in our web of influence. Then, the Spirit creates opportunities for us to share with them.

As referenced by Dr. Donahue from Matthew 4:19 and Mark 1:17, Jesus called those early disciples to become "fishers of men." As any net-fisherman will attest, the fish do not just swim into the net while the fisherman relaxes on the shore. It usually takes considerable work to haul in a profitable catch of fish each day. Yet, there are two accounts in Scripture where the Lord caused the fish to be in the right place at the right time for those nets that the disciples lowered into the water. Those were unique opportunities, provided by the Lord and obediently accepted by the disciples.

In conclusion, permit me to add one more thought. The spreading of the *good news* is far more a *community effort* than a single-person event.

The Spirit often uses a number of people to touch the lives of one individual before there is a life change in that person. As Paul describes it, there is both a time of “planting” and a time of “watering” before God “makes it grow” (1 Corinthians 3:6, NIV). As we work in partnership with the Spirit and with each other, we can all share in the “*joy*” when lives are changed by the *good news* of our Lord Jesus!

## **Evangelism in a Post-Modern Urban Setting**

### **Wing Fai Chan**

The “Cell Church: Theory and Practice” class I am teaching this Fall has 17 students. Most of them are daytime white-collar workers pursuing a bachelor’s degree, seeking to serve full-time in a church setting after graduation. A handful of them, however, are lay leaders and current pastors wanting to learn more about Cell Church and its possible impact on their own congregations.

The more we get into the roots of church growth and cell group theory, the more we are convinced of the effectiveness of their principles and structure. In line with the pragmatic spirit of John Wesley and Donald McGavran, I would like to share one perspective of evangelism in a post-modern urban society such as Hong Kong.

While Dr. Donahue provides a sound biblical and theological framework for us to work with, Dr. Cobb and Dr. McCarty push us further into the practice domain. And my formula of urban evangelism is indeed grounded in pragmatism:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{EVANGELISM} = \\ & \text{HIGH PRIORITY} + \text{TIME} + \text{COMPASSION} + \text{HEALING} + \text{DISCIPLESHIP} \end{aligned}$$

Hong Kong is a big metropolitan area, well known for its worldwide business connections, filled with cultural pluralism and religious syncretism. Time is the most precious commodity for this city of seven million souls, which I imagine would be similar to most other world-class cities around the world.

Theoretically, Christians in Hong Kong have an adequate knowledge of the Bible and its mandate for evangelism. In reality, however, the demands for life are usually so overwhelming for the average Christian

that not much of the religious head knowledge can be transferred into practice, especially in evangelism.

Priority is the number one obstacle for doing evangelism in Hong Kong. The average Christian is not only bombarded by thousands of audio and video solicitations in any single day (dulling one's sense of passion for anything with true value), pressures from long working hours, financial stress and broken human relations further weaken the average Christian's ability to respond to God's mandate and His promise of the Holy Spirit's power.

Unable to set a high priority for Christian fellowship and God's call for evangelism, the average urban Christian invests limited time in religious activities, or prefers to participate in non-threatening and non-committal church gatherings. Unknowingly he or she settles in a misconceived comfort zone, while in reality it is a self-contained cocoon lacking both spiritual input and output, allowing sin and evil to continue damaging one's mind and soul. This act of seclusion reduces one's opportunity to experience true love and compassion from fellow Christians, and also the chance to be healed and restored by the power of God. A vicious cycle thus begins.

As discouraging as the above scenarios appear to be, there are a good number of mega churches and Christian communities capable of defeating the post-modern individualism of the average urban Christians in Hong Kong. These churches are able to fulfill the evangelism formula as outlined above to a rather full extent.

Why? My observation is that they all use the Natural Church or Cell Church principles in organizing Christian fellowships and training lay leaders. Directed by God-anointed leadership, Christians in these churches are meeting regularly in a structure that is conducive to experiencing love, compassion and healing. The more such experience takes place, the more souls are drawn to such gatherings.

Man and woman as God's creation have been facing the same dilemma ever since they were created. Modern or post-modern, human beings throughout the centuries need to accept the same challenges from sin and alienation from God. The only answer is in Christ, and in giving and receiving support from fellow Christians.

Evangelism will continue to be the main focus of Christianity, and this will never change. It is the structure of evangelism that may change over time and be tailored made for different cultures and people groups. John Wesley used it in his class, bands and societies. Donald McGavran rediscovered the essence in his lifelong teaching and writing. Numerous

21<sup>st</sup> century church leaders embrace it and are making disciples of all nations. Our hope is that more Christian communities will find the right leadership and fellowship structure to carry the torch of evangelism from one generation to the next.



## **Articles of Faith and Jesus' Victory over Satan: Missiological Implications**

Neville Bartle

The most important theological document of the Church of the Nazarene is the Articles of Faith. As Wesleyans we expect them to be true to Scripture, church tradition, reason and experience. Unfortunately many Nazarenes find them to be inadequate, for there are very significant areas of their spiritual experience that are not addressed by this theological document.

“Can you come quickly? My neighbor’s house is haunted and we need your help.” It is 11 pm and Pastor Michael is called by one of his congregation to visit a friend’s home. Every night at 12 o’clock exactly, they hear noises of people walking around on the roof of their house. Sometimes people are heard knocking at the door but when they open the door—no one is there. Then there is a horrible smell of blood and death that floods the house in the middle of the night. There are reports that during a recent civil war many people were murdered in that same house. The pastor looks at this watch. It is getting close to midnight. Fortunately Michael had been in classes at Bible College that had prepared him to handle situations like this. He opens his Bible and tells of the power of Jesus over demons. He prays and asks God to demonstrate His powers. He commands the powers of evil to leave the house and not to return. The people are frightened as the clock strikes 12. There is silence. No scary footsteps. The peace of God fills their hearts and minds and they relax for the first time in weeks. Unfortunately many Nazarene pastors have not been trained how to handle situations like this.

I was a young missionary involved in church planting. One morning one of the new converts was standing at the door looking quite worried. I invited him in and he told his story. “You know how we buried my father last week! Well he came to visit us last night, and we were really frightened.” That was not the story I was expecting. Why did he come? Will he come back again? What should we do?

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Dr. Bartle serves as the Asia-Pacific Region Literature Coordinator.

So many questions—where were the answers? I pulled a big theology textbook down off the shelf. Surely in the 700+ pages written by three outstanding Nazarene theologians there would be some answers. Sorry. They were not even aware of the questions, and it certainly had no answers.

Fijian divers go into shark-infested waters with no apparent protection and fearlessly hand-feed 14 foot long ferocious Tiger sharks. Tourists are awestruck. What is the secret? Why do the sharks not eat them? They say that Dakuwanga, the powerful shark god of Fiji, protects them. Yet these same divers claim to be Christians.

In resorts around Fiji, tourist watch in amazement as Fijians walk barefoot over scorching hot rocks. They feel no effect of the fire at all. They also have the ability to heal people who are badly burned by simply laying on their hands. The power comes from the traditional god of their island. With the income from the tourist industry they are able to bring development to their island homes and build a larger church. They see no conflict between the traditional gods and the God of the Bible. How should the church address such issues?

Soli was the traditional priest of a Fijian village that had a large Christian church. It was his responsibility to deal with the village spirits and gods. If a person became demonized, he would be called on to present an offering of kava drink to the spirit and respectfully entreat it to leave. The Church of the Nazarene came to his village and Soli accepted Christ as his savior. He learned that Jesus, through His death and resurrection, has defeated all the powers of evil. How could he relate his Christian faith to his role of village priest? How would he deal with the village gods if they attacked someone? One night a woman began screaming because of a demonic attack. They called Soli to come quickly. But instead of the traditional drink offering to appease the spirit, he brought his Bible. He led the people in prayer and commanded the spirit to leave. The spirit left and the villagers were amazed.

These stories show that the spirit world is alive and active. Recently I taught folk religions at APNTS and found that similar beliefs exist in all areas of our region. These beliefs are also on the increase in Western countries. The Harry Potter books about a fictional twelve year old boy's adventures in witchcraft and wizardry are taking the world by storm. The author J. K. Rowling has quadrupled her personal fortune in the past two years and is now one of the richest women in Britain.<sup>1</sup> In the secular West,

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<sup>1</sup>“Rowling beats Queen in UK fortune list,” *Fiji Times* April 28, 2003.

New Age philosophies and even witchcraft are big business and increasingly popular.

Unfortunately many Western conservative evangelicals, Nazarenes included, largely ignore the spirit world. In this paper I will be focusing on the Good News that Jesus defeated Satan and all the powers of evil through His death on the cross and demonstrated His victory by His resurrection. I will also be looking at why this important doctrine has been largely ignored in Western Churches including the Church of the Nazarene. I will address the implications of this failure and the reasons why we should make alterations to the Articles of Faith so that is included in the future.

### **An Indigenous Church**

The Church of the Nazarene began as an indigenous American church. It was self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing from the very beginning. It was an indigenous church with an international vision. The general superintendents, at that time, were primarily national leaders rather than international leaders. The general assembly was a national assembly and the general board looked after national interests. After a few years Canada and Britain, who shared a similar cultural background, became participants in the organizational structure of the church.

The Church of the Nazarene also gave considerable attention to what some have called the “Fourth Self”—namely self-expression.<sup>2</sup> The church compiled its own hymn books, and worship style. It hammered out its own theological statements and general and special rules. It developed its own theological institutions to train its leaders in holiness theology and it developed a widespread publishing ministry to spread the message of holiness. Its theology was based on Scripture, reason, experience, and church tradition especially that of Wesley. Its theology was developed in the cultural context of North America, which inevitably influenced the shape and nature of the church’s theology.

The Church of the Nazarene has moved from being an indigenous American church to a global church. But a global church also needs to be an indigenous church in each country. Every Nazarene wants to feel that his church is not a foreign import but a church that is his or her spiritual home.

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<sup>2</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Baker: Grand Rapids, MI, 1985).

## **The Articles of Faith in a Global Church**

The Articles of Faith<sup>3</sup> are the official definitive doctrinal statements of the Church, and represent Nazarene theology in a nutshell. They are the most widely translated theological statements of our church. Theology courses are built around the Articles of Faith. Catechisms are designed to cover them, and membership classes are organized so that the new members are introduced to the essentials of the faith.

Unlike the North American church who hammered out the Articles of Faith in numerous discussions in District Assemblies and General Assemblies, the Asia-Pacific church has inherited the Articles of Faith. They were exported to us neatly packaged and ready to serve. But if we are truly equal partners in a global church, then it is our privilege and duty to study them, examine them and perhaps even improve them. We must do this, for although God is supra cultural, theology is culturally conditioned.

### **Theology is culturally conditioned**

There is one God and one Bible. But our understanding of God and of the Bible is conditioned to a large extent by our own personal experience and by our cultural background, especially our worldview. Our worldview acts like a filter that highlights certain truths while minimizing others. One of the strengths of being a global church is that as we come together as equal partners, we help each other see aspects of God, His love, and His wonderful plan of a salvation that perhaps, we would not have otherwise recognized.

