

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

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY



Volume 45 • No. 3 • August 2021

Evangelical Review of Theology

A Global Forum

Volume 45 • Number 3 • August 2021

Published by



WIPF and STOCK Publishers
199 West 8th Avenue • Eugene OR 97401
wipfandstock.com

World Evangelical Alliance launches new Spanish-language journal
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<https://theology.worlddea.org/evangelical-review-of-theology/>
To order hard copies, contact orders@wipfandstock.com

ISSN: 0144-8153
ISBN: 978-1-XXXX-XXXX-X
Volume 45 • No. 3 • August 2021
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Global Theology Department

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John Stott: The Greatest Modern Model of Evangelical Theology

Thomas Schirrmacher,
WEA Secretary General

This year we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the birth of John Stott. The publishers of his books, The Gospel Coalition and *Christian Today* were among those celebrating Stott's influence and emphasizing, in remarkably similar ways, that evangelicals still need to learn from Stott. They particularly recognize his effectiveness as an irenic but principled evangelical, one who sought to build bridges and who drew lines of division only where Scripture required it.¹

I have also wanted to recognize John Stott on this occasion, but I find that I have nothing better to say than what I wrote in 2011 for the booklet distributed at the 'Service of Thanksgiving for the Life of John R. W. Stott' in London's St. Paul's Cathedral, with 2,000 invited guests from all over the world.² I never saw so many Anglican and other bishops attending the farewell service of a simple priest. It was one of the most impressive services I ever visited and the cross of Christ (which happened to be the title of Stott's major work) stood in the centre of it.

So I offer you that message again, with only minor updating.

John Stott: man of complementarity

John Stott, the main author of the theological preamble of the constitution of the World Evangelical Alliance and a key player in the launching of our theological journal, the *Evangelical Review of Theology*, is now with Jesus, who was the focus of his life in all he did, said and wrote. In what was probably his best book, *The Cross of Christ* (1986), he summarized his legacy to all evangelicals when he stated that only if the cross of Jesus remains our centre can we achieve unity.

For me, John Stott is a role model for all evangelical theologians. He was an impressive master of complementarity, by which I mean that he was never willing to emphasize one important thing at the expense of other important things. Let me illustrate some of those complementarities by comparing John Stott to Paul—something he surely would have very much disliked!

1 See InterVarsity Press, 'Organizations Partner to Commemorate John Stott's One Hundredth Birthday and Ongoing Legacy', January 2021, <https://worldea.org/yourls/ert453ts1>; Russell Moore, 'John Stott at 100: Why Evangelicals Still Need Him', *The Gospel Coalition*, 27 April 2021, <https://worldea.org/yourls/ert453ts2>; David Baker, 'What Can Today's Evangelicals Learn from John Stott, 100 Years after His Birth?' *Christian Today*, 27 April 2021, <https://worldea.org/yourls/ert453ts3>.

2 The booklet from the service is available at <https://worldea.org/yourls/ert453ts4>.

- Like Paul, Stott was a pastor, a missionary and a great theologian at the same time. His academic theology was always aimed at the body of Christ, not his academic colleagues.
- Like Paul, he was a master thinker and systematic writer, trying to put the whole faith into one short book (Romans for Paul, the 1958 classic *Basic Christianity* for Stott). And yet he never wrote in an abstruse way so as to impress academics, but so that the whole church could benefit.
- Like Paul, he was willing to strive for the gospel and was a man of clear words; see especially his *Christ the Controversialist* (1970). And yet he was a man of peace, a bridge builder, someone who listened to other opinions very thoroughly and sought to understand them. Through his involvement in the WEA and the Lausanne Movement, he brought evangelicals and evangelical theologians together on a larger scale than ever before. But he did not do so by having no principled position or by bypassing theological discussion or biblical exegesis. Rather, he brought people together in the midst of theological debate. He was convinced that unity would not come from doing less good theology, but from more open study of the Bible together across all lines.
- Like Paul, he was as local as he was global. He managed to write, speak and travel all over the world while also being totally dedicated to personal counselling, to his local congregation and to the mentoring of those close to him.
- Like Paul, Stott became world-famous and yet remained a humble servant who never understood how Jesus could use him in such a way.
- Like Paul, he became prominent in politics and the secular world and stood before rulers—for example, preaching to the Queen and being counted among the 100 most influential people by *Time* magazine in 2005. And yet he was never absorbed by this worldly influence; rather, preaching the gospel stayed his obsession.
- Like Paul, he was a master of the old and brilliant with regard to what needed to be changed and invented anew. He never wanted to conform the old rugged cross to the modern age, but to defend the faith once for all given to the church. And yet he was open to adapting the Christian faith to ever-changing situations on all continents, even in his old age. As a young man, his evangelical gospel looked very old to some; as an old man, his ideas seemed fresher than those of many people 60 years younger than he.
- Like Paul, Stott was convinced that preaching the gospel is the centre of everything, but at the same time he furthered works of compassion to the needy worldwide. He saw everything through the lens of the gospel, knowing that only the cross can overcome the sins of pride, racism, mammon, hatred, sexual abuse and so on, yet at the same time he motivated many people to become engaged in opposing those social evils.

I hope that the World Evangelical Alliance can maintain John Stott's high standards and carry his theological heritage into the future of the evangelical movement.

Byang Kato: Africa's Foremost Twentieth-Century Evangelical Theological Leader

Aiah Dorkuh Foday-Khabenje

In the mid-twentieth century, Byang Kato swam against the tide of accommodating traditional African religious ideas within African Christianity. His energetic articulation and defence of historic Christian truth remain influential today. In this article, one of his successors describes Kato's personal story, theological work and ongoing importance.

Byang Henry Kato (1936–1975) was likely the most influential evangelical Christian leader in sub-Saharan Africa in the twentieth century. Kato was dedicated as a fetish priest a few months after his birth, destined to follow his father as a priest serving a local ethnic deity. Instead, he became a Christian at age 12 and grew into an outstanding leader, experiencing a notable transformation from African traditional religion (ATR) to a biblical worldview.¹

Kato insightfully critiqued several of the other theologians of his time, whose teachings he saw as syncretistic and universalistic. He raised the alarm about these theological pitfalls and endeavoured to provide a solution by creating the foundation and structures for sound theological education on the African content. He also prioritized biblical fidelity above nationalism, sometimes putting himself at loggerheads with those who promoted Afrocentrism in theological and intellectual discourse.

At a time when many other voices were expressing a positive appraisal of ATRs' compatibility with the Christian faith, Kato pointed out the danger of the coexistence of the two religious systems and advocated for discontinuity. He helped to shape and define the contours of evangelical Christianity in Africa, becoming the first African General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA). Kato also held key roles in the Lausanne Movement and the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). He was a plenary speaker at the inaugural Lausanne Congress in 1974 and member of

Aiah Dorkuh Foday-Khabenje (PhD, South African Theological Seminary) is the immediate past General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa. He stepped down on 31 May 2021 after serving the maximum allowable 12 years in that post.

1 Scott Douglas MacDonald, *A Critical Analysis of Byang Kato's Demonology and Its Theological Relevance for an Evangelical Demonology* (PhD dissertation, University of South Africa, February 2017), 18; Sophie de la Haye, *Byang Kato: Ambassador for Christ* (Achimota, Ghana: African Christian Press, 1986); Byang Kato, *From Juju to Jesus Christ* (Lagos: Africa Challenge, 1962); Stephen Oluwarotimi Y. Baba, 'The Profile of Dr. Byang Henry Kato, Former Lecturer at ECWA Theological Seminary, Igbaja, Nigeria', address delivered at the 41st Byang Henry Kato Memorial Conference, 4 April 2017.

the Lausanne Continuation Committee. He was elected as Secretary of the WEA's International Council and chaired the WEA Theological Commission. Despite his short life, Kato is widely remembered as the father of contemporary evangelicalism in sub-Saharan Africa.²

Kato's conversion and Christian education

Kato was born in the town of Kwoi in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, as a member of the Jaba ethnic people. Kwoi was one of the earliest settlements for Christian missionaries in northern Nigeria, with the Sudan Interior Mission—now Serving in Mission (SIM)—present there since 1910. However, Byang was initially exposed to traditional African religious beliefs under his father's mentorship.

Kato's first encounter with the gospel message resulted from the evangelistic activities of SIM missionary Mary Haas in Kwoi. Haas would attract the community's attention by playing music on a gramophone in the town square and would then preach the gospel in the Jaba people's language. Intrigued by the gospel stories he heard, Byang followed the missionary to Sunday school and eventually enrolled in the mission's Christian elementary school at age 12. Byang's father resisted the idea of placing his son in this school for nearly a year, but his own father finally persuaded him.³

Byang's heart was stirred when he heard a Bible story, told by his Nigerian teacher, about God's plan of salvation in preserving Noah and his family (Gen. 6:9–8:22). Seeing his own need for salvation from the devastating consequences of sin, Byang accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour.⁴ Testifying about his conversion, Kato wrote:

Finally, a day came when I knew I had to decide what I would do. I had to face these facts: Juju could not save my soul. Juju demands bloody sacrifices—often human sacrifices. Juju demands torture, keeps women and children in fear. Juju priests claim they have the power of life and death over anyone who fails to give the required number of goats, rams, and cocks. These priests are a terror to everyone!⁵

Many years later, when asked why he became a Christian, Kato responded, 'Well, when I was without Christ, I was of course religious—religious in the sense of worshipping idols. But when Jesus Christ was presented to me, I realized that He was

2 David Tonghou Ngong, *The Material in Salvific Discourse: A Study of Two Christian Perspectives* (PhD dissertation, Baylor University, 2007), 128; de la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 17; Detlef Kapteina, 'Formation of African Evangelical Theology', *African Journal of Evangelical Theology* 25, no. 1 (2006): 61–84; Paul Bowers, 'Byang Kato and Beyond: The 2008 Byang Kato Memorial Lectures, Part 1', Jos, Nigeria, March 2008.