The Western worldview, places a great emphasis upon the individual. It has emphasized the importance of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and personal ethical morality as being an essential aspect of holiness. We have all benefitted from that important emphasis.

The Western worldview however is naturalistic and materialistic. That has its benefits, for people who subscribe to the Western scientific worldview are responsible for much of the technological development that the world enjoys today. At the same time Westerners on the whole are very ignorant of the world that exists outside the realm of time and space: the unseen world or the spirit world.

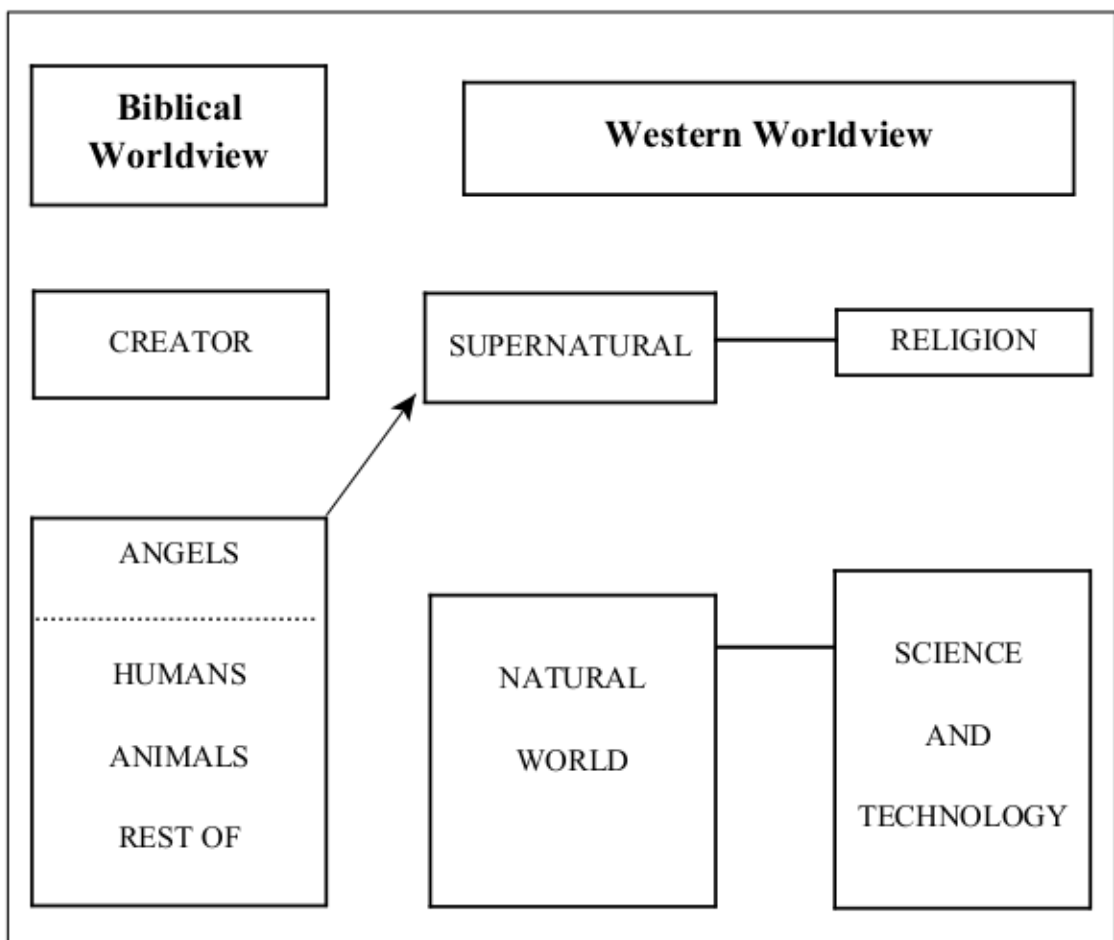
In the Middle Ages, Europe thought of the world as existing in two sections: the Creator and His creation. Angels and demons were part of

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<sup>3</sup>*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2001).

creation and very much a part of this worldview. From the 10<sup>th</sup> century onwards there was a sharp division made between spirit and matter, mind and body. In this worldview, spirits such as angels and demons were moved to the supernatural category and human and other material beings to the natural world, which were controlled by laws of nature.

This division began to widen and by the 19<sup>th</sup> century belief in angels, demons, witchcraft, magic, evil eye, began to die out. Science dealt with the natural world and religion was left to deal with the supernatural. Religion was based on faith rooted in personal opinions, visions and inner feelings. Science sought order in natural laws. As scientific knowledge increased, the domain of the supernatural became smaller and smaller. In time, the “unseen world” of spirits, magic, curses and blessings were rejected as “fairy tales.” Protestant missionaries, like other Westerners, were deeply affected by this worldview. They introduced schools and hospitals, and taught about germs and microbes, the importance of cleanliness and how to prevent sickness. However, when nationals spoke about evil spirits, they were often dismissed as superstition rather than



claiming the victory of Christ over them.<sup>4</sup> The theologians, educators, and missionaries of the Church of the Nazarene have come out of this worldview. That is probably the main reason that the Articles of Faith makes no mention of the spirit world, there are no references to Satan, and no reference at all to Christ's victory over the powers of evil. Many people of the non-Western world find that the Articles of Faith are inadequate for they do not address some of the most pressing theological questions that they are facing in their daily lives.

We claim to be biblical and Christ-centered in our theology yet it appears that the Western naturalistic worldview has influenced Nazarene theology a lot more than we would care to admit. Wiley's theology gives thirteen out of 1686 pages to deal with angels, demons and Satan.<sup>5</sup> Wiley is not atypical. Most Western theologians show a similar attitude. *Systematic Theology*, by Charles Hodge has only 11 pages out of 1380 to cover the realm of angels, demons, Satan, and the problem of evil.<sup>6</sup> *Christian Theology*, by Millard Erikson, gives 18 pages out of 1250.<sup>7</sup>

Clinton Arnold argues that there is a conflict between two different worldviews and that these differing worldviews affect people's theology. According to Arnold, there is no doubt at all that the people of the first century, including the apostle Paul and the other New Testament writers, believed in evil spirits. The problem is that "the modern scientific worldview stands in direct contradiction to the first century worldview and also the biblical worldview."<sup>8</sup> He calls the academic community "to rethink the part of the Western worldview that denies the actual existence of spirits, demons, and supernatural powers"<sup>9</sup>

As part of his argument, Arnold points out that while the West denies the reality of evil spirits, they do remain an integral part of the worldviews of most other cultures. He adds that Christians from other

<sup>4</sup>Paul G. Hiebert, Daniel Shaw, Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion* (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, MI, 1999), 88-92.

<sup>5</sup>H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press, 1940), vol. 1, 473-488.

<sup>6</sup>Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Scribner Armstrong and Co, 1871), 637-648.

<sup>7</sup>Millard Erikson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1983), 433-451.

<sup>8</sup>Clinton Arnold, *Powers of Darkness* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press), 176-177.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 177.

parts of the world “often express disappointment that the Western church has not been able to help them develop a Christian perspective on the realm of the spirits.”<sup>10</sup>

The spirit world is of great significance in Scripture. The Bible has 450 references to gods, idols and idolatry. There are 200 references to Satan, the devil, demons and evil spirits. There are 350 references to angels of various types and over 100 references to spiritists, mediums, magicians and sorcerers.

The mysterious serpent who appears in the third chapter of Genesis and who wrecks havoc in the world is clearly identified as Satan and is done away with in Revelation 20 just two pages before the end.

Jesus came to “destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). Jesus referred to this evil personality with the following terms: Satan, the devil, the evil one, and the ruler of this world. He referred to Satan as Beelzebub—the prince of demons. Jesus said that hell was prepared for the devil and his angels (Mt 25:41). Jesus said Satan was a murderer and a liar (John 8:44). He is also a thief who steals the word of God to prevent it from taking root in peoples lives. Jesus healed a woman whom He said had been bound by Satan for 18 years (Luke 13:16). He cast out demons as a regular part of His ministry, yet Western theology has largely ignored this area of His ministry. The Bible does not say, “Ignore the devil and he will flee from you. It says, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). This implies that we should acknowledge his existence, understand his strategy and know how to deal with him.

### Christus Victor

Gustav Aulen in his book, “Christus Victor” emphasized what he calls the “classic view” of the atonement. “Christ—Christus Victor—fights against and triumphs over the evil powers of this world, the ‘tyrants’ under which mankind is in bondage and a suffering and in Him God reconciles the world to Himself.”<sup>11</sup> He states that this dramatic view was the dominant idea of the atonement through the early church period. He gives several reasons for the decline of emphasis in this doctrine. There was a demand that the Christian faith must be expressed in the form of a rational doctrine and the classic view which is dramatic and figurative

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 180.

<sup>11</sup>Gustav Aulen, *Christus Victor* (London, UK: SPCK, 1931), 20.

was dismissed in favor of other theories which seemed to have greater rationality.<sup>12</sup>

Dualism was not popular with theologians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The classic view is dualistic and dramatic and hence was looked on with disfavor. But the idea constantly occurs in scripture of a dualism. Not between two eternally opposed principles, but the opposition that exists between a God of love and those of His creatures that resist His love.

Irenaeus emphasized that "The Work of Christ is first and foremost a victory over the powers which hold mankind in bondage: sin death and the devil . . . the victory of Christ creates a new situation bringing their rule to an end and setting men free from their dominion."<sup>13</sup> Christ wins the victory through His obedience. "The earthly life of Christ as a whole is thus regarded as a continuous process of victorious conflict . . . His death is the final and decisive battle."<sup>14</sup>

The Christus Victor explanation of the atonement strikes a response in people all over the world, especially in tribal cultures where people love drama and think in pictures, rather than in closely reasoned out logical explanations. Eminent theologians such as John Stott and very recently William Greathouse have emphasized the Christus Victor view of the atonement.<sup>15</sup>

John Stott outlines the drama as occurring in six major stages:

*Conquest Predicted:* Genesis 3:15 the coming Messiah.

*Conquest Begun:* Ministry of Jesus in which He overcame temptation, cast our demons, healed the sick raised the dead, and proclaimed the Kingdom of God.

*Conquest Achieved:* Jesus was obedient unto death, even death on the cross.

He overcame every temptation.

His obedience overcame Adam's disobedience.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 26.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 36.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 46.

<sup>15</sup>Paper presented at African Regional Theology Conference Nov 2003, in which he stated that the "Christus Victor motif . . . gives Wesleyan theology a significant biblical basis for developing a thoroughgoing Christological doctrine of sanctification." *NCNews*, Nov. 21, 2003.



His humility overcame sinful pride.  
 His self-sacrifice overcame self-centeredness.  
 His love overcame hatred.  
 His meekness overcame worldly power.  
 His death atoned for our sins.

*Conquest Confirmed and Announced:* “All authority in heaven and in earth has been given unto me...” (Matthew 28:18).

*Conquest Extended:* The church in mission extends the conquest as people are rescued from the “dominion of darkness” and “brought ... into the kingdom of the Son” (Col 1:13).