3 De la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 18.

4 Christian Breman, *The Association of Evangelicals in Africa: Its History, Organization, Members, Projects, Localization and Message* (PhD dissertation, Utrecht University, the Netherlands, 1995), 37; de la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 19.

5 Kato, *From Juju to Jesus Christ*, 13.

the Way of Life—not just a way, but the only Way, and so I asked Him to come into my heart.⁶

Predictably, Byang incurred his father's wrath for this decision. In fact, his father sometimes beat him and denied him food, even though Byang continued to work on the family farm and, as the oldest son, to mentor his two younger half-brothers (sons of a different wife of Byang's father). Costly discipleship was a very real experience for Byang from the beginning. Moreover, his Christian conversion meant loss of status and identity. This fate is shared by many young Africans who choose to follow Christ, especially those from a Muslim background, for whom Kato's experience is an inspiration.⁷

In his early years as a Christian, Kato did not feel there was any difference in the way he lived, apart from the punishments he received from his father. He explained later, 'I was a Christian, but I knew constant failure. My testimony was a mockery to the name of Christ.' But he experienced a spiritual turning point in 1953, while attending a week-long SIM conference on holiness and repentance from sin. Convicted by the Holy Spirit, Kato took off his shirt and laid it on the altar as a sacrifice and contribution.⁸

More importantly, Kato recognized that God wanted more than a shirt—he wanted Byang's whole life and his commitment to missionary service. Others would later speak of his passion for the church's evangelistic work and his generosity to others. For example, his brother recalled that every time Byang would return to Kwoi from a trip, it would take him nearly two hours to reach his home from the drop-off point, a distance that would ordinarily require less than 30 minutes on foot. This was because Byang would stop by every household to greet people and often to evangelize them.⁹ From his 1953 recommitment onwards, the change in his life was unmistakable.

Kato would teach other boys what he learnt in Sunday school and would even travel to neighbouring villages to share Christian messages. He joined the Boys' Brigade, an interdenominational uniformed Christian youth organization that emphasized character formation through a combination of semi-military discipline and Christian values. He was also involved with Youth for Christ. By age 18, he was promoted to the rank of sergeant in the Boys' Brigade due to his hard work and leadership.¹⁰ (Parachurch organizations such as the Boys' and Girls' Brigades, Youth for Christ and notably Scripture Union were important mission initiatives for evangelizing and discipling believers. They contributed significantly to the growth of the church and to developing church leaders in the region.)

Kato was particularly sensitive about drawing the line between traditional religious aspirations and authentic biblical Christianity.¹¹ With his spiritual

6 Byang Kato, 'Interview' in *Idea*, African Perspectives, Special Edition on World Mission, 18 November 1974.

7 Breman, *Association of Evangelicals in Africa*, 37.

8 De la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 20–23; Breman, *Association of Evangelicals in Africa*, 138.

9 De la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 20–27.

10 Breman, *Association of Evangelicals in Africa*, 38; de la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 23.

11 Byang H. Kato, *A Critique of Incipient Universalism in Tropical Africa* (ThD dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1974), 33.

immersion in both traditional African and Christian religions, he was knowledgeable enough to compare the two perceptively and make informed choices.

It is noteworthy that Kato continued to live with his parents despite their objections to his new religious faith. In such a context, usually a form of syncretism develops. Most fetish priests were happy for their children to receive the education and other opportunities offered by the foreign missionaries, so long as the children continued to participate in the home fetish rituals also. Accordingly, Kato must have been involved in day-to-day negotiations as he faced the difficult situation of balancing two masters. This situation may have contributed to developing his Christian character and his objective appraisal of the value of ATR culture relative to his Christian faith. Thus, his strong contrast of the two worldviews in his later theological discourse cannot be easily dismissed as naive. In 1962, Kato recalled some of his bitter memories from home:

My father cursed and swore. He got so angry that he swore by his juju never to buy me any more clothes. Both my parents cursed and abused me. I was very frightened and worried, but they did not care. Believe me—people who serve juju are hard hearted, cruel, wicked, and bloodthirsty. They are cruel to those who dare to oppose them. They try by all means to put terror into the minds of all who do not follow them.¹²

Kato's commitment to his schoolwork was exceptional. He worked on his father's farm in the morning, attended school in the afternoon and worked part-time for missionaries in the evening, to earn money to pay school fees and buy school supplies. Notwithstanding the hectic work schedule, Kato excelled in class and was often ranked as the top student. From this educational foundation, he skipped secondary school and proceeded directly to a three-year diploma course in theology at Igbaja Bible College, enrolling there in 1955. Igbaja, established by SIM in 1941, was an important theological training institution in West Africa.¹³

In 1957, during his final year at Igbaja Bible College, Byang married Jummai Rahila Gandu, a princess of the Jaba people.¹⁴ The marriage brought together people from two influential backgrounds: one from a traditional ruling house and the other from a fetish priest background. Their marriage was blessed with three children, all of whom were personally led to Christ by their father.

Upon graduating, Kato returned to his hometown, living at the Kwoi Bible school and also teaching there. Wanting to further his education, he undertook diligent independent study, passing the UK ordinary and advanced-level school certificate exams in 1961 and 1963, respectively, so that he could qualify to attend university there.¹⁵

Kato immediately gained admission to London Bible College (LBC, now London School of Theology). The scholarship board funded by SIM and its ECWA¹⁶ partner churches offered him the most expensive scholarship the board had ever granted,

12 Kato, *From Juju to Jesus Christ*, 13.

13 De la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 19, 25–26; Breman, *Association of Evangelicals in Africa*, 135–39.

14 Breman, *Association of Evangelicals in Africa*, 139; de la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 36.

15 De la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 115.

16 ECWA (previously the Evangelical Church of West Africa, now Evangelical Church Winning All) is a Nigerian denomination originally formed from SIM-related churches in 1954.

knowing the value of the education Kato could receive and bring back to Nigeria. Kato was the first person from tropical Africa ever to enrol at LBC. He earned his bachelor of divinity degree in 1966.¹⁷

That would have been enough for Kato to establish himself as a theological leader on the African continent. However, still not satisfied, he entered Dallas Theological Seminary, USA in 1970 and completed both a master's degree in sacred theology and a ThD in four years. Kato won the school's Loraine Chafer Award in 1971 for proficiency in systematic theology.

Kato's doctoral thesis, *A Critique of Incipient Universalism in Tropical Africa*, was published in 1975 by Evangelical Publishing House, Kisumu, Kenya, under the title of *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*. This would prove to be Kato's seminal theological contribution,¹⁸ seeking to alert the church to unhealthy trends in African theology. He believed that evangelical Christianity in Africa was under threat and sought to encourage the church to uphold biblical orthodoxy.

Professional life

Byang Kato's active working life extended from 1958, following the completion of his course at Igbaja Bible College, to his death in 1975. From 1958 to 1963, he taught at Zabolo Bible Training School and Kwoi Christian Training Institute and then served at the African Challenge (now Today's Challenge) in Lagos, as a writer and counsellor. On his return from London in 1966, he joined the Igbaja Theological Seminary as a tutor. In the following year he was elected General Secretary of the ECWA, holding that post until he departed for Dallas Seminary in 1970.

Many church leaders would have considered the prestigious position of leading a denomination to be the apex of their ministerial career. It was exceptional for Kato to have ascended to this position at age 33, and to voluntarily relinquish it and go back to school with a family of five was equally unusual. However, this was a mark of Kato's commitment to theological education and his attitude towards the trappings of high office. After completing his doctoral work, he was appointed as the first African General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa and Madagascar (now Association of Evangelicals in Africa), holding that position for less than two years until his tragic drowning in the Indian Ocean near Mombasa, Kenya on 19 December 1975.¹⁹

As General Secretary, Kato also held the position of Executive Secretary of the AEA Theology Commission.²⁰ His contributions earned him recognition as the father of evangelical theology in Africa.²¹

17 De la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 35–36; Breman, *Association of Evangelicals in Africa*, 40.

18 Bowers, 'Byang Kato and Beyond'; Breman, *Association of Evangelicals in Africa*, 368.

19 De la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 91–97.

20 Paul Bowers, *Theological Education in Africa: The ACTEA Story—Questing for Excellence and Renewal 1976–2016* (Nairobi: ACTEA, 2016), 2; Tite Tiénou, *The Theological Task of the Church in Africa* (Achimota, Ghana: Africa Christian Press, 1982).

21 Kapteina, 'Formation of African Evangelical Theology', 62; Timothy Palmer, 'Byang Kato: Rejectionist or Conversionist?' *African Journal of Evangelical Theology* 23 (2004): 3–20; Sochanngam Shirik, 'African Christians or Christian Africans: Byang H. Kato and His Contextual Theology', *Asbury Journal* 74, no. 1 (2019): 131–56.