*Conquest Consummated:* This victory that was won decisively on Calvary will be finally consummated when Jesus returns and every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is lord. Until then we are to “be strong in the Lord... put on the full armour of God...” and “take [our] stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is ... against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph 6:10-12). Until Jesus returns we are to “Resist the devil” (James 4:7), for our “enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).<sup>16</sup>

This outline of Stott fits in well with Wesley’s comments on 1 Corinthians 15:26. John Wesley wrote, “Satan brought in sin and sin brought forth death. And Christ, when He ... engaged these enemies, first conquered Satan, then sin in His death, and lastly death in His resurrection.”<sup>17</sup>

The victory of Jesus over sin, death, and the devil is such a major theme of scripture and so important to victorious Christian living (holiness) that it should be addressed in our Articles of Faith. Its absence implies an incomplete gospel.

### **Missiological Implications**

#### *Incomplete Gospel and Inadequate Savior*

When we fail to deal theologically with the unseen world, then people perceive the Savior to be inadequate and our gospel to be incomplete.

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<sup>16</sup>John Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester, Eng: InterVarsity Press, 1989).

<sup>17</sup>John Wesley, *Notes on the New Testament*, in reference to 1 Corinthians 15:26.

Evangelical churches have done a great job of presenting Jesus as a Savior who forgives sin and who has prepared for us an eternal home in heaven. That is good news, but for millions of people their most pressing concerns are related to the power of sorcery, witchcraft, demons and vengeful ancestral spirits here and now. Jesus is a Savior from sin and the giver of eternal life, but is He greater than witchcraft? Can He break powerful evil curses? Can He deliver from demonic bondage now? How does He relate to the ancestors and the spirits of the dead? Is Jesus able to meet the everyday spiritual issues that threaten them?

Christ's victory over the powers of evil is great news and many people feel this to be the heart of the Gospel. When we as a church do not emphasize this, we are failing to present the good news in its fullness, and instead we are preaching an abbreviated or inadequate gospel. We are certainly not proclaiming full salvation but partial salvation. We have told people that Jesus can save from sin, but is He also able to redeem from the power of sorcery, witchcraft, demons and vengeful ancestral spirits?

Some African evangelicals have spoken out on this issue. Keith Ferdinando says that Western missionaries whose theology was shaped by their naturalistic worldview are partially responsible for some of the weakness in African Christianity. Ferdinando says, "The domain of spirits and occult activity played relatively little active part in the worldview of nineteenth and twentieth century missionaries . . . Consequently they were often blind to a significant area of spiritual reality, and therefore unsympathetic to the beliefs of their hearers, even when those beliefs coincided with biblical truths."<sup>18</sup> He acknowledges that many of the early missionaries doubtless believed in the objective existence of Satan and demons but did not believe that demons and sorcerers could physically harm humans. He argues that the neglect of demonology has had serious consequences for the church in Africa. "The consequent failure therefore to respond to traditional, and still dominant, fears of physical aggression by spirits and sorcerers means that the Christian faith has often been perceived to *be inadequate, indeed irrelevant, in the face of basic issues of life and death.*"<sup>19</sup>

Another African scholar, Osadolor Imasogie, writes, "Many African Christians perceived the 'God' of Christianity as a 'stranger-God,' the God of the white man, who is unfamiliar with the local spiritual problems. To

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<sup>18</sup>Keith Ferdinando, "Screwtape Revisited: Demonology Western, African, and Biblical," In *The Unseen World*, ed. by Anthony N.S. Lane (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), 103-132.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 131; emphasis added.

these Africans, Christianity was of no practical use in times of existential crisis. It seemed much more reasonable to them to revert to traditional practices when faced with serious situations unfamiliar to the God of the white man, who is unfamiliar with the local spiritual problems."<sup>20</sup> He also says, "Any authentic Savior must be capable of destroying the cause of His fears and anxieties. . . . No religion can be relevant to a people if it neglects any area of their total experience as perceived by them."<sup>21</sup>

Paul Ebhomielen is likewise concerned that Christianity has "generally proved inadequate to meet the existential problems in the lives of most professing African Christians, thereby making it necessary for them to revert to old solutions to meet life's crises by appeals to spirits, demons and ancestors." He says that this is because "the Western style presentation of Christianity . . . has not sufficiently grappled with the African worldview."<sup>22</sup>

We must ask, has the church been any more successful in dealing with the Asian worldviews and the worldview of the Pacific islanders?

If the church does not present an adequate Savior, then people, Christians included, will look elsewhere for help.

### *Split-level (Syncretistic) Christianity*

An imported Western theology may be orthodox, biblical, and Christ centered but still be inadequate. If the gospel we present does not emphasize Christ's victory over the powers of evil, it can easily result in a weak syncretistic church.

Jaime Bulatao of the Philippines coined the phrase "split-level Christianity" to describe the situation where people hold two mutually contradictory beliefs at the same time.<sup>23</sup> This has been a widespread problem in the Catholic Church, but many evangelical churches suffer from the same problem. Sometimes Western missionaries have dismissed the unseen world as being "mere superstition," and have told the new

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<sup>20</sup>Osadolor Imasogie, *Guidelines for Christian Theology in Africa* (Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 1983), 69.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>22</sup>Paul Ebhomielen, *Gustaf Aulen's Christus Victor View of the Atonement as it Relates to the Demonic in Africa* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 1982), 5-6.

<sup>23</sup>Jaime Bulatao, *Split-level Christianity* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University, 1966), 2.

Christians, “You are Christians now—forget that silly nonsense.” The result is that the nationals no longer mention the topic, in the presence of the missionary. A conspiracy of silence develops. The missionary feels he has solved the problem because no one ever mentions it again. Unfortunately the fear remains, but since the Gospel apparently does not address the issue and has no answers, the only apparent alternative for the national is to go back to the witch doctor, for he understands. The Christian does not feel good about doing it, but he needs help, and the “white man’s God” appears to be no more helpful or understanding than the missionary himself.

Some missionaries have taken the attitude that Jesus defeated Satan at the cross, and therefore Satan is no longer a problem. Some have dismissed Satan as being a dog without teeth—makes a lot of noise but is unable to harm us. If that is the case, then why did Jesus pray that God would protect us from the evil one (John 17:15)? Paul said we were in a battle, and told us to put on the whole armour of God so that we can win the battle (Ephesians 6:12). Both Peter and James told us to resist the devil. Peter said that Satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. All of these indicate that Satan is alive, active and dangerous and we must be prepared to do battle and defeat him.

The spirit world must be taken seriously. Promoting a non-contextualized Western form of Christianity will lead to syncretism just as definitely as an uncritical acceptance of folk religious beliefs and practices will lead to syncretism. When the gospel is not contextualized, old beliefs and customs do not die out. Because they are not consciously dealt with, they go underground and become part of the Christian’s hidden culture.

### *High Turnover of Membership*

Part of our high turnover of membership may be because we do not have a theology that deals with spiritual power and meets people’s needs.

We do a good job of evangelism and year after year in most of our districts we see new members being added to the church. Unfortunately we also see a large group of people leaving the church. Obviously there are many reasons why people leave the church, but one reason is unmet expectations. The people simply did not find what they were looking for. Many people are looking for spiritual power to help them in their daily lives. We preach of a God who saves from sin and emphasize the power of the Holy Spirit to live a godly moral life, and that is wonderful. But people ask, “Is God interested in a sick goat, the need for rain on the gardens? Can God help with school exams? Is God able to break the curse of a witch? Pastor, will you pray for God’s blessing on my new car?”

Many people do not divide their world into natural and supernatural or physical/spiritual as Westerners do. All of life is spiritual. The supernatural influences all of life. Religion is not a compartment of their lives, but rather it is the glue that holds life together. If God is all-powerful, then they want to see that power displayed in visible ways. They are looking for a God who is involved in the nitty-gritty of everyday life. They want a God who heals sickness, helps them find jobs, delivers from the fear of sorcery, and so on. If this is not found in our churches, they will look elsewhere. Some may secretly go to spiritists and traditional healers, but others will go to churches that have a much greater emphasis on spiritual power. People do not go to Pentecostal churches because they are attracted by speaking in tongues, but because they have a theology that deals with demons, curses, and healing. Many Pentecostal pastors are not afraid to come and cleanse a house of evil spirits, or pray for God's blessing on a truck, bicycle, or a student preparing for exams. Sometimes our fear of Pentecostalism has frightened us away from claiming our proper inheritance of "Holiness and Power."

### *Inadequate Theology*

A contextualized theology that deals directly and specifically with the spirit world in all of its dimensions is very important, because this is where Western theology is so lacking.

Western theology especially systematic theology has concentrated on helping individuals find peace with God, forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life in heaven. When we take a narrative approach to theology and look at the cosmic story, we find that salvation is much more than helping individuals find peace with God. God is seeking to redeem a world. The problem is not just sin, but also death and the devil. All three are inter-related. Unfortunately Western theology has often ignored the villain (Satan) and so has lost a lot of the drama from the story.

If there is no villain there can be no conflict.

If there is no conflict there can be no victory.

If there is no victory there can be no celebration.

I think there are two main reasons why we are weak in our eschatology. One is that we have become tired of speculative eschatology with its charts and diagrams and speculative timetables that constantly need to be revised.

The other reason is that we have largely ignored the devil and Jesus victory over Satan. The second coming is the consummation of the battle,

the final defeat of the evil one, the victory march and coronation of the king. Unfortunately our Articles of Faith make no reference at all to Jesus victory over Satan in reference to the Second coming. If we ignore the unseen spirit world, then we have largely lost the heart of the wonderful drama of redemption.

Merely condemning traditional beliefs as superstitious and primitive, will not help people. It will lead only to a “conspiracy of silence” in which people no longer talk about these beliefs and problems because they know that the missionary does not understand.<sup>24</sup>

### *Textbooks and Theological Education*

Christ's victory over the principalities and powers needs to be emphasized in our theological textbooks and our theological education.

It is important that the Articles of Faith make mention of Christ's victory over Satan and the evil powers of this world so that this emphasis may be included in training for church membership and also theological education. At the moment, the church is still very dependent upon Western textbooks, which are obviously written from a Western perspective. Since approximately 50% of all Nazarenes live in non-Western countries, we must give up our dependency upon Western writers. It is important that we have theological books that address the spirit world in a significant way.

### *Lack of Practical Holiness*

People who live in the fear of sorcery and witchcraft and who from time to time feel pressured to appease vengeful ancestral spirits are not living a life of holiness. The first of the Ten Commandments says, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). If our church people put out offerings to appease the ancestors, call on the spirits of the dead, or go to traditional healers and/or mediums to break curses, then we are far from being a holiness church. If our people live in the fear of sorcery and witchcraft, then they are not enjoying full and free salvation.

The Nazarene *Manual* says, “The primary objective of the Church of the Nazarene is to advance God's kingdom by the preservation and propagation of Christian holiness as set forth in the Scriptures.”<sup>25</sup> We want people to live holy lives. Then it is very important that they are convinced

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<sup>24</sup>Rodney Henry, *Filipino Spirit World* (Manila, Philippines: OMF Literature, 1986).

<sup>25</sup>*Manual*, Church of the Nazarene, 5.

that Jesus has won the victory over Satan and all the powers of darkness, and that they can participate and enjoy the results of that victory.

Only those who are totally committed to Jesus Christ will ever be filled with the Holy Spirit and be able to live the life of holiness. But people must be convinced that Jesus offers full salvation from sin, death and the devil. They must have confidence that Jesus is greater than all the powers of witchcraft, sorcery and demonic bondage. Only then will they present themselves as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to Him.

Our doctrine of holiness must deal with the spirit world or it will not satisfy the needs of thousands of people who call themselves Nazarenes.

### **Action is Necessary**

This conference of theologians and educators from across the region can make a significant difference. We can send a resolution from this conference to the Regional Advisory Council recommending a change to the Articles of Faith. From there it can go to General Assembly. It can also go from here to the District Assemblies across the region and they can approve and send our recommendation to the General Assembly.

I think the best way to adjust the Articles of Faith would be to modify Article IV on "The Atonement." The new words are typed in bold.

We believe that Jesus Christ by **His obedient life**, His sufferings, by the shedding of His blood and His death on the cross made a full atonement for all human sin. **He has defeated Satan and the powers of evil. And destroyed the power of death.** This atonement is the only ground for salvation, and that it is sufficient for every individual of Adam's race. The Atonement is graciously efficacious for the salvation of the irresponsible and for the children in innocency but is efficacious for the salvation of those who reach the age of responsibility only when they repent and believe.

(Additional scriptural reference to be added would be Colossians 2:15).

We can recommend that article XV be changed to read:

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again **and His victory over sin death and the devil will be consummated.** We who are alive at His coming shall not precede them that are asleep in Christ Jesus; but that, if we are abiding in Him, we shall be caught up with the risen saints to meet the Lord in the air, so that we shall ever be with the Lord.

We have a wonderful opportunity to make a difference. I am requesting this conference to draft a recommendation to the Regional Advisory Council and to the District Assemblies across the region.



# Jesus' Victory over the Forces of Evil

## A Biblical Perspective

David A. Ackerman

### Introduction

This paper is a brief look at a few of the key ideas of Jesus' victory over the forces of evil. This is part of a larger conversation about how the Church of the Nazarene can better contextualize the Gospel for places where the spirit world is a daily reality for many people. The specific task at hand is to consider possible revisions to the "Articles of Faith" contained in the *Manual*. Neville Bartle has raised a number of important issues in his paper, "Articles of Faith and Jesus' Victory over Satan: Missiological Implications." Significant in his paper is his concern that the Church of the Nazarene, in its efforts to become a truly international church, make the reaching step of re-envisioning its theology to be faithful to both scripture and culture. This is no simple task in a world so diverse, with peoples living in pre-modern, modern, and post-modern (sub-) cultures (however one wishes to describe these labels), nor is it a static process. Theological inquiry by intent and necessity is an on-going search to understand and apply God's revelation of Himself.

We are immediately confronted in this task by several challenges. For one, this topic is much bigger than a quick perusal of Scripture can accommodate. A number of significant questions for theologians, philosophers, historians, Bible scholars, and practitioners are left unanswered. There are many excellent studies available from various theological traditions and positions that need to be consulted in this conversation, and I will admit, up front, that I am no expert at this topic, only a curious conversant in the dialogue.

A second challenge involves methodology. Many of the Scripture texts that deal with the spirit world can be interpreted in various ways. One's hermeneutic determines to a great extent what one concludes about what the Bible says about the world of the supernatural. As believers from within the Wesleyan tradition, we would see the final authority for

understanding the spirit world as the Scriptures, but the Scriptures must be interpreted through a hermeneutical filter. This is where the challenge lies: what determines this filter? Thomas A. Noble, Professor of Theology at Nazarene Theological Seminary, offers, "The church of Jesus Christ therefore has to assert again and again that the central Christian doctrines constitute the appropriate and definitive hermeneutical framework for the interpretation of the canon of scripture" (p. 190). Perhaps one thought that could be added to this excellent statement, and one which Bartle has raised in his paper and his doctoral thesis, is that Christian doctrine is culturally conditioned by our experiences, just as it is historically stationed and reasonably stated. With the deepest respect, I acknowledge the place and necessity of the ancient creeds and contemporary doctrines. However, if we acknowledge that Scripture must be interpreted through a hermeneutical filter, we should also recognize that the articulation of doctrine involves hermeneutical decisions. The struggle we face is making the timeless timely. Obviously, God did not stop speaking to the human race at the end of the Book of Revelation, nor at the great councils of the Church. How has God continued to lead the human race into a fuller comprehension of Himself? How much of a factor is culture in this whole mix? The culture of the Church, whether it be the Church of the first, third, or twenty-first century, significantly molds the doctrine in this community. This community guides the formation of a hermeneutic. As communities change, mature, and grow, so the hermeneutic will change, if ever so slightly, sometimes even imperceptively.

This brings us to the challenge that Bartle has presented in his paper: with more Nazarenes coming from non-Western countries, the hermeneutic of the Church of the Nazarene as a denomination will also change. The question we are left with is this: how do we determine which changes in our hermeneutic are consistent with what we believe the intent of Scripture to be? Really, this is a circular problem, because we return to the issue that community constructs doctrine, and doctrine is dynamic. Does the contextualization of the doctrine change the doctrine itself, even if ever so slightly? Minimally, does a shift in language or even translation lead to a change in beliefs? A diagram helps picture the circularity:



These difficult questions lead to a third challenge: the certainty or validity of our interpretations of Scripture. There is a range of certainty when it comes to interpreting the concept of the spirit world. The following sequence demonstrates this range:

*Sure/Obvious* ==> *Possible* ==> *Opinion* ==> *Speculation* ==> *Heresy*

The goal is to base our doctrines on the sure and obvious statements in Scripture that cannot be disputed. Even some beliefs that some may hold as *sure* may, under closer scrutiny, turn out to be *possible* or only *opinion*. We get into danger when we build our doctrines on *possibilities* or *opinions*. No theologian would consciously build a doctrine on mere *speculation*, and he or she would not even be a theologian if doctrine was built on *heresy*.

Now that I have basically set myself up for either a life-long study or failure, I will attempt to highlight a few texts from the Bible that may be relevant to our discussion. Any one of the points below could be expanded into full-length studies.

## I. Old Testament Antecedents

### A. Sovereignty of God

The most obvious tenet of Scripture is the supremacy of God. What set Israel apart from its neighbors was the idea that there is only one God and that there is none like Him (Deut 4:39; Ps 83:18). The Bible opens with God as creator, hovering over—hence, in control of—the watery chaos. Foundational to Israel’s theology is the creating God who “made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth

and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them [who] give[s] life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship [Him]" (Neh 9:6). All creation, even spiritual beings, is under the complete control of God. Both "good" and "evil" spiritual beings are under God's sovereignty (1 Sam 16:14-23; 1 Kings 22:21-23; Ps 78:49). God's holiness categorizes and limits everything else in existence, including the spirit world.

## B. Satan

The Bible is not always clear about the being known as "Satan." "Satan" is a transliteration of the Hebrew word *sâtân*. The basic meaning of this word is "adversary" (Num 22:22, 35; 1 Sam 29:4). The word itself is used 31 times in the OT. It can also be translated as "accuser" (Ps 109:6-7). It is used of people (1 Kings 5:14, 23, 25; 1 Sam 29:4) and to describe a specific being in Job, Zech 3:1-2, and 1 Chron 21:1, although the meaning of these texts is debated. The Greek term used in the LXX of these passages is *diabolos*, from which we get "devil", and designates a slanderer or adversary. In the Hebrew of Job 1, the word *sâtân* is used with the article suggesting a description "the accusing one" and not necessarily a name. An example of the need for a careful hermeneutic is with Isa 14:12-15 and Ezek 28:12-19, both of which may be allusions to Satan. The traditional approach to these texts has been to interpret here Satan's rebellion against God. In the context, Isa 14 is a taunt to the king of Babylon and Ezek 28 a taunt to the king of Tyre, but as with other Biblical prophecy, a double meaning could be intended, as Rev 12:7-9 suggests. Another text that may have a double meaning is Gen 3 where the "serpent" tempts Eve. This passage does not explicitly say that the serpent was Satan, but this is only an assumption and interpretation. In the text, the serpent seems to represent something greater than an animal. This story was later interpreted to refer to Satan (see Ezek 28:12-19). These examples show that caution is required in interpreting these and similar passages. Often one's presuppositions and questions will determine one's interpretation and answers. Overall, the evidence suggests that Satan is only a minor character in the OT. Minimally, Satan is seen as the enemy of God and God's people. Satan is not God's equal, but is created, inferior, and must follow God's will. Israel's stress on monotheism left no room for cosmic dualism.

## C. Fallen Angels, Demons and Evil Spirits

There are more references to these creatures in the OT than to Satan, but some of the passages are even more difficult to interpret in order to know what ancient Israel believed. These beings are called by different names including "sons of God," "gods," "powers in the heavens above,"

“princes,” “demons,” and “spirits.” Demons are mentioned in Deut 32:17 and Ps 106:37 where they seem to be related to “gods” (this may be similar to what Paul talks about in 1 Cor 10:19-20). Demons are clearly inferior and under the control of God (1 Kgs 22:21-23). They are not gods but created beings (see Isa 45:5). Evil spirits are referred to in 1 Sam 16:14-16, 23; 18:10; 19:9; 1 Kgs 22:19-23; 2 Chron 18:18-22; and Judg 9:23. These evil forces have a corrupting influence on humanity, tormenting them and depriving them of the freedom to act as responsible, moral agents. As Ps 91 shows, the people of God have no need to fear, for God will protect from evil. These forces are always subordinated to Yahweh. The strong monotheism of ancient Israel kept Israel from taking too much interest in demons; thus, there was no superstition and fear. We may be able to learn something from ancient Israel at this point.

## **II. Non-Biblical and Intertestamental Literature**

There is an increase in references to Satan and demons in intertestamental literature and late Judaism. This has been attributed by some interpreters to the difficult experiences of the Jewish people during that time or possibly to the influence of Persian dualism (Jub 2:2; 4:22; 1 Enoch 6:1-7:6). God’s complete sovereignty was still maintained (Jub 2:2, God created all the spirits). Evil became attributed to angelic beings who had fallen and had corrupted humans (a Jewish interpretation of Gen 6:1-4; Jub 4:15; 1 Enoch 69:4, and others). These spirits cause trouble and fight against the human race (1 Enoch 15:11; 69:1-15). According to D. E. Aune, “In intertestamental Judaism demons appear to function in four primary ways: (1) they cause and transmit disease among men (Jub 10:10-13); (2) they accuse men who dwell on the earth (1 En 40:7); (3) they act as agents of divine punishment (1 En 53:3; 56:1; 62:11; 63:1); and (4) they tempt men to sin (1 En 69:6)” (Aune, 920). In the Dead Sea Scrolls, there is a limited dualism between the Angel of Light and the Angel of Darkness, but both of these were created by God (1 QS 3:13-4:26). During this period, Satan was still seen as subject to God (Jub 10:4-13). The NT shares many similar concepts with other literature of the period; for example, there were common beliefs that demons could possess a person, cause convulsions, screaming, and change of voice. Likewise, there were many healers (exorcists) in Jesus’ day, both Gentile and Jewish. This raises an important question: how does Jesus’ ministry stand out in its first-century context? This is a significant question for Christians today who deal with similar beliefs and practices—how is their ministry different than the witch doctors and shamans they confront?