Accomplishments and theological legacy

Although his time on earth was relatively short, the scope of Kato's work and achievements was wide and will be remembered for generations. Kato was an accomplished young man, husband, father, pastor, teacher, writer, preacher, prophet, visionary and global leader, and evangelist. Many people still recall how Kato impacted their lives and the warmth and godly life of his family. His witness saw his children, parents and other family members come to the Christian faith, many of them from ATR backgrounds.²²

Before his untimely death, Kato set the stage for theological work among African evangelicals by initiating the AEA Theological Commission and its various projects. He saw the need for advanced theological education in Africa and sought to push the evangelical church to engage in biblical scholarship.²³

In his polemics, Kato debated against the theological systems of other African Christians who had more favourable views of ATR, including John Mbiti, J. K. Agbeti, Bolaji Idowu and Harry Sawyerr, among others. Keith Ferdinando states, 'By his opposition to the AACC [All Africa Conference of Churches] and theologians like Mbiti and Idowu, Kato was taking on the African ecclesiastical and theological establishment. He disagreed in print with those whose academic credentials were already established, risking opprobrium and ridicule.'²⁴

Kato asserted that what was emerging as 'African Christian Theology' was imprecise and at best a theology of decolonization, an amalgamation of Black Theology and Ethiopianist Theology.²⁵ He expressed the view that the assertions of Mbiti and others about ATRs constituting a well-organized system, and that ATR worshippers knew the true God, were unduly optimistic.²⁶

Mbiti argued that the Christian faith was compatible with African traditional religious beliefs. Similarly, Idowu championed what Kato termed the 'Theology of Peaceful Co-existence', claiming that Africans believed in one God and explaining away the pantheons of objects of worship or gods as only mediums to the one Supreme God.²⁷ Sawyerr, meanwhile, posited that 'the prayers of African Christians might in the providence of God lead to the salvation of their pagan ancestors.'²⁸

Kato's theological opponents were distinguished heads of departments in leading universities of both West and East Africa. The influence of their seemingly liberal-leaning theologies was pervasive and countering them was a daunting task. In response, Kato identified ten points of concern:²⁹

22 De la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 44–45.

23 Kapteina, 'Formation of African Evangelical Theology', 72.

24 Keith Ferdinando, 'The Legacy of Byang Kato', *Africa Journal of Evangelical Theology* 26, no. 1 (2007), 3–15.

25 Byang Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Kisumu, Kenya: Evangelical Publishing House, 1975), 53–56.

26 Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*, 69; John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Prayer* (New York: Praeger, 1970), xiv.

27 Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*, 91.

28 Harry Sawyerr, *Creative Evangelism: Towards a New Christian Encounter with Africa* (London: Lutterworth, 1968), 112; see Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*, 179–80.

29 Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*, 11–17.

1. Prevailing universalism in the homelands of missionaries coming from Europe and America to Africa
2. Search for solidarity of the human race
3. The emerging political awareness in Africa
4. Universalism as a tool for uniting people in Africa
5. Syncretism, or the practice of more than one religion at the same time
6. The belief that very religious people will surely be saved because of their zeal
7. Reformation of African religions
8. The new garb that ATRs were putting on, which promoted universalism
9. Biblical ignorance in the African churches and inadequate emphasis on theological education by the missionaries
10. The gregarious nature of Africans, who like to congregate with others

As an apparent lone voice in his negative assessment of the potential for Christianity to appropriate content from ATRs, Kato was criticized as naïve and lacking understanding of African culture. His opponents questioned Kato's Africanity and his respect for African values. In fact, Kato, having been raised in the family of a fetish priest, had more understanding and experience of ATR practice than the others. His life and ministry among his people locally and across Africa established him as a true African. His opposition to incorporating ATR beliefs into Christianity stemmed from his thorough understanding and experience of the two belief systems.

Kato's theological contribution

Kato's theological contribution has not been fully explored. In fact, his opponents say he had no theology of his own but was only critical of the theology of others. Paul Bowers stated, 'One might think that all there is to know about Kato has already been well rehearsed over the years. But not so. The fact is that not everything relevant about Kato has yet been adequately surfaced or sufficiently pursued. There is still room for further fruitful inquiry, rich opportunity for further professional research and exposition.'³⁰

The controversy Kato sparked in African theological circles has not gone away. He was praised by his followers but derided by his opponents, viewed as a mouthpiece for Western missionaries who discarded African traditional values and religions.³¹ Even some theologians of evangelical persuasions, who hail Kato for his defence of a biblical worldview, tend to occupy a middle ground. Many do not seem to have a clear stance on the uniqueness of biblical claims and are straddling the opposing positions, between accommodation of ideas espoused in ATRs and the uniqueness of the biblical message.

To interpret Kato's theological significance, I will review his hermeneutics, his understanding of African Christian identity, and his contribution to evangelical theological education in sub-Saharan Africa.

30 Bowers, 'Byang Kato and Beyond', 5; cf. Shirik, 'African Christians'.

31 Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity: The Impact of Culture on Christian Thought in the Second Century and Modern Africa* (Oxford: Regnum, 1992); Mercy Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986).

Kato's hermeneutics

At the heart of Kato's theology was the place of the Bible itself. He elevated the Bible as the sole source for Christian theologizing and thus drew a clear distinction between ATRs and Christianity. The assumptions people have about the Bible are a critical defining factor in their interpretation and application of Scripture. Kato was unwavering in his biblicism, supporting the orthodox evangelical view of the Bible in contrast to both liberal and neo-orthodox perspectives, as God's specially revealed and inspired word (2 Tim 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:20–21). Kato advocated for an authentic reading and interpretation of Scripture and did not see much value in attempts to link biblical understandings with ATR systems, as others advocated.

Kato believed in taking a literal approach to Scripture, interpreting words and sentences in their ordinary and usual understanding. He was convinced that this literal approach was consistent with that of biblical characters from the Old Testament, like Ezra, as well as church fathers such as Tertullian and Reformers such as Luther and Calvin. Kato stated, 'Only by following the normal grammatico-historical interpretation would one be free from extreme subjectivism. To follow the allegorical method or to spiritualise normal concepts necessarily leads to subjectivism and preconceived notions.'³²

Kato's exegetical approach informed his expression of the biblical position on such issues as the relationship between ATRs and Christianity, conceptions of sin and salvation, ancestor veneration and true worship, liberal ecumenism and church unity. Kato contended for the uniqueness of Christ as the only way to salvation and the all-sufficiency of the gospel message for faith and conduct. He decisively rejected ATR as a source for Christian theology.

ATR claim to give worship to the supreme God but are also characterized by ministrations to spirits and ancestors and the involvement of intermediaries. Mbiti explained:

Sacrifices and offerings constitute one of the commonest acts of worship among African peoples. ... 'Sacrifices' refer to cases where animal life is destroyed in order to present the animal, in part or in whole, to God, supernatural beings, spirits or the living dead [i.e. ancestors]. 'Offerings' refer to the remaining cases which do not involve the killing of an animal, being chiefly the presentation of foodstuffs and other items. In some cases, sacrifices and offerings are directed to one or more of the following: God, spirits and living dead. Recipients in the second and third categories are regarded as intermediaries between God and men, so that God is the ultimate Recipient whether or not the worshippers are aware of that.³³

This depiction of ATRs could cast doubt on the unique and exclusive claim that the sacrificial death of Christ is the only means of salvation. Kato appealed to Scripture to counter Mbiti's assertion of continuity between ATRs and Christianity:

In advocating that non-Christian beliefs [such as ATRs] be left to exist, Mbiti gives the impression that both Christianity and non-Christian religions are

32 Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*, 78, 80.

33 John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1989), 58.

valuable and deserve co-existing. The Apostle Paul declares, 'And for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here' (2 Cor. 5:17, Jerusalem Bible; cf. Eph. 2:1-3).³⁴

African Christian identity

On the question of 'African Christian identity', Kato advocated for 'a third race' in accordance with Scripture. At a time when many budding African theologians saw the need to de-Europeanize Christian faith and practice, the resulting tendency was to shield the faith in ATR beliefs. In response, Kato contended against what he perceived as syncretism and universalism and opposed much of what other theologians were writing. In his disputations with the other theologians, Kato established the defining contours of biblical orthodoxy or evangelicalism from an African perspective.

The desire amongst African theologians was to establish an identity that reflected on their spiritual and religious heritage. Underlying this quest was the influence on African culture and social structures exerted by colonialism and the missionary movement. African intellectuals were placing high priority on the subject of African identity in every area of endeavour. Their key assumption was that the influence and maltreatment of their slave masters and colonizers had led to a split personality or loss of identity. In the struggle for independence, selfhood and cultural revival were critical elements for the burgeoning Pan-Africanists. Africa was characterized by an overwhelming commitment to self-direction and a revival of interest in Africa's heritage.

Bowers observed the need to explicate an African identity and authenticity against the domineering influence of Europe. Along with this came a determination to critique and renounce the West and, conversely, to affirm Africa's traditional life, distinctive dignity and worth. This commitment to self-identity and resistance to its unwelcome political, economic and cultural embrace became the fundamental force for African self-reflection during much of the second half of the twentieth century. As African intellectuals asked what it meant to be African, African theology sought to determine what it meant to be an African Christian. And just as the African intellectual turned to African traditional cultural heritage to explain its distinctiveness, African theology proposed to look to Africa's traditional religious heritage to frame its own distinctive identity.³⁵

Kato saw the quest for the restoration of the African identity differently. In the first place, he questioned the reality of a single African persona. According to Kato, 'The Scriptures know of only two groups of people, the people of God and the people of the world (Lk 12:30).'³⁶ He repudiated a return to ATR and identified Christians as belonging to 'a third race', consistent with his biblical understanding. Kato believed he was a citizen of heaven (Gal 2:20; 2 Cor 5:17; Jn 1:12; Rom 6:6). By this he did not denounce his earthly citizenship; in fact, he advocated for both a faithful

34 Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*, 70.