### III. Jesus' Earthly Ministry

When one reads the Gospels, especially the Synoptic Gospels, one is immediately confronted with the world of the supernatural. In Mark's gospel, one of the first acts of Jesus is to cast out an unclean spirit from a man in the Capernaum synagogue (Mark 1:21-28).

#### A. The Devil

The devil or Satan is mentioned more frequently in the New Testament than the Old Testament. Satan is the chief adversary of Jesus and His ministry (Mat 4:1-11; Mat 13:39). This creature is described in various ways in the Gospels, for example, Beelzebul (Matt 10:25; 12:24; 12:27), the "evil one" (Matt 5:37; Matt 13:19, 38; John 17:15); "prince of demons" (Matt 9:34; 12:24), "the enemy" (Matt 13:39), to mention a few. In Matthew and Luke, "devil" is used synonymously with "Satan" (Matt 4:1, 5, 8, 11; Luke 8:12; 13:16). Each of the terms used to describe this creature are descriptive of it. Satan is the enemy of Jesus and God's people. Satan attempts to hinder people from coming to Christ (Mark 4:15). Matt 25:41 describes Satan as the chief of the demons, suggesting that Satan has a host of beings that aid it in combating God's purposes.

A revealing passage about the character of the devil is the temptation of Jesus. This story tells a lot about both Jesus and the devil. The devil presents Jesus with a temptation, stated in the Greek as a *first class conditional statement*. This is a serious temptation: "If, for the sake of argument, let's say that you are the Son of God, then prove it by turning this stone into bread" (Luke 4:3). This was a direct threat to Jesus divinity by appealing to His human hunger. The devil had keen insight into both aspects of the personhood of Jesus. By not turning the stone into bread, it could be interpreted that Jesus is giving the devil the victory, but actually, He is invalidating the devil's scheme. The second temptation reveals that the devil believes that his authority included all the kingdoms of the world (4:6). If the temptation is to have any real appeal to Jesus, then we should consider the devil's statement to be accurate, though still under the sovereign control of God (note the passive verb, *paradedotai*). The last temptation again attacks Jesus' self-understanding as the Son of God. The devil knew the key "buttons" to push for Jesus, but Jesus overcame every temptation. This story shows a very human Jesus with real divine power or potential, yet a Jesus who responded to the devil in ways that we can appreciate and appropriate. As the writer to the Hebrews says, "He was tempted in similar ways to us, but without sin" (Heb 4:15). Although Satan was a problem to the incarnate Jesus, Satan was no match (see 1 John 4:4).

## B. Demons and Spirits

Jesus encountered throughout His travels both Jewish and Gentile people under the control of demons and various types of spirits. The gospel writers use the word *pneuma* for both good and bad spiritual beings (Mt 12:45; Luke 7:21; Mark 6:7) and for demons (Mark 1:23, 26; 3:11; 5:2, etc.). The early Christians remembered that Jesus healed “all who were under the power of the devil” (Acts 10:38). Demons or spirits were manifested in Jesus’ ministry in various ways including convulsions, loud screaming or change of voice, chaotic and unpredictable behavior, super-human strength, and indifference to pain. Demon possessed people were often on the margins of society. In Mark 1:21-28, the man was a participant in society; the demon only revealed itself when it faced Jesus. Some demon possessed people remained in their family situations (Mark 7 and 9). By casting out the demons or spirits, Jesus brought social restoration to many of these people (Luke 5:19). Demons recognized the identity and authority of Jesus (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:33) and manifested themselves in the presence of Jesus (Mark 1:21-28; 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 9:14-29). Jesus was not the only person in the ancient world to cast out demons. What is significant about Jesus is that He did not use other devices common to the period (incense, medicine, laying on hands, magical charms). The demons or spirits obeyed Jesus simply by the word from His mouth (Mark 1:25; 5:8; 9:25). He commanded and the spirits obeyed.

The authors of the Synoptic gospels make a distinction between being controlled by demons and by sickness. Jesus had a two-part ministry of casting out demons and healing the sick (Mark 1:34; Luke 13:32). Some illnesses were influenced by supernatural forces, such as the woman with a curved spine who had been bound by Satan for 18 years (Luke 13:10-17). However, not every “spirit” Jesus encountered may have been “demonic.” In Mark 9, a father brought his son, who would be seized by a spirit and fall to the ground, to Jesus’ disciples to be healed, but the disciples could not. In desperation, this father brought his son to Jesus who then healed the boy. There are various ways to interpret this story, but from a rather personal perspective of one who has experienced challenges similar to this father, I read this story and see an epileptic child. Epilepsy was not a known medical condition in the first century, so it is easy to conclude that this child was not “demon possessed” but simply suffering from some form of epilepsy. To come to this conclusion, I have to apply a certain “modern” or “scientific” reading of the text that takes into consideration the influence of the “pre-modern” world view of the gospel writers and early church. This is a hermeneutical decision I take based on the fact that no where in this story is the spirit called evil, wicked,

or a demon but only “unclean,” “deaf and dumb,” although “unclean” could be equated with “demonic” as in Mark 7:25 and 30. But what this interpretation suggests to me is that not every “demonic-like” condition we encounter is actually a case of demon possession but may simply be a physical illness that people interpret as supernatural. It may take supernatural intervention to fix, as Jesus says, “This kind can come out only by prayer” (Mark 9:29). Jesus’ defeat of Satan, demons, and evil is an important and vital part of the Gospel story of salvation. It showed that the kingdom of God was breaking into the world, transforming the human situation (Matt 12:28). One of the greatest fears of the people of that day was shown to be powerless when confronted by the Incarnate Son of God. The same sovereignty apparent throughout the Old Testament is evident throughout the Gospel narratives and should give believers confidence.

#### **IV. The Church’s On-going Battle**

The New Testament shows that those who follow Jesus should expect to experience similar challenges and opportunities as Jesus. This includes battling evil and the forces of evil. Outside of the Gospels and Acts, demons are mentioned only 9 times, although other terms may refer to the same beings (Gal 4:3, 9; Rom 8:38-39; Eph 6:12; Rev 16:13; 1 John 4:1-3). Confrontation with evil continued after Jesus’ ministry for the disciples who were extensions of Jesus.

##### **A. Jesus commissioned and gave His disciples authority to cast out demons or unclean spirits.**

In Mark 6:7, Jesus gave His disciples authority or power to cast out “unclean spirits” and sent them out two by two to preach the message of the kingdom of heaven, the same ministry that He Himself was involved in. They were successful in their ability to drive out “demons” (6:13). The longer ending of Mark has Jesus giving this same commission to His disciples just before He ascended (16:17). However one wishes to address the textual issue of Mark 16, casting out demons and healing the sick continued to be a hallmark of the early church as is evidenced in Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16-18; and 19:12-19. The disciples were able to carry out this mission because of their association with Jesus and use of His authority (Acts 16:18). The theme that underlies the entire book of Acts is that the disciples went out in the power of the Holy Spirit who continued the ministry of Jesus (John 16:4-15).

##### **B. The gates of hell cannot resist.**

In Matthew 16, the disciple Peter confesses Jesus to be the Christ. In response, Jesus makes the significant statement that He would build His



church on Peter, the rock, and the gates of “Hades” would not be stronger than this church (Matt 16:18). There are two ways to interpret this phrase relevant to the topic of this paper. One is to take the defensive position: the forces of evil will not be able to destroy the church. We should not fear that the church will be defeated by the wickedness that is all around us. Although persecuted, the church will continue until the end. The other way is to take the offensive position: the power of evil and its hold on people will not be able to stand up against the power of the gospel. Both of these are possible, but perhaps the second option finds more support with v. 19: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” We have the power to influence people’s eternal destinies. Evil will not have the last say, we will!

### **C. Our battle is against the principalities of this world.**

In Ephesians 6:10-18, Paul gives some advice to believers on how to live victorious lives. In this passage he describes the armor of God that will help the believer hold up against the schemes of the devil. The believer’s real battle is deeper than “flesh and blood” but is a spiritual battle with the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the spiritual world. Paul’s answer to this battle sounds like a litany of spiritual gifts: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, the word of God, and prayer. Although the forces of evil can oppress believers (2 Tim 2:25-26), especially through ungodly people, believers need not fear because we are on the side of the sovereign God. In Ephesians 2:1-2, Paul describes victory over the devil in individual believers. He describes the devil here as “ruler of the kingdom of the air who works in the disobedient.” The devil apparently works through the power of the “flesh” (*sarx*, a term for Paul which has the connotation of living to satisfy the fallen, sinful condition, without reference to God) to defeat us (2:3). The logic of this passage suggests that by gaining victory over the flesh, one also gains victory over the devil. The way victory is gained is by dependence in faith upon the grace of God in Christ Jesus. James says something similar in James 4:7: “Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil and it will flee from you.” The two ideas expressed here go together. Submitting to God in humility, repentance and purity causes us to go God’s way, thus resisting the devil’s tool of the flesh and its temptations and forcing the devil to flee. This is a powerful message for a denomination “called unto holiness” to proclaim. 1 Pet 5:8-9 says something similar, that the way to overcome the devil is to be self-controlled and alert.

## **D. Victory over the temptation is victory over Satan**

By following Jesus' example of victory over temptation, the believer can also gain victory over Satan. Giving in to temptation is a victory for Satan because Satan has essentially created a rift between us and God. Temptations are as varied and numerous as the situations we face (see Matt 13:19; 2 Cor 4:4; Rev 12:12). God gives us victory over temptation through the presence of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 10:13). The obedience of submission allows the Holy Spirit to guide us and reveal to our consciences God's will for us. Giving in to the temptation to sin gives the devil a foothold (Eph 4:27; 1 John 3:8-10). Satan need not and cannot have any victory when we say "yes" to God. The Holy Spirit is God's assurance of victory in this life (1 John 4:4).

## **V. The Victory of the Cross Event**

### **A. The Power of Christ's Resurrection (1 Cor 15)**

The place to begin when constructing a biblical understanding of Jesus' victory over Satan and the forces of evil is with Jesus' death and resurrection. By His death and resurrection, Jesus took care of the debt we owe God for our sin and disarmed the "rulers and authorities" (Col 2:15). The sequence in 1 Cor 15:20-29 is noteworthy. First, this passage shows that Jesus' resurrection reverses the effect of Adam's sin (vv. 21-22), especially the penalty of death. By conquering the power of sin, Jesus essentially cut off Satan's one tool—the propensity of humans towards sin. Jesus reversed the curse of Adam, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Gen 3:15. Second, the hope of the resurrection of believers in v. 23 actualizes Jesus' own resurrection for each of us. We become participants in Jesus' resurrection by our submission to Him (Rom 6:4). Next will come the destruction of all dominion, power and authority (v. 24; "all His enemies under His feet," v. 25). According to Heb 1:13 and 10:12, Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father, waiting until His enemies will be made His footstool. The enemies still wage war against God's people, but this will end when Jesus comes again. When Jesus comes again, He will hand the conquered kingdom to God the Father (v. 24). The last enemy is death. Jesus' own resurrection proves His power over death, therefore, the end of the story has already been written—Jesus and those who are in Him win.

### **B. Fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 10:14-22)**

Jesus' claim upon His followers is exclusive, much like the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel in the Old Testament (see the book of Hosea). The significant confession in the NT is, "Jesus is

Lord” (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; Phil 2:11). This is both a religious decision and a cosmic confession. To say “Jesus is Lord” is to exclude any other claim on our lives (1 Cor 8:6). Paul’s discussion in 1 Cor 10 reveals an important concept for understanding our dis-relationship with demons. In the context, Paul is trying guide the Corinthians in matters related to eating food sacrificed to idols. Paul recognizes that idols are nothing but man-made objects (8:4), but there is a demonic power behind them (10:20). Critical for Paul is the idea of “fellowship” (*koinonia*). Participating in idol worship violates fellowship with Christ. Communion with and in Christ is vital for the Christian community. Participating in the cup and loaf binds us to Christ because we allow Him to be Lord. Our bond with Christ enables us to be “church” because of the presence of the Holy Spirit (10:17; 3:16). Paul makes a significant statement about the Eucharist in the context of idolatry and demonization. What would a holiness sermon about the Lord’s Supper look like if given in a context where people are conscious of the spirit world? One note from Paul is helpful as we formulate this theology: “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons” (10:21). This sounds like the need for a consecrated and sanctified heart.

### C. Cosmic Victory

One final note—we know how the story ends. The Book of Revelation gives the conclusion to the matter. Believers can expect to experience persecution instigated by the devil, but if we hold strong, we can expect the crown of life (Rev 2:10). The way believers can hold strong is by “the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death” (12:10). Revelation indicates the end days will not be easy for Christians, with many losing their lives in persecution. Satan will be bound for “a thousand years,” let free from a time to deceive the nations, and finally cast for eternity into the lake of burning sulfur (20:1-3, 7-10). This symbolic language is impossible to interpret with certainty, but the message is clear: the Lamb wins and Satan is forever defeated. This all came about because of the sacrifice of the Lamb who is proclaimed “King of kings and Lord of lords” (19:16).

### Conclusion

As people who believe in the divine inspiration of the Bible, we should take seriously the concepts expressed in the Bible, not with naive simplicity, but with openness and careful consideration. With the premise of divine inspiration, how then do we consider the cultural conditioning of

the Bible? The challenge is to separate the eternal and the temporal aspects of the Bible. Perhaps some of the Bible's descriptions of Satan and demons are "culturally" conditioned (synchronic); hence, interpretation is confined to a specific point in history. Yet, other descriptions of Satan and demons are more "timeless" and valid for all cultures and times (diachronic).

Methodologically, one could ask the question about the cultural conditioning of the authors of the New Testament. If the authors were men of their time, they saw their world through first-century eyes. They were part of a world where the spirit world was common experience, not too unlike many countries today. A critic might say that the disciples, early church, and authors of the NT saw and re-interpreted aspects of Jesus' story that were relevant to their own situations, hence, they "contextualized" their messages to meet the needs of a world dominated to a great extent by the supernatural. Even if this view were true, and it is difficult or impossible to prove or disprove it, it actually supports the need to contextualize our own interpretation of the Jesus story to meet the needs of the non-believers and believers in many parts of the world today. We are faced with the same difficulty that the early church faced—how can we take a timeless message given in a moment of time and make it relevant to people influenced by diverse world-views? Is there actually something numinous about the mortal? The first step that serious interpreters of Scripture must take is to recognize both the humanity of the Bible and themselves and the supernatural in the Bible and the world around us. There is a whole realm of existence of which we only get rare glimpses.

In our effort to make the timeless message of Jesus Christ relevant, we can make one of two errors. One, we can become so absorbed with the supernatural that our theology loses out in the incarnate, transformative power of the gospel. We can become too caught up in the fine articulations of our doctrine as to become irrelevant, or preoccupied with trying to figure out the problem of evil resulting in the neglect of the good. The other error is that we can focus so much on things conditioned by time, such as culture, that we cannot see the greater movement of the Spirit. We could run around putting out "fires" of the devil and never experience the cleansing *Fire of God*. If I could say it all simply, we need to approach this topic with great care, putting it all under the hermeneutical umbrella of the optimism in God's grace to change those who were once lost, alienated, and in enmity towards God, into saved, sanctified, and empowered vessels of the Holy Spirit. I endorse Neville's efforts at re-examining our Articles of Faith in light of Scripture and the experiences of many people today. As we approach this task, we must have open dialogue

between biblical scholars, theologians, philosophers, and practitioners, with a willingness to change what needs changed, and a caution and reserve to preserve what needs preserved.

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## **An Initial Response to Neville Bartle’s “Articles of Faith and Jesus’ Victory over Satan: The Missiological Implications”**

**David B. McEwan**

I would like to thank Neville for this very important paper on a topic of major concern to the Church, wherever it is located. My brief responses address particular areas where I would like to see further debate before any firm conclusions are reached.

### **The Church: the West and the Rest**

Neville makes constant reference to the worldview/theology of the “Western” church and sharply contrasts that with the church in the rest of the world, particularly in the area of the spirit world. While I agree with the general tenor of his comments, I do not think that it is helpful to make the contrast between “the West” and “Rest,” as if they are two monolithic cultural realities. The characteristics that he attributes to the “Western” church are the qualities to be found wherever Modernism is the dominant worldview. They are the result of the profound changes introduced by the Enlightenment in Europe and North America, interwoven with an increasingly secularised culture. These qualities are to be found in many world areas, especially amongst the more highly-educated living and working in large cities. There are people in Asian cities who are as thoroughly “Modern” in their approach to life as any so-called “westerner.” Conversely, there is a resurgence in Europe and North America of pagan spiritualities and worldviews; partly as a consequence of migration and partly as a reaction to Modernism. These cultures fully believed in the spirit-world in premodern times and are increasingly returning to that belief in postmodern times. There are many areas where, even during the dominant period of Modernism, a strong belief in the spirit world has persisted. Given global migration patterns, I do not think West-East is a particularly helpful description today.

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## **Worldview**

Dualism has been a part of the worldview that the Christian Church had to deal with from the very beginning (not merely since the 10<sup>th</sup> century), as its basic conception goes back at least to the Greek philosophers of the classical period many centuries before Christ. The Early Church Fathers were only too well aware of this and generally very successful in evading its traps. While they had to work with Greek philosophical terms, they gave them a decidedly Christian and biblical content, maintaining strongly that there is only a single creation composed of both material and spiritual realities.

There is no doubt that the impact of Modernism has led to a practical cosmic dualism for many evangelical Christians. I would agree with Neville that this tragedy coincided with the great Protestant missionary movements and the impact of Modernism was evident in the mission work of nearly all these groups. This naturalistic-materialistic-scientific worldview has dominated much conservative evangelical Christianity to the detriment of a more biblical worldview. Today many theologians from Europe and North America are seeking to refute the claims of Modernism and return the church to a more holistic view. Sadly, their literature does not easily reach the local laity, let alone the clergy who did their ministerial preparation using exclusively the textbooks written by an older generation from North America or Europe. This is a situation that really does need to be addressed.

### **Incomplete Gospel, Incomplete Saviour, Syncretistic Christianity**

I would agree with Neville about the inadequacies of preaching/teaching an incomplete gospel and an incomplete Saviour, with the sad consequences that inevitably follow. While this is not the only reason for syncretism, it is certainly a major factor in many world areas. Its impact on church membership losses I think is much more problematic.

## **The Spirit World**

While I find myself agreeing with much of Neville's material on this area, there are a number of issues I would want to consider further, though a detailed examination of them is well beyond the scope of this brief response.

Theological reflection, discernment and formulation in the Wesleyan-Holiness movement is based upon Scripture, reason, tradition and experience. Of these, Scripture is primary and foundational, with the other three elements forming the "hermeneutical tools" that enable the community of faith to understand and apply the Scriptural truth in its

current setting. These three tools are all shaped significantly by the persons, communities and cultures utilising them. This is why we can all read the same Scripture passage and arrive at different interpretations and applications. Fortunately this hermeneutical process is not merely a human one, for we believe in the active presence of the Holy Spirit who is always seeking to guide the church “into all the truth” (Jn 16:13). Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit always works with real persons in real communities in real times and places. The role of “experience” in this process is the one that is much debated. For Wesleyans, experience can “confirm” doctrine but it cannot devise it—Scripture alone is the “source.” I do believe that the Scripture teaches that only reality prior to creation was the Triune God—there was nothing and no-one else. It is the action of God alone that brings about creation, and the created order is everything else that is not God—the material cosmos, biological life and the realm of spirits (angels, Satan and demons). Thus creation embraces both the material, visible realm and the spiritual, invisible realm. Information about the former we can gather by our five senses; information about the latter is not quite so straightforward. Certainly the spiritual directly impacts the material, but moving from “experience” to “interpretation” of that experience is not as straight-forward as it is sometimes deemed to be. It seems to me that much of the so-called “factual” material about the spirit world comes, in practice, from sources other than Scripture—and this is the key issue in my view. Many of the books currently popular in Christian circles that deal with the spirit world give major attention to the experiences of people, the “words” of the spirits themselves and the “beliefs” of the pagans who have embraced these spirits. While it would be a great mistake to reject all of this, it would be equally a grave mistake to unquestioningly adopt it.

In a recent book by Nigel Wright, four cautions are raised when we seek to go beyond the material found in the Bible on the nature and inhabitants of the spirit world:

1. The New Testament shows no interest in demonology as such—it is treated as incidental to the positive work of Christ in bringing the kingdom of God. It was certainly an important and central part of His ministry—but it was only one element in a ministry of forgiveness, healing and liberation.
2. The New Testament says very little about the internal workings of the kingdom of darkness. Thus other books written by Christians on this subject are attempts to describe and make sense of experiences; as such they have a validity if approached with caution (like all non-canonical material).



3. The demonic realm, by definition, cannot be well-organised and highly structured—its essence is unreason and chaos. Thus all “results” of human investigation should remain tentative.
4. Beware of finding what we expect to find—that is, imposing our own expectations and models upon experiences that we investigate.<sup>1</sup>

One need not agree with all of these points in order to appreciate the difficulties raised when we venture beyond the clear warrant of Scripture. In particular, his second point on the clarity of the information given in the New Testament (and in the Old Testament for that matter) is crucial. There are no references at all in Scripture to spirits inhabiting inanimate natural objects (rivers, hills, stones, etc), vegetation, or artefacts. There are a couple of references in such books as Daniel which **may** be understood to refer to spirits that are involved with geographical areas, but the interpretation of such references is very much debated. This can be illustrated from Neville’s own paper where he makes the assumption that in Genesis 3 the serpent is “clearly identified as Satan” (p. 195). This identification may commonly be made in certain circles but it is by no means “clear”; neither from the text itself (the serpent is simply identified as “crafty”), nor in the writings of many commentators. The link with Revelation 13 and 20 can be made only on some other grounds, based upon presuppositions that are not held by all Christians. The use of the word “serpent” in both passages proves nothing; after all, Jesus strongly urges us to be “wise as serpents”(Matt. 10:16. RSV)!!