35 Bowers, 'Byang Kato and Beyond', 3-6; Ngong, *The Material in Salvific Discourse*, 114.

36 Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*, 21.

heavenly citizenship that Christ would be proud of and a loyal earthly citizenship that the national authority would appreciate.

The nature of Christian conversion, he said, was a calling out of pre-Christian culture or belief into a new life—born anew (Jn 3:3).³⁷ After all, this is the message of salvation; a call to Christianity is a call to come out of the past and even to launch out as Abraham did in response to his call, paradigmatic of all Christian callings, which brought him out of the world of the Chaldeans and Haran, respectively (Gen. 11:31, 12:1). It was a call to leave his native land and relatives and go into the unknown, at God's instruction. Kato prided himself as a Christian African. A positive response to this call is absolute faith in the one who calls and reliance on his goodness, love, infinite power and sovereignty. Thus, Kato's Christian identity was more important and his main concern was to be more Christ-like, as an African Christian. His commitment to his Christian faith came first, and his African identification, nationality or tribe was secondary (2 Cor 5:17; Jn 1:12). Like Paul in his letter to the Philippians, Kato had reason to boast about his African nativity or ancestry, but he considered it worthless because of his new life in Christ (Phil 3:4-7).

For African theologians such as Idowu, Mbiti, Mugambi and Bediako, answering these questions was the defining task of African theology.³⁸ Amidst Africans' quest to deliver themselves from their self-identity challenge, Kato argued for a third race, defined by salvation in Christ. Only in Christ, he contended, could one find true liberation and identity as a Christian African.³⁹ Kato certainly valued his African identity and never separated himself from his people, but his primary concern was to reach out with the gospel and win them to Christ.

As a matter of fact, Kato's position grew out of his profound understanding of his pre-Christian religion and his newfound biblical faith in Christianity. His first-hand grounding in African traditional religion was unrivalled amongst his peers in the academy of his time. His radical conversion could well be attributable to his knowledge of the deep menaces of his pre-Christian religion and a decision to embrace the message of his new faith as a lifeline of salvation and redemption to be held onto firmly.

Evangelical theological education

Kato strived to promote sound biblical theological education on the African continent, to address the theological malaise that was creeping into the African church. He planted the seeds for evangelical theology in his seminal work, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*. Amongst other contributions, Kato crafted a blueprint for evangelical theological education in Africa.⁴⁰ His plan resulted in the establishment of the first two postgraduate theological schools serving all of sub-Saharan Africa, an institution for the standardization and accreditation of theological education in Africa (the Accrediting Council for Theological Education in Africa, now the Association of Christian Theological Education in Africa or

37 'Citizenship', Kato's undated sermon notes on Romans 13:1-14.

38 Bowers, 'Byang Kato and Beyond', 6.

39 Kato, *Critique of Incipient Universalism*; Breman, *Association of Evangelicals in Africa*, 366.

40 Carolyn Nystrom, 'Let African Christians Be Christian Africans', *Christianity Today*, 6 May 2020, <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert453adfk1>.

ACTEA), and the Christian Learning Materials Centre (CLMC), which produced curriculum and Sunday-school materials for the church's nurture and development of children.⁴¹

Kato's contribution to theological education went beyond Africa. He led the African delegation to the inaugural Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization in 1974, where he was one of the plenary speakers. He was also a member of the Lausanne continuing committee. Kato is credited with introducing the subject of contextualization into evangelical theological discourse.⁴² As chair of the WEA Theological Commission, Kato advocated for the establishment of the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE).⁴³

The consistency and integrity of Katoan theology

An analysis of Kato's theological beliefs and teachings finds them to be consistent with classical or orthodox Christianity and mainstream evangelical understandings, rooted in the apostolic teachings handed down to the contemporary church. Kato's perspectives were in resonance with those of other evangelical scholars. His theological propositions were mostly ones that Christians in other parts of the world could understand and relate to.⁴⁴ This is an important consideration if the church in Africa is going to take seriously the call to reach out to other regions of the world with the normative Christian gospel—which is increasingly a responsibility for the continent where Christianity is growing most rapidly.⁴⁵

A description of Katoan theology

Kato was deeply concerned about safeguarding the historic or classical doctrines of the Christian faith. 'Unless the church in Africa wants to isolate itself from historic Christianity, it should take a position on these vital doctrines', he wrote.⁴⁶ This comment was in reaction to those who wanted to maintain church unity at all costs and avoided talking about doctrines to avoid division.

Kato's messages, writings and polemics show that his theology was characterized by affirming basic Christian theological doctrines and applying them in different contexts. He covered essential doctrines from the believer's new birth (soteriology) through defending and safeguarding the Christian faith life (missiology), the place of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology), and the last things (eschatology). Katoan theology focused on an apologetic defence of the historic Christian faith, upholding the integrity and authority of the Bible and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. He defended the distinctiveness of the Christian faith in contrast to ATRs and emphasized the clarity of the gospel message in its contextualization. B. J. Van der Walt observed,

41 Breman, *Association of Evangelicals in Africa*; Bowers, 'Byang Kato and Beyond', 4–5; Ferdinando, 'Christian Identity', 3.

42 Bowers, 'Byang Kato and Beyond', 4; Kato, 'Interview'.

43 De la Haye, *Byang Kato*, 116–17; Bowers, 'Byang Kato and Beyond'.

44 Shirik, 'African Christians'.

45 Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996); Gordon-Conwell Center for the Study of Global Christianity, 2018 report.

46 Kato, *Theological Pitfalls*, 149.

'There are very few contemporary African theologians who emphasise the discontinuity between the Christian faith and the traditional African religions and cultures. The greater majority are in line with some form of synthesis; pleading for various degrees of continuity between the gospel and traditional African beliefs.'⁴⁷ Thus, Kato's mainstream yet contextually unique evangelical articulations would constitute an important lesson for the evangelical church in Africa.

Kato's theological message could not have been accepted as *Sitz im Leben*, allegorically concocted in cryptic language of theological opinion leaders of his time, like *Orita* (Idowu), *Communio Sanctorum and Praeparatio Evangelica* (Mbiti), *ancestor veneration* (Sawyer), and *African Theological Innovation/Identity* (Bediako) constructs. Nonetheless, Kato's notable dissenting voice was *Ubique, semper, omnibus*. That is, he described the gospel as applicable *everywhere* (across cultural space), *always* (across time), and *to all*—in other words, as that which has been believed and lived out by the faith community in all cultures, believed from the beginning of the apostolic witness, and accepted by general consent by both clergy and laity over the whole world through all generations. Kato's theology thus meets the tests of universality, apostolic antiquity and conciliar consent.⁴⁸ As Thomas Oden stated, Christian teaching consists in 'what you have received, not what you have thought up; a matter not of ingenuity, but of doctrine; not of private acquisition, but of Public Tradition; a matter brought to you, not put forth by you, in which you must be not the author but the guardian, not the founder but the sharer, not the leader but the follower'.⁴⁹

The key components of Kato's theological beliefs and message can be summarized as follows:

1. ATR followers believe in a supreme being but approach or worship him through intermediary gods, a human creation or nature; their belief is not enough for salvation. There is a clear distinction between ATR and Christianity, and the two cannot co-exist under the same roof.
2. There is some limited continuity between various belief systems, but only because of the *imago Dei* that is present in all humans.
3. The unique revelation of the Bible and the person of Jesus Christ represent the only means of salvation.
4. The Bible is the prime source of Christian theology.
5. We should interpret the Bible by looking for the simple, plain and normal meaning of Scripture (not allegorical interpretation).
6. Kato opposed those who called for a moratorium on mission activities from the West to the Third World, and he approached the issues of the self-sufficiency and maturation of the church in Africa quite differently from other Africans.
7. A Christian confession conveys a new identity in Christ (the third race).

47 B. J. Van der Walt, 'An Evangelical Voice in Africa: The Worldview Background of the Theology of Tokunboh Adeyemo (1 October 1944–17 March 2010)', *In die Skriflig* 45, no. 4 (2011): 928.

48 Thomas C. Oden, *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy: Signs of New Life in Christianity* (St. Davids, PA: ICCS Press, 2015), 190–92; Shirik, 'African Christians'.

49 Oden, *Rebirth of Orthodoxy*, 143, citing Vincent of Lérins.

Conclusion

Byang Kato's angst about the incipient syncretistic universalism in the African church during his time resonates with the current inroads of secularism, pluralism and new forms of spirituality that tend to emasculate the Gospel. The eminent pitfall is that the fastest-growing church could soon become the fastest-declining church. Kato's call for constant theological awareness and vigilance and his prophetic voice need to be heard again. The church must be on guard against the tendency to accommodate to the surrounding culture in unbiblical ways.

Kato's hermeneutics and theological legacy have much to contribute to addressing the risk of the corruption of new generations of Christianity. In an age when Africa has become the heartland of the Christian faith, the need for an authentic, paradigmatic Christian expression of faithful missionary and disciple-making endeavours in Africa is greater than ever.

World Evangelical Alliance Launches New Spanish-Language Journal

Beginning in spring 2022, the World Evangelical Alliance intends to publish a Spanish-language version of the *Evangelical Review of Theology*. The *Revista Evangélica de Teología (RET)* will be a free electronic journal (just like *ERT*) and will start with a biannual publishing schedule, with the hope of eventually increasing publication to four times a year.

Andrew Messmer will serve as editor. He is the academic dean of Seville Theological Seminary (Spain), associate professor at International Theological Faculty IBSTE (Spain) and affiliated researcher at Evangelische Theologische Faculteit (Belgium). He has published on multiple topics including Old Testament, New Testament and historical theology. He has also written for and reviewed submissions to *ERT*.

RET invites potential contributors to submit articles and book reviews to Andrew (amessmer@worldea.org) for consideration. Articles should be approximately 2,000–6,000 words (including footnotes) and written at a semi-popular level, meaning that they should be academically rigorous but also accessible to pastors, students, and interested laypeople. Articles can fall under any of the traditional topics of theology: Old Testament, New Testament, historical theology, systematic theology, practical theology, and missions and world religions. Book reviews should be approximately 600–800 words and should ably summarize the book's contents, methodology, and unique contribution, as well as engaging critically with the book's overall argument.

‘Many Shepherds, One Flock’: An Evangelical Retrieval of Cyprian’s Model of Church Unity

Daniel Eguiluz

Evangelicals express Christian unity through global and parachurch organizations, but evangelical denominations and congregations often remain isolated from each other. This article seeks a way out of that box by going back to a time 18 centuries ago when achieving unity was difficult but essential for Christians.

Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258) was the first church father to write extensively on the theory and practice of the church’s unity, making him ‘potentially the most important source’ outside the Bible for the promotion of Christian unity.¹ I believe that a critical appropriation of Cyprian’s model of Christian unity could help contemporary evangelicalism realize its aspirations for greater visible unity. Cyprian offers us a biblically based, historically tested system of local pastoral collaboration that strives for consensus while allowing for diversity on non-essentials.²

In this article, I (1) highlight the longing for greater evangelical unity, (2) explain Cyprian’s relevance to the question of evangelical unity, (3) summarize the model found in his writings, (4) subject Cyprian’s views to an evangelical critique, and (5) outline an application of his ideas to evangelicalism today.

As we will see, not all elements of Cyprian’s system are equally helpful to evangelicals. In fact, some of his most basic convictions may evoke strong negative reactions. However, some elements of his model of Christian unity are so salutary that if we ignore them today, we deny ourselves some of the strengths that enabled the ancient church to overcome the many challenges it faced, including Roman persecution.

My focus on the evangelical context does not imply that evangelicals are the only true Christians, or the only ones who should care about pursuing Christian unity. But I do think that a shared evangelical identity has great potential to bring together Christians of different church backgrounds. Indeed, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and other organizations demonstrate that evangelicals already enjoy visible

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1 Erik Thaddeus Walters, *Unitas in Latin Antiquity: Four Centuries of Continuity* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011), 23.

2 This is the central argument of my PhD dissertation, ‘*Una ecclesia et cathedra una*’: A Retrieval of Cyprian’s Model of Church Unity for Global Evangelicalism (Calvin Theological Seminary, 2020), available by e-mailing me at deguiluz@serge.org.

unity to some degree, even at the international level. This article seeks to build on this foundation, recognizing that whatever unity evangelical Christians may reach will have to be a unity in diversity, one that does not simply overlook doctrinal or denominational differences. Cyprian's allowance for diversity in non-essentials provides a clear basis for our pursuit of fuller unity.

The evangelical longing for greater visible unity

The precise nature of evangelicalism is often debated. One evangelical scholar even claimed, 'In truth, there is no such thing as evangelicalism.'³ In a sense, this internal debate hints at both the existence of *something* that one might describe as evangelicalism and the need for greater evangelical unity.

The WEA is a good starting point for considering the current situation. First, its existence displays the reality of evangelical cooperation, even on a global scale. Second, the WEA's statement of faith⁴ reveals a set of basic convictions that unite many Christians of different church backgrounds under the evangelical identity. Third, the WEA explicitly emphasizes the most effective motivation for evangelical cooperation—namely, world evangelization. The WEA's mission statement expresses an intention 'to enable the Church to advance the Good News of Jesus Christ'. As a relatively recent WEA publication acknowledges, 'Missions has always been the driving force of evangelical ecumenism.'⁵

American historian George Marsden suggests that the network of parachurch agencies participating in the common project of world evangelization makes evangelicalism a sort of single denomination, albeit a very informal one.⁶ Ironically, this positive phenomenon also hints at the serious limitations of evangelical unity. Evangelicals of different backgrounds come together for parachurch activity, but they often fail to join hands in the ordinary life and practice of the church.⁷ Typically, parachurch organizations champion a very specific church-related cause such as world evangelization, but they do not concern themselves with the other activities for which the church is responsible. The very designation as *parachurch* is designed to distinguish these institutions from the church. Consequently, evangelical unity tends to be missional rather than ecclesial. Common interests and passions mobilize evangelical cooperation rather effectively, but this type of specialized collaboration often circumvents ecclesiastical structures and does little to bring congregations together at the local level. Clearly, one of the main causes of this lack of ecclesial

3 Nathan O. Hatch, 'Response to Carl F. H. Henry', in *Evangelical Affirmations*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 97.

4 World Evangelical Alliance, 'Statement of Faith', <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert453de1>.

5 Rolf Hille, 'Evangelicals and Ecumenism', in *Evangelicals around the World: A Global Handbook for the 21st Century*, ed. Brian C. Stiller et al. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 65.

6 George M. Marsden, 'The Evangelical Denomination', in *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, ed. George M. Marsden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), xiv. Marsden identifies three spheres of evangelical unity: a conceptual unity corresponding to the definition of the term 'evangelical' given above; the unity of the movement's common heritage and tendencies; and the unity of self-conscious communities such as the agencies he mentions (ix–xvi).

7 Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *In One Body through the Cross: The Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 43. The Princeton Proposal is presented as applicable to all Christians, not just evangelicals.

unity is that 'there is no distinctively evangelical doctrine of church order.'⁸ Because evangelicals cannot agree on how the church should function, neighbouring congregations operate separately and often in isolation from each other.

This lack of ecclesial agreement and shared practice is frequently lamented. Even while demonstrating the doctrinal consensus among evangelicals around the world in their volume *One Faith*, J. I. Packer and Thomas Oden confess that 'the widespread image of evangelicals is one of ... people who are famous, indeed notorious, for eccentric individualism, for fighting and splitting, for dissenting and separating.'⁹ Similarly, the Manila Manifesto of 1989 states, 'We are ashamed of the suspicions and rivalries, the dogmatism over non-essentials, the power-struggles and empire-building which spoil our evangelistic witness. ... We affirm the urgent need for churches [to repudiate] competition and [avoid] duplication.'¹⁰ More recently, the Evangelical Manifesto of 2008, signed by leaders from different churches and denominations, admits, 'All too often we have failed to demonstrate the unity and harmony of the body of Christ, and fallen into factions defined by the accidents of history and sharpened by truth without love, rather than express the truth and grace of the Gospel.'¹¹

These collective statements show a wide-ranging evangelical desire for greater visible unity, especially at the local, inter-congregational level. Before I call on Cyprian for help, I will answer an obvious question: why should evangelicals, who tend to be relatively uninterested in ancient church tradition or the early church fathers, look for guidance to a third-century bishop from North Africa?

Cyprian's relevance for greater evangelical unity

Cyprian of Carthage is recognized as 'the first Father to consider the Church's unity per se'¹² and 'potentially the most important source' for promoting ecclesial unity.¹³ Upon his conversion, Cyprian gave away much of his considerable wealth to assist the many poor members of the church in Carthage. In addition, he committed himself to celibacy and his famous rhetorical skills to the service of the gospel. He quickly became the most popular member of the Carthaginian church. When the bishop's chair became vacant a couple years after his baptism, the will of the people to make him bishop was so strong that not even the objections of many presbyters could prevent his ascension.

As the new bishop of the most important church in all Roman Africa, Cyprian had to lead Christians through the first empire-wide persecution. During his brief

8 Bruce Hindmarsh, 'Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron? A Historical Perspective', in *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?* ed. John G. Stackhouse (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 31.

9 J. I. Packer and Thomas C. Oden, *One Faith: The Evangelical Consensus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 12. Cf. John Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity and Faithfulness* (Carlisle, England: Langham Global Library, 2003), xv.

10 Packer and Oden, *One Faith*, 112–14.

11 'An Evangelical Manifesto: A Declaration of Evangelical Identity and Public Commitment', *Evangelical Manifesto*, <https://worldidea.org/youurls/ert453de2>, 12.

12 Russel Murray, 'Assessing the Primacy: A Contemporary Contribution from the Writings of St. Cyprian of Carthage', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 47, no. 1 (2012): 43.

13 Walters, *Unitas in Latin Antiquity*, 23.

reign from 249 to 251, the emperor Decius attempted to restore the fortunes of the Roman empire by ordering that all people should sacrifice to the gods. Sadly, many Christians—including members of the clergy—gave way under the pressure. After the persecution ended, what was the church to do with the many members who sought forgiveness for this serious offense? Bishops gathered all across the empire to reach a consensus, but their decisions did not satisfy everyone. In Carthage, the presbyters who had opposed Cyprian's ordination led a portion of the church to form a separate community. The fact that Cyprian had gone into hiding during the persecution gave his opponents ample ammunition to criticize their bishop. Fortunately for us, Cyprian's letters aimed at keeping the North African churches united provide a rare abundance of detail concerning the ancient church's ideas and practices concerning unity.