This illustrates Wright’s fourth point—our proneness to find what we expect to find—and this is true for all parties in hermeneutical debates. Those who are predisposed to believe in the extensive presence of spirits in people, animals, vegetation, artefacts, buildings, natural features and geographical locations will “find” scriptural support for their position. They are very surprised that others do not—for it is so “obvious” to them. Likewise, those who are not predisposed to believe in such an extensive presence “find” adequate scriptural support for their position—which they believe is equally “obvious.” To my mind, the only “obvious” point to be gleaned from this is that for some things, “Scripture alone” is not adequate to provide a definitive answer to every question we raise. It is at this point that we turn to see what the tradition of the Church Universal, reason and experience have to contribute, with “experience” being the public, long-term testimony of the saints from all ages and places.

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<sup>1</sup>Nigel G. Wright, *A Theology of the Dark Side: Putting the Power of Evil in its Place*. Carlisle. (UK: Paternoster Press, 2003), 110-113.

Once more, it is important to comment that a thorough analysis and discussion of this material is well beyond the scope of this brief initial response. However, I would like to say that the “picture” that emerges regarding the spirit world is not as one-sided as either the modernists or the pre- and post-modernists would often like us to believe. It is a complex issue and we do ourselves no favours if we reduce it to simplistic statements such as “the church—always, rarely, never—believed this way.” John Wesley made a valid point when he said that there is a profound difference between those things that **must** be believed in order to be a Christian (“doctrine”), and those things that **may** be believed, but are not essential (“opinion”) to being a Christian. This same point has also been made by others in the long history of the Christian Church. Of course one person’s “opinion” is another person’s “dogma”; so even this argument is not particularly clear-cut. Nevertheless, the classic creedal statements of Christendom have never included any reference to the nature of the spirit world, nor to any one “theory” of the atonement that all Christians at all times and places must believe. The various views on the spirit world and the theories of the atonement are then matters of “opinion” and not established doctrine. Tom Noble makes this point and develops it extensively in a key chapter of *The Unseen World*, a recent book edited by Anthony Lane.<sup>2</sup>

### The Articles of Faith

In the section on “The Church” [paras. 23—27], the Nazarene *Manual* reminds us that the Church of God is composed of “all spiritually regenerate persons.” This is true whether we are considering the Church universal, a particular denomination or a local church. We make explicit in paragraph 26 that church membership rests “upon the fact of their being regenerate” and thus “we would require only such avowals of belief as are **essential** to Christian experience” [emphasis mine]. This is then followed by eight very brief statements (the “Agreed Statement of Belief,” paras. 26.1—26.8) that we see as being “essential” and to which many Christians (of whatever denomination) would be able to subscribe. The crucial requirement for membership in the church is spiritual life, not agreement with detailed theological propositions. In fact, belief in the Articles of Faith is **NOT** required for church membership; indeed, they cannot be as they are subject to change at every General Assembly. If we were to hold explicit belief in these Articles as a requirement of membership, then either

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<sup>2</sup>Tom Noble, “The Spirit World: A Theological Approach,” in *The Unseen World: Christian Reflections on Angels, Demons and the Heavenly Realm*, ed. Anthony N. S. Lane (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1996), 185-223. See also the chapter by Nigel G. Wright, “Charismatic Interpretations of the Demonic,” 149-163.

the whole Nazarene church would have to retake its membership vows every quadrennium or else we would have members belonging to the church under different conditions. The Church of the Nazarene is true to its Wesleyan, Anglican and Catholic (i.e. Early Church) roots by not requiring adherence to a lengthy and detailed creedal confession in order to join the church. Membership in the Church of the Nazarene rests on spiritual life rather than mental assent to a series of theological propositions. There never has been a comprehensive system of doctrine that was required to be believed by all who would call themselves Nazarene—any more than such a thing was required by the Early Church. In this we are being true to the Early Church, which limited its creedal statements to “essential” beliefs regarding the nature and person of the triune God, with a special focus on the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and a number of brief statements on the nature and composition of the Church. These creeds state the “fact” of our salvation, but do not offer any particular theological interpretation of it. Since the Early Church ministered in a world in which pagan life was dominated by the spirits, surely we would expect some reference to this in the Creeds if they had regarded it as important for salvation?

Our doctrinal position is not “merely” a North American one. Our denomination traces its theological heritage to Wesley and Methodism, which in turn arose primarily from an Anglican heritage. The Church of England, unlike many of the European Protestant traditions, has always retained a strong Catholic (universal) focus that was significantly shaped by the input of the Greek Fathers as much as the Latin Fathers. Later generations have shaped their doctrinal understanding according to their time and culture, but the basic theological core retains a genuine ecumenical reality that is based on what is “essential” to salvation. It is not surprising that Hodge, Wiley, Erikson *et al* make little or no reference to the spirit world, since their context for ministry are societies shaped extensively by Modernism. Systematic theologians writing for a pre-modern or a postmodern society give more attention to this matter, as it is a part of their ministry setting.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See for example Donald Bloesch’s *Christian Foundations* series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992 onwards); Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1994); Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1987-92). These are currently popular systematic theologies and all give quite extensive coverage of this issue. There are also innumerable monographs and articles written by theologians from this part of the world on this topic, at both an academic and popular level, let alone those who write from other world areas.

### Metaphors of Salvation

The Bible utilises a number of metaphors in talking about the death of Jesus and our salvation. The most common are from:

- the law court—justification
- the world of commerce—redemption
- our personal relationships—reconciliation
- community and personal worship—sacrifice
- the battleground—triumph over evil, victory

These metaphors are certainly the primary ones and the Church has utilized each of them in seeking to “explain” the atonement theologically. However, no one metaphor is adequate by itself and all of them together still do not convey the fullness of the work of Christ on the cross for our salvation. It is true that some metaphors are more useful in some contexts than others. There is an increasing recognition of the need to recover the “*Christus victor*” motif for the church in Britain, Europe and North America, let alone its usefulness for many other parts of the world. Even though much of evangelical Protestantism has been overly-focused on justification by faith in the past, it is surely no gain to replace this with an over-emphasis on “*Christus victor*” now. I agree with Neville that the latter does need emphasis in many world areas today, but I would not want it to become the sole metaphor (or for some parts of the world, even the main metaphor) used by the Church when speaking of the work of Christ at Calvary.<sup>4</sup>

### Closing

The Bible is filled with many references to the spirit world (as Neville rightly points out), but they utilise images, allusions and metaphors which need “interpreting” for the many ministry contexts in which we work today. Hermeneutically, we face the danger of “remythologising” the Scriptural accounts in a pagan way, when we take the biblical imagery and apply it literally and woodenly, thus invoking superstition and fear even amongst Christians. In the Gospels and Acts, demons are never encountered anywhere other than in human beings or (very rarely) in animals. The belief that “spiritual warfare” as it is currently interpreted by

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<sup>4</sup>See for further discussion on these issues, John Goldingay (ed), *Atonement Today: A Symposium at St. John's College, Nottingham* (London: SPCK, 1995); Jeol B. Green and Mark D. Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross: Atonement in New Testament & Contemporary Contexts* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

so many (with its associated power encounters, deliverance ministries and exorcisms) is essential before we can effectively minister amongst pagans must be questioned. For example, in Acts 16:16-18 a spirit-possessed slave-girl followed Paul and Silas as they were ministering in Philippi. They made no attempt to deal with her tragic situation as a “priority” or “necessity” for effective evangelism in this pagan city. It was only after “many days,” when Paul became “very much annoyed” (16:18), that they dealt with the girl’s problem; the text seems to indicate that had she left off following them around, Paul would not have bothered to perform the exorcism. I agree that it is dangerous to draw wide-ranging conclusions from one explicit incident, but this is precisely what many proponents of the “spirit warfare” worldview seem only too happy to be doing! You can’t have it both ways; if universalising from one text is problematic in one situation, it is equally problematic in others.

Paul’s references to “idols” in 1 Cor 8 and 10 reminds us of the symbiotic relationship between humans and the demonic. Many have made the point that demons have power over people to the extent that the people believe in them. As someone once commented, “whatever gets your attention, gets you”; there does seem to be a correlation between belief in the demonic and the incidence of demonic possession. Ironically, the more we focus on the forces of evil, the greater the power they have over us. Secularisation in countries dominated by Modernism has resulted in a reduction of people’s “awareness” of such spirits and therefore their “power” over human lives—simply because people no longer believe in them. In many other countries, the demonic has overt power because people do believe in them and “experience” them everywhere. If the problem in countries dominated by a Modernist worldview is a denial of the spirit world, it is no gain to replace this by an equally problematic worldview shaped by paganism, with its emphasis on the power and strength of the demonic. As Christians, while we do not deny the reality of the demonic, surely we want to emphasise the victory that we have in Jesus Christ. Perhaps the problem with many Christians in some societies is that they are still held captive by a pagan worldview and fail to realise the victory that is ours in Jesus Christ. As Nigel Wright has pointed out, there are problems in moving simplistically from an “experience” to searching Scripture and tradition in order to interpret what is being experienced. There is a real danger when we use obscure texts and non-canonical sources to legitimise ideologies derived more from paganism or subjective personal belief. The transition from observed or experienced phenomena to assigning authoritative meaning is not a simple one. It surely requires the wisdom and discernment of the Church Universal if we are to avoid the

two extremes of reducing everything to a rationalistic, scientific, materialistic explanation or to an irrational and superstitious spiritual one.<sup>5</sup>

I would draw our attention again to the crucial difference between “doctrine” and “opinion”; those matters on which Scripture and the classical Creeds are clear and regard as necessary for our salvation, and those where it is less clear and not essential for our salvation. In a world church like ours, seeking to distinguish between doctrine and opinion requires us to be a people of spiritual sensitivity, discernment, and wisdom, while strongly bonded together in holy love. I would certainly support Neville’s desire to have this matter debated in as wide a forum as possible. If the best way to begin the debate is to propose a number of changes to our Articles of Faith from our region, then I would endorse that action.

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<sup>5</sup>Wright, “Charismatic Interpretations of the Demonic,” 149-163.