The second great controversy through which Cyprian had to navigate in the course of his episcopacy was a direct result of the first one. How should the church treat those who were baptized in schismatic or separate communities but later wanted to join its ranks? Should the church recognize the validity of schismatic baptism? Cyprian and most North African churches opposed doing so, but the very influential Bishop Stephen of Rome insisted that no one should be rebaptized and even threatened to excommunicate anyone who took a contrary position. Under Cyprian's leadership, North Africa stood its ground and refused to betray its convictions to appease Rome.

Ironically, Cyprian, the champion of unity, was thus involved in one of the most notable divisions in the early church. Nevertheless, relations between Rome and Carthage appear to have resumed after the deaths of Stephen and Cyprian. Having served his people for ten years, the Carthaginian bishop bravely faced martyrdom during the persecution under emperor Valerian, sealing his legacy as one of the most respected and influential leaders in the early church.

Why should evangelicals concerned for Christian unity today pay attention to Cyprian? For starters, his devotion to Christ and to Scripture was wholehearted. His biblical interpretation and teaching contained some ideas to which most evangelicals would object, and his biblical canon was not exactly identical to that of Protestants today. Nevertheless, his reverence for Scripture inspired him to withstand Bishop Stephen's coercion. Thirteen centuries before the Reformation, Cyprian wrote, 'If the truth has wavered and vacillated somewhere [as in Rome], we should return to the dominical origin and to the evangelical and apostolic tradition [of the Scriptures], that the reason for our actions may arise from there.'¹⁴

Cyprian's circumstances also commend him to evangelicals. In stark contrast to the experience of believers a century after him but much like the church today, Christians in Cyprian's time had to form a united front without any assistance from the state. As Erik T. Walters observes, Cyprian's 'pre-Constantinian and ante-Nicene status inoculates him from accusations that he is motivated or that his thought is contaminated by secular politics and ecclesial partisanship.'¹⁵ Moreover, at this early stage in the history of doctrinal development, there was plenty of room

14 Cyprian, *Epistula* 74.10.3.

15 Walters, *Unitas in Latin Antiquity*, 26.

for a diversity of opinion that called for a form of unity that did not entail uniformity—a feature that aligns well with ‘authentic aspirations for evangelical coherence’ today.¹⁶ Cyprian’s system of Christian unity did not rely on the recognition of a single bishop to rule over the whole church but on the free cooperation of colleagues, almost all of whom were pastors of a single congregation. If there was any magisterium, it was the consensus of regional bishops, but even this consensus did not always prevent a bishop in communion from taking an independent stance based on personal convictions. Thus, as with evangelicals today, all that Cyprian’s bishops had at their disposal to lead the church in a given direction was ‘the power of persuasion and witness’.¹⁷

Despite the significant limitations imposed by the hostility of the Roman government, the lack of a ‘bishop of bishops’, the diversity of opinion, and the dependence on sheer persuasion, we find in Cyprian the workings of a system that produced a truly remarkable degree of unity. Indeed, historian Geoffrey D. Dunn describes the church relations presented in Cyprian’s writings as ‘a golden age in collegial ecclesiology’.¹⁸ Similarly, Henry Chadwick concludes that ‘there is no parallel in other [Roman] societies’ to the inter-regional network that the church of Cyprian’s time developed.¹⁹ The third-century North African church became famous for its unity, whereas contemporary evangelicals are infamous for their disunity.

Cyprian’s commitment to Christ and Scripture, his challenging circumstances and the surprising success of his system all commend him to an evangelical audience. But beyond these features, we should note the representative character of Cyprian’s witness. The very fact that his numerous writings were preserved and disseminated across the empire by a church that did not tend to welcome innovation demonstrates that he spoke for large portions of the church of his time. Cyprian was not important because he introduced a new system, but because he described in greater detail than anyone else the workings of a network that had been forming since the first century.

Cyprian’s model of church unity²⁰

For Cyprian, the church’s whole system of government derived from Matthew 16:13–19, where Jesus tells Peter that ‘on this rock I will build my church.’ According to Cyprian, the Lord Jesus founded his church on one apostle, Peter, as a means to protect ecclesial unity. There can be only a single lawful bishop in a town or city, and this single bishop is the local successor to Peter. By the Lord’s own authority, the

16 Mark Hutchinson and John Wolffe, *A Short History of Global Evangelicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 19.

17 R. Albert Mohler, ‘A Confessional Evangelical Response’, in *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, ed. Andrew David Naselli and Collin Hansen (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 199.

18 Geoffrey D. Dunn, ‘Cyprian and His *Collegae*: Patronage and the Episcopal Synod of 252’, *Journal of Religious History* 27, no. 1 (2003): 13.

19 Henry Chadwick, *The Role of the Christian Bishop in Ancient Society* (Berkeley, CA: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1980), 43.

20 Due to space limitations, I can only briefly summarize Cyprian’s model here. For more detail, see my dissertation (note 2).

single bishop, as Peter's successor, is to govern all aspects of the church in his city and exercise the power of the keys by means of the sacraments, either directly or indirectly through lower clerics who serve as his representatives. Each church thus consists of all the faithful who stay in communion with the single bishop. Given that all ecclesiastical power is centred on the single local shepherd by divine design, no one—not even martyrs—can find saving grace outside his spiritual oversight. Thus, Cyprian could write that 'the church [is] in the bishop, and the person who is not with the bishop is not in the church.'²¹

Even though Christianity grew considerably in the third century, in most churches the bishop still acted very much like a local pastor. Although a group of presbyters served as his council, only the bishop was known as 'the priest' because he presided over the eucharist for the whole church. During the eucharistic celebration, the bishop prayed for all members of the community. He also baptized new members and laid hands on those being readmitted after a period of discipline. Only the bishop could ordain all lower clerics, and he oversaw all the church's resources. Therefore, the bishop alone could represent the local church, writing in its name to sister churches around the world. All these powers, Cyprian taught, derived from the local bishop's succession to Peter, the one on whom the Lord built his church. In the fulfilling of all these responsibilities, the bishop effectively kept the local church united.

Given their foundational role, their equal share in the one episcopate, and the forces that were constantly fighting against the church, bishops had a special responsibility to defend church unity according to Cyprian. Bishops formed a united front against the Lord's enemies by organizing along provincial lines and collaborating regularly for the harmonious care of the churches within their region. This collaboration resulted in the exchange of episcopal letters of consultation on various questions, assembling in council to establish consensus, joint ordination of new bishops, joint excommunication of the deviant, and mutual hospitality, assistance and eucharistic intercession. To achieve a truly catholic consensus, the presidents of regional colleges exchanged their conciliar resolutions and kept each other up to date on the latest happenings of common interest. When divisions occurred within a region, bishops invited the most influential leaders from elsewhere to become involved. Nevertheless, each college was sovereign over its own provincial jurisdiction.

Consensus was always ideal, but when it was unreachable, bishops needed to demonstrate unity through tolerance. In his 'celebrated formulation for preserving unity in episcopal diversity',²² Cyprian declared, 'As long as he keeps the bond of concord and perseveres in the indivisible sacrament'²³ of the catholic church, every

21 Cyprian, *Epistula* 66.8.3.

22 G. W. Clarke, *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage: Letters 55–66* (New York: Newman Press, 1986), 197 note 95. For a critique of Cyprian's formula, see Maurice Bévenot, 'A Bishop Is Responsible to God Alone', *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 39 (1951): 397–415.

23 Clarke translates the phrase *indivuiduo sacramento* as 'sacred unity ... unimpaired' (*Letters 55–66*, 46); Allen Brent renders it as 'inseparable solemn ... oath of agreement'. Allen Brent, *On the Church: Select Letters* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006, 132 note 23).

single bishop may arrange and direct his dealings having to render an account of his intentions to the Lord.²⁴

An evangelical critique of Cyprian's model

Retrieval is not repositioning. As Kevin J. Vanhoozer explains, 'Retrieval does more than repeat: it reforms. ... *To retrieve is to look back creatively in order to move forward faithfully.*'²⁵ And yet, as one looks back to move forward, we must also avoid the danger of repeating former errors as a result of enthroning the past.²⁶ Even though one might argue against its critics that Cyprian's model is coherent,²⁷ it does also have serious problems, of which the most serious is his assumption of the monarchical constitution of the church. The bishop of Carthage insisted that Christ designed his church to have but a single bishop and ruler per town from the beginning. In stark contrast, only a minority of evangelicals embrace a monarchical form of church government.²⁸ One reason for this rejection is the contemporary consensus of patristic scholars that 'the historic episcopate was the result of a development in the post–New Testament period, from the local leadership of a college of presbyters, who were sometimes also called bishops (*episkopoi*), to the leadership of a single bishop.'²⁹

A second, closely related objection to Cyprian's theory of ecclesial unity concerns the level of authority that he ascribed to the episcopal office. Not only did Cyprian make a biblically and historically unsustainable distinction between the office of the one bishop and the many elders in town, but he attributed 'plenipotentiary' powers to the single overseer.³⁰ Of course, the claim of special powers for an artificial office must of necessity be as bogus as the claim for the office itself.

Third, if the church is not intended to function as a monarchical episcopacy, then one should not *a priori* categorize a local schism as disobedience to the one rightful shepherd. Consequently, one cannot deny the hope of salvation to all Christians who participate in such a schism.

These flaws are significant enough as to raise the question whether evangelicals should 'break with Cyprian's paradigm', as George W. Harper suggested in this very

24 Cyprian, *Epistula* 55.21.1–2. Insightfully, Clarke (*Letters* 55–66, 197 note 95) suggests that Romans 14:12 may be influencing Cyprian here. For Cyprian's use of Romans 14:12, see Michael A. Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible: A Study in Third-Century Exegesis* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), 438.

25 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 23–24, emphasis in original.

26 See Donald G. Bloesch, *The Future of Evangelical Christianity: A Call for Unity amid Diversity* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1983), 85, 91.

27 Eguiluz, 'Una ecclesia et cathedra una', 293–301. For a particularly searing criticism, see John Chapman, *Studies on the Early Papacy* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1971), 40, 44–45.

28 See Gerald L. Bray, 'Why I Am an Evangelical and an Anglican', in *Why We Belong: Evangelical Unity and Denominational Diversity*, ed. Anthony L. Chute, Christopher W. Morgan, and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 65–92.

29 Francis A. Sullivan, *From Apostles to Bishops: The Development of the Episcopacy in the Early Church* (New York: Newman Press, 2001), viii. Notably, Sullivan was a Catholic priest.

30 Robert F. Evans, *One and Holy: The Church in Latin Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1972), 48.

journal many years ago.³¹ Until my dissertation, Harper's article was the only scholarly treatment of Cyprian's ideas on church unity from a distinctively evangelical perspective. Harper echoes George S. Hendry's judgement that 'the Churches of the West, by both temperament and history, have been disposed to think of unity in terms of organic consolidation or doctrinal consensus.'³² However, Harper adds that this fixation on 'structural' unity is due to 'the foundational teaching of several Fathers of the second and third centuries, including Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons and especially Cyprian of Carthage'.³³ Thus, Harper proposes a departure from 'Cyprian's paradigm' to allow different denominations to connect in 'confessional pluriformity'.³⁴ Harper concludes that denominational plurality is good for the church, but that evangelicals need some type of intersectionality to avoid ecclesiastical chaos. Therefore, he suggests that evangelical congregations everywhere come together to form what Count Zinzendorf described as a 'commonwealth of Churches within the one Church of Christ'.³⁵

As I have argued elsewhere,³⁶ had Harper carefully examined all of Cyprian's writings, he could have appealed to some of Cyprian's own ideas to support his proposal for a 'commonwealth' of evangelical churches from different denominations. The main problem with Harper's criticism of Cyprian is that it fails to distinguish the bishop's insistence on a monarchical government from his allowance of a diversity of opinions and convictions on secondary issues among the many pastors of the church. In other words, though Cyprian did not tolerate organizational 'pluriformity', he did acknowledge doctrinal diversity on non-essentials. This level of doctrinal tolerance is one of the main features of his approach that evangelicals would do well to recover.

Another feature of Cyprian's system that would benefit evangelicals today is the intentional collaboration of neighbouring pastors in the care and direction of Christ's flock. In Cyprian's model, this pastoral collaboration manifested itself in the provincial college of bishops. As he stated, 'We must firmly hold and defend [Christian unity], especially we bishops, who preside in the church.'³⁷ Cyprian rephrased the same principle in more poetic fashion: 'Although we are many shepherds, yet we shepherd one flock.'³⁸ Given the historical evidence available, one may postulate that the episcopal collaboration at the regional level described in

31 George W. Harper, 'Breaking with Cyprian's Paradigm: Evangelicals, Ecclesiological Apathy, and Changing Conceptions of Church Unity', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 32, no. 4 (2008): 306–22.

32 Harper, 'Breaking with Cyprian's Paradigm', 310.

33 Harper, 'Breaking with Cyprian's Paradigm', 310.

34 Harper, 'Breaking with Cyprian's Paradigm', 310.

35 Harper, 'Breaking with Cyprian's Paradigm', 321.

36 Daniel Eguiluz, 'Breaking with Partial Treatments of Cyprian for the Sake of Evangelical Unity', in *Soteriology and Ecclesiology from Hermas to Anselm* (72nd Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society: Christianity and Islam, 2020).

37 Cyprian, *De ecclesiae catholicae unitate* 4.112–5.120 (Textus receptus).

38 Cyprian, *Epistula* 68.4.2.

Cyprian's writings is an outgrowth of the collaboration that first took place at the town level, probably dating back to apostolic times.³⁹

Once again, then, a rejection of Cyprian's assumption of monarchical episcopacy need not imply a rejection of the more basic apostolic principle that the leaders of Christian congregations should guide the church in the display of its unity through their pastoral collaboration. Thus, instead of 'breaking with Cyprian's paradigm', evangelicals should take the Carthaginian father to be expressing the church's timeless conviction when he exhorts the leaders of Christian congregations towards 'defending the unity of the Spirit' through pastoral cooperation. An evangelical retrieval of Cyprian's model would summon neighbouring pastors from different denominations to follow in the footsteps of the forefathers, the ancient bishops, and to lead the church in a display of unity through their collaboration in caring for Christ's flock while allowing for diversity on secondary doctrines.

Though evangelicals do not subscribe to monarchical episcopacy, Matthew 16:18–19 still presents a further call for evangelical pastors to collaborate in promoting unity. New Testament scholar J. Knox Chamblin explains, on the basis of rabbinic usage in the time of Jesus, that '*binding* means prohibiting entry into the kingdom to those who reject the apostolic witness, and *loosing* means granting entry to those who accept the witness.'⁴⁰ Thus, by interpreting the power of the keys as the ongoing 'teaching office'⁴¹ and the 'legislative authority of the church',⁴² evangelical scholars end up with a position similar to that of Cyprian, but with a multiplicity of church leaders carrying the church's teaching and ruling authority rather than a single bishop.⁴³ Chamblin concludes that 'the keys of the kingdom are still employed by church leaders committed to biblical truth and who on that basis make judgments about persons both beyond and within the church.'⁴⁴

How does all this relate to the pursuit of unity? Let us return to Cyprian's exhortation to his fellow bishops: 'Although we are many shepherds, yet we shepherd one flock.'⁴⁵ For Cyprian, to be a pastor of a local church means being a co-pastor, because no pastor holds the keys by himself. The common calling of church leaders demands their collaboration. For if the teachers of the church confess different creeds and teach diverging morals, they relativize each other's authority and undermine the church's own claim to possess the power of the keys. If evangelicals today possess the power of the keys and have the authority to teach in

39 See Jack Barentsen, *Emerging Leadership in the Pauline Mission: A Social Identity Perspective on Local Leadership Development in Corinth and Ephesus* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011); Alistair C. Stewart, *The Original Bishops: Office and Order in the First Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).

40 J. Knox Chamblin, 'Matthew', in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 742.

41 Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 631.

42 Richard France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 256.

43 See José Capmany, 'El sacerdocio ministerial según San Cipriano', *Teología del Sacerdocio* (1972): 161. See also the reference to Moses' *cathedra* in the Greek and Latin versions of Matthew 23:2.

44 Chamblin, 'Matthew', 742.

45 Cyprian, *Epistula* 68.4.2: 'Nam etsi pastores multi sumus, unum tamen gregem pascimus.'

the name of Christ their Lord, why can their churches not agree on what they teach or practice? Is Christ confused? Is he undecided? Or do these churches lack the power of the keys?

Cyprian perceived the crisis of faith that could result if pastors acted in isolation from each other and taught conflicting ideas. He understood that unless the pastors and teachers of the church were committed to staying in communion with one another and working together to speak with one voice on the questions of faith and practice that the church encountered—despite their differences on secondary issues—they would undercut each other's claim to possess the power of the keys, resulting in contradictions that could threaten the spiritual health of the Lord's sheep. On the other hand, by honouring each other's authority and coordinating the direction of the church, bishops mutually bolstered their claims, both common and individual, and strengthened the church as a whole. In the insightful words of the Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity:

The teaching of the divided churches and the ordering of their life are perceived not as assertions of life-giving truth, but as selling-points for an array of consumer choices. ... However loudly our rhetoric insists that Christian discipleship is not a matter of consumer choice, the point will be made effectively only when potential believers encounter all around them Christian communities united in shared disciplines of faithfulness to the apostolic word.⁴⁶

Application to evangelicalism

As noted earlier, evangelicals already collaborate in various ways. Not only are there joint evangelistic campaigns and annual marches promoting diverse causes, but evangelicals from different ecclesiastical backgrounds combine forces for humanitarian aid, social action, international missions and theological education. But it is less common for neighbouring pastors of different evangelical denominations and theological persuasions to come together in regular and systematic fashion to support each other in the routine work of leading and caring for the local church. Though individual denominations certainly get many of their pastors and congregations to work together, intra-denominational collaboration cannot overcome the divisions that separate evangelicals of differing theological persuasions. Rather, these groupings perpetuate the mutual relativization of evangelical opinions. If all Baptist pastors in a given city come together to speak with one voice on an issue of common interest, their statement does not represent the evangelical consensus but only what Baptists think.

Here, then, is the void in evangelical practice that Cyprian's model of church unity could fill, particularly as his testimony suggests that pastoral collaboration was the chief way in which the church manifested its unity in his time. I do not claim that comparable collaboration amongst pastors from different denominations never happens today, but it does not happen as often as it should. Thus, this section suggests some concrete steps towards making such collaboration more common.

Before I present these practical suggestions, several caveats are in order. First, I do not mean to minimize the inherent difficulties involved in working regularly with

46 Braaten and Jenson, *In One Body through the Cross*, 38, 42.

those who think differently from us. Nor do I pretend to answer every conceivable challenge that might arise in connection to the materialization of greater visible unity. My goal is only to outline some basic steps in the right direction. Besides, if I tried to be exhaustive, I would contradict the very principle, central to Cyprian's model, of not imposing non-essential convictions on others. Ultimately, each community is responsible before God for its own decisions. Accordingly, working out the details of such efforts would depend on each group of pastors.