## The Most Excellent Way

Cisca Ireland

*“And now I will show you the most excellent way. . . . Follow the way of love.” (1 Cor. 12:31b-14:1a)*

This morning I would like to remind us all of the love of God. His sole purpose for creation was love. In love He made human beings and promised a way of salvation when they sinned. In His love God choose a people for Himself so that, through them, He could show the world how much He loves us. This love culminated in the coming of God’s own son. Jesus’ life and His sacrificial death, no matter what we call it theologically, were motivated by one thing only: love—love for His Father and love for us. In His great love God did not leave us orphans when Jesus ascended into heaven to take His rightful place as King of kings—He gave us His Spirit. “And God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us” (Rom. 5:5). The Psalmist sings often about God’s unfailing love and kindness. Unfailing! In Psalm 33 it even says “the earth is full of His unfailing love” (5)!

In His great love and compassion, God rescued each one of us from the darkness. He loves us so much that He gave us a place of ministry where we can influence our church and our world and show them God’s love. Love is the Father’s most excellent way. In fact, He has no other way!

The holiness which we seek and yearn for is exactly this: the tenacious, all-encompassing, sacrificial love of God. To live the holy life means to have our emotions, our thoughts, our motives, our actions purified of everything but love. The love of the Almighty God. That same love which has been poured out into our hearts. When Paul writes this in the letter to the Roman Christians, he uses the perfect tense, which indicates a continuing effect of a past event. The Spirit was poured out in our hearts and we continue to live with the effect of it: God’s love floods our heart.

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When Paul addresses the Corinthian Christians in what we know as the First Epistle, he is speaking about this same love: it is patient, kind, it does not envy. . . . This is not a treatise on marital love, although it is often used that way. Here, Paul is addressing the Christians in Corinth who think they are quite something. They have knowledge, they have spiritual gifts, they have even contextualized the Christian teachings down to the level of their ordinary life: they know what is right and what is wrong, they are dealing with idol worship and dietary restrictions; they can speak as eloquently as the next orator; and, moreover, they consider themselves strong in the faith and therefore they can be tolerant concerning many issues. Paul has much to say to them in these regards, but in the end, it all comes down to this: I will show you the most excellent way: follow the way of love. If their lives do not match up with the life of love that God gives them to live, then all of the above is absolutely worthless.

People who love but don't theologize, miss interesting and fun discussions. People who theologize but don't love, miss the whole point.

In his commentary on First Corinthians 13, Richard Hayes underscores three areas: first of all, love is the ground of all meaning. It is also the ground of our theological deliberations and of our much needed efforts to support and encourage the formation of a truly Asian/Pacific holiness theology. Paul tells us that we can have the deepest theological thoughts and we can come up with the most brilliant contextualization, but if we have not love, we are nothing. We do not count in the Kingdom of God.

Secondly, love requires formation of character. Although after salvation we may receive God's gift of His sanctifying Spirit in one moment, it then takes a lifetime to live out a holy life. How do we do that? How do we learn to live holy? How do we learn to love? The mission statement of the Church of the Nazarene is: to fulfill the Great Commission. If we are serious about "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20), then we need to get down to the nitty gritty of love and teach our people how to be patient, how to be kind, how not to keep records of wrong, how not to delight in evil. . . .

In "The Divine Conspiracy," Dallas Willard writes about the necessity for spiritual training programs, which he calls "a curriculum for Christlikeness":

Imagine, if you can, discovering in your church letter or bulletin an announcement of a six-week seminar on how genuinely to bless someone who is spitting on you. . . . Or suppose the announced seminar was on how to live without purposely indulged lust or covetousness. Or on how to quit condemning the people around you. Or on how to be free of



anger and all its complications. . . . Imagine further . . . driving by a church with a large sign in front that says, We Teach All Who Seriously Commit Themselves to Jesus How to Do Everything He Said to Do. If you had just been reading the Gospels, especially Matt. 28:20 . . . you might think, “Of course, that is exactly what the founder of the church, Jesus, told us to do.”

But your second thought might be that this is a highly unusual church. And then, “Can this be right?” And: “Can it be real?” When do you suppose was the last time any group of believers of church of any kind or level had a meeting of its officials in which the topic for discussion and action was how they were going to teach their people actually to do the specific things Jesus said?” (p. 314)

The third point Richard Hayes makes in his comment on 1 Cor. 13 is that all our knowledge is partial. He says,

The force of verses 8-13, however, is to encourage us to have a sense of humility and a sense of humor about even our gravest convictions and activities. When the perfect comes, when God judges the secrets of human hearts, when we can see this life from the other side of the resurrection, we will discover that even the things that have seemed most glorious and exalted to us . . . have been like child’s play. Paul tries to teach us to sit loose in the cares and conflicts of present existence and particularly to what we think we know. Only love will not be rendered obsolete in the end (p. 233).

Dear brothers and sisters, Paul again has shown us the most excellent way. Let us strive together to follow this way of love.

## Scripture's Distinctives and Dynamic: "Towards" a Synthesis

Dwight Swanson

The task of bringing a synthesis of the wide-ranging approaches taken to our subject has been a challenge of its own! This short paper does not attempt to summarise the discussion, nor to comment on every strand of discussion. Rather, it addresses five themes which arose out of the whole of the conference.

### Narrative as a Means of Doing Theology

There was a good deal of interest in "*story*" as a means of crossing cultural contexts. For many cultures, this would be a natural way to "do theology." Some group discussion wrestled with the question of how to set the boundaries for such interpretation. When does contextualisation fall over into syncretism? The example of ancestor veneration/worship was given.

This is precisely the question of this conference, and discussion came back to this question over and again.

Concern was also evident over the differences between "*Asian*" and "*Western*" ways of thinking, and, more specifically, Western (read "missionary") involvement in the determination of what is valid theology. We will come back to this latter point below.

Regarding the first, I was struck during the presentation of the Khit-Pen educational method, by the essential similarity of this method to the goals of Western education (as distinct from "training"). The emphasis on reflective thinking about one's own thought processes is common ground. As for differences, perhaps this may be seen in the way in which evidence is evaluated—the Western critical evaluation vs. the Khit Pen non-judgmental reflection. Yet, at some point reflection has to ask whether one's thinking is valid. When it is found wanting, it has to be changed. In

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this respect, then, there seems to be little fundamental difference between the goals of thinking, though there are obvious differences in approach.

### **Postmodernism**

The most surprising component of discussion in this conference, to this listener, was to hear the word “postmodernism” so often. The phenomenon of globalisation, particularly the affect upon local cultures by Youth Culture as represented by MTV’s missionary activity, shifts the discussion for us in significant ways. In many respects, what we have been talking about during this conference is already obsolete. In Youth Culture, a generation is no more than two or three years old before it is out of date. We need a paradigm shift to take this on board!

This effects our concepts of evangelism, as well. The fact that 50% or more of your populations are under the age of 18, or even 15, makes youth evangelism top-priority. This is true even in an ageing population like the UK. As I drive through the small towns of England, where there is no witness to holiness, I contemplate what it will take to bring the Church of the Nazarene there—what it will take to make the Church a national church. Observing groups of young people standing idle on street corners and in front of shops, it has struck me that church growth will happen through youth ministry.

We need youth workers as evangelists. And, those youth workers *must* be theologically educated. The serious job of doing theology for a new generation is highly specialised work!

### **On “Contextualisation”**

Listening to the ways in which “context” was used during the conference, I was struck by the realisation that what many were talking about was “the right to find one’s own voice.” Many voices seem to be saying, “Our theology has been given to us by others, so it is not wholly our own. We want to speak, and make theology our own.”

The predominate voice in theology is, and has always been, the Western voice. In many ways, by my own presence and by having this last word, I am confirming this very fact!

In my papers I attempted to put forward the case for the common effort of doing theology, in which we are involved in this together. Such a common effort will require, on one hand, a readiness of the here-to-fore dominant voice to allow room for the other voices, and to give full respect to those voices as equals. My hope is that we will. On the other hand, the danger to beware is that of slipping into nationalism—where non-Western

voices choose their own way because it *is* theirs and no one else's. This would have the effect of replacing one dominant culture with another.

### **Evangelism and Theology**

I heard a common theme in the discussion of evangelism—that of the place of *community*. The truth remains that each of us must come, personally, to faith in Jesus Christ; but the East teaches the West that every person lives as part of a community. Mission evangelism has often created community chaos, and the division of families, by focussing on the individual apart from his/her social ties.

The evangelisation of Europe in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Cs was effected by the conversion of tribal groups. First the chief of the tribe, then every family leader with his family. Even Europe has a communal past!

Another significant factor to understand in the evangelisation of Europe is that it was done by teachers! It was Irish and British Celts, moving out from the teaching centres of Iona and Lindisfarne, who brought the gospel to the Franks and Gauls (today's northern Europe). They did this by teaching—discipleship. In England, the South had been evangelised in this way, but not the North. When the pagan Saxons invaded from Denmark and Norway, the Christians of the North fell away—but the fully disciplined Christians of the South not only remained strong, but converted their conquerors.<sup>1</sup>

Such a pattern of evangelism seems fitting in those cultures of Asia which are heirs of Buddhism and Confucianism.

The question which remains here, however, is a different one than that of method. Under the theme of this conference, we have to ask the relation of evangelism to our message of holiness. What is different about our evangelism?

If we see it take place within a teaching community, then it will surely display the lifestyle of a holy people. This means we have to live like such a people! This evangelism is people who love God, loving each other, reaching out to others in love.

### **The Hermeneutic of Holiness**

Have we found a hermeneutic for doing theology in this region within a holiness perspective? In most ways, we are probably still heading "towards" that point. But I don't think it is that hard to pin down. It has

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<sup>1</sup>For England, see F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, Vol. 2 of the Oxford History of England (Oxford, 1947), chapter IV, "The Conversion of the English Peoples." For the emphatic importance of education as evangelism, see p. 116.

different outworkings than in other parts of the world, but the basic hermeneutic will not be very much different that that for the Church in the UK or the US, I think.

A “hermeneutic” implies that a grid is placed over Scripture whereby we can evaluate how to understand the Scripture. We each have to acknowledge the grids we already have in place—our cultural, national, local, and unique standpoint for reading Scripture. After reflecting on these factors, in order to account for them in the process of our work, we choose to place ourselves within a broader grid, that of our Wesleyan and holiness tradition. Then, this tradition, too, is constantly held up to Scripture for reflective evaluation, and for the test of faith.

The test of faith is our *community*. It must go through our local church, and our national church, and our global church, for confirmation and incorporation. No other part of the church can exercise a veto (we are not the Security Council of the UN); rather, the greater body offers a check against excesses. Wisdom, says the Proverb, comes in the counsel of many people.

### Conclusions

These are but preliminary observations, and now open for discussion. I will conclude my part with a word about the way forward, if I may be so bold.

If we are ever to go beyond discussions that head “towards” a theology, then the task has to begin soon. Suggestions were made during the conference regarding the issue of the spirit-world, and perhaps even ancestor veneration/worship. I can envision each nationality, or sub-group, establishing a theology panel. Perhaps it may be set up from the regional colleges. Each panel would look at the key issues facing their church in its culture, and see that the work of research and writing of position papers be commissioned. These could be circulated nationally, and also to other parts of the Region (on a secure web-site, as was suggested by Dr. Cobb). Interaction could then help to refine the thinking. Eventually, books of theology would be published in an Asian manner—as a community effort.

Such an effort would be wonderful to see!



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