For instance, the size and geographic scope of collaboration amongst neighbouring pastors may vary greatly today. All evangelical pastors in a small town might be able to gather regularly, but such meetings would be nearly impossible in a large city. The largest council on record during Cyprian's career brought together 87 bishops from different parts of North Africa.⁴⁷ Today, a single city might have hundreds of evangelical pastors, so it might be necessary for them to gather along district or neighbourhood lines. The more basic and important principle is to create pastoral cooperation despite non-essential doctrinal differences.

Where there is no fellowship of evangelical pastors in a community, starting one from scratch could take much time and patience. Given the distrust and suspicion that sometimes exist between fellow ministers, it might require a lot of personal effort simply to get colleagues to open up to the possibility of a relationship. But the process could begin with any pastor who has a vision of evangelical pastors working together for the spiritual well-being of the church in their community. Once a few pastors decide to work together, they would then need to agree on the nature of their collaboration, as well as on how to admit new members to their group. Just as each episcopal college was sovereign in Cyprian's system, each group of neighbouring pastors would make these decisions for themselves.

Next, pastors could bring some of their interactions into the lives of their congregations in the form of corporate prayer. Cyprian bears witness to the prayers he offered for Christians of other churches in the celebration of the eucharist.⁴⁸ Similarly, evangelical pastors could regularly devote a portion of their worship services to praying for the needs of nearby congregations. Corporate prayer should serve as an effective instrument for training all the members of the congregation in Christian unity, as it would cause them to think frequently about the needs of believers outside their own assembly. Following the example of the mid-third-century church, evangelical congregations could pray for each other in the context of the Lord's Supper—the sacrament of the church's unity.⁴⁹

Perhaps the most difficult but also the most urgent application of Cyprian's model of church unity to evangelicalism would occur in the meetings of pastors. In Cyprian's time, bishops came together to lead authoritatively in matters of belief and practice. Through their synods, the teachers and rulers of the church demonstrated most dramatically that there was indeed one church and one *cathedra*, because they all reached the same judgement on serious questions of common interest—notably

47 Cyprian, *Sententiae episcoporum numero LXXXVII de haereticis baptizandis*.

48 Cyprian, *Epistula* 61.4.2.

49 See James Vernon Bartlet, *Church-Life and Church-Order during the First Four Centuries*, ed. Cecil John Cadoux (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1943), 163.

when 87 North African bishops *unanimously* resisted Stephen of Rome.⁵⁰ North African synods on record up to Cyprian's time rebuked deviant Christians (including bishops),⁵¹ agreed on common policy in controversial matters like the conciliatory process for lapsed believers,⁵² and responded to inquiries by other episcopal bodies.⁵³ Due to the explosive nature of these issues, bishops might meet more often than the single annual assembly that appears to have been the minimum in Cyprian's time.⁵⁴

In these special meetings, pastors would not gather for the typical reports and prayers but to address spiritual problems or issues that concerned all their congregations. For instance, a local council of evangelical pastors could produce a joint statement on the question of how the church should respond to worship restrictions created by the COVID-19 pandemic. Undoubtedly, there will be differences of opinion amongst the participants, but this diversity could actually benefit the discussion by providing a variety of perspectives. Even if pastors do not manage to agree on every point, their shared evangelical convictions should enable them to come to terms on some basic ideas. More importantly, even a minimal degree of consensus is still consensus, and whatever agreement pastors reach would inspire greater confidence than the opinion of a single person or a subsection of evangelicals.

Also, the process of dialogue involved in seeking this consensus could equip every participating pastor to approach the question at hand more intelligently. Therefore, the sheer benefit of joint study and dialogue should commend the practice of consensus building to evangelical pastors. Vanhoozer argues similarly:

Canonical conference—gathering together to reach a common understanding on the meaning of Scripture—is both unifying and edifying to the church. ... Only the God of the gospel and the gospel of God carry ultimate authority [but] the councils and conferences provide the structure and order that prevent interpretive anarchy when it comes to saying what the gospel is. ... The purpose of canonical conferences is to preserve both doctrinal truth and ecclesial unity. The Spirit who authored the Scriptures is also the Spirit who superintends catholic councils, communal conscientiousness, and canonical conferences.⁵⁵

But as Vanhoozer himself clarifies, 'Discussion is not an aim in itself; consensus is.'⁵⁶ Therefore, pastors could meet to seek consensus in the development of common policies regarding a controversial issue.

These statements and policies would not attempt to replace the congregational or denominational procedures that participating pastors would continue to follow. Rather, they would serve as a means of mutual edification, exercising better pastoral care and promoting evangelical unity in the face of challenges peculiar to the shared

50 Cyprian, *Sententiae episcoporum numero LXXXVII de haereticis baptizandis*, preface.

51 Cf. Cyprian, *Epistulae* 52.2.1; 59.1.1–2; 10.1–3.

52 Cf. Cyprian, *Epistulae* 55.6.1–2; 57; 70; 71.4; 72; 73.3.1.

53 Cf. Cyprian, *Epistulae* 64, 67.

54 Cf. Benjamin Safranski, *St. Cyprian of Carthage and the College of Bishops* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018), 40–41.

55 Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel*, 231.

56 Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority after Babel*, 230.

space of ministry. As suggested above, as long as pastors limit their agreements to their denominational circles, they relativize their judgements. On the other hand, if, for instance, Presbyterian ministers share the judgements of their local presbytery with their non-Presbyterian colleagues in a broader council for evangelicals of different backgrounds, they might perhaps influence others to reach the same decision, or even if they could not fully persuade their colleagues, the dialogue could result in a joint statement that, though more limited, would still be more representative of evangelicalism as a whole and thus more helpful to the larger church.

As anticipated, the suggestions in this paper do not answer all the questions that might arise as evangelicals seek to apply Cyprian's model. Pastors in the field will have to decide for themselves how to maintain a united front, and one group's decisions will not guarantee the same result in a different place. Nevertheless, Cyprian's model reminds evangelicals that the building of consensus that bears witness to the oneness of the church and the truth of the gospel must start at the local level. No single pastor has the ability or responsibility to oversee the whole church. Thus, out of a shared sense of mutual responsibility for the welfare of Christ's single flock, neighbouring pastors must collaborate in their common ministry. For, as Cyprian wrote, 'Although we are many shepherds, yet we shepherd one flock.'⁵⁷

57 Cyprian, *Epistula* 68.4.2.

Christian Proclamation and God's Universal Grace

Thomas K. Johnson

Tell a Muslim or Hindu that they need to accept the Trinity, and you probably won't get very far. But if you start from shared assumptions about the blessings we receive from our creator and then explain how Christian theology helps to make sense of those blessings, you might be more successful. This article details, in Pauline fashion, ways to develop such themes.

The amazing growth of Christianity from obscurity towards becoming a global faith began when the first apostles spread out from Jerusalem to proclaim the novel message that God was reconciling the world to himself through a crucified but resurrected Saviour. But most people overlook the fact that in their preaching, the early apostles repeatedly referred to the universal grace of God, especially when addressing people from a non-Jewish background. They seemed to believe that understanding the experience of God's universal grace provided the necessary background for their hearers to appreciate the special things that God had done in Christ. In our modern, globalized multi-religious context, we would do well to pay more attention to this feature of Christianity.¹

When Paul addressed a Gentile audience in Lystra (a Roman colony in today's southern Turkey) he claimed that God 'has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy' (Ac 14:17). In a speech to learned people in Athens, he made a similar appeal to their ingrained perception of the existence of a Creator:

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any

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1 What I am calling God's universal grace has also been called common grace or general grace within Protestant theology. As background, see Jochem Douma, *Common Grace in Kuyper, Schilder, and Calvin: Exposition, Comparison, and Evaluation*, ed. William Helder, trans. Albert H. Oosterhoff (Hamilton, ON: Lucerna CRTS Publications, 2017; originally published in Dutch in 1967), and Richard J. Mouw, *All That God Cares About* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2020).

one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' (Ac 17:24–28)

With these words, the apostle interpreted the life experience of his hearers in light of his knowledge of God learned from the Hebrew Bible. They had experienced their Creator's kindness, including rain, food and joy. They received the gift of life and the destiny of inhabiting the earth as God's sub-creators and developing civilizations. In the deepest level of their minds and souls, they should have perceived a call to seek God, a call from the Creator that echoed through Greek poetry and philosophy, that God is near because we are his offspring. This God, whose universal grace had made their lives possible, had now come to humanity in Jesus the Christ, whom Paul proclaimed. The universal grace of God provides the background for the nations to appreciate the Christian message.

Today, Christians are less likely to encounter Athenian philosophers, but they are very likely to interact with adherents of other major religions, especially Muslims. There are more than a billion Muslims and close to two billion Christians in our world. Thanks to globalization, the extent of interaction among people of different backgrounds and beliefs continues to increase. As a result, there will be countless conversations every year between Christians and Muslims. And among those who view their faith as the central defining feature of their lives, those discussions are not likely to be limited to medicine or technology.

When Christians and Muslims talk with each other about their faith, Christians tend to mention the themes that are most dear to them: the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus, themes that seem strange to Muslims. It would seem wise for them instead to follow the example of the apostle Paul and talk about the universal grace of God as a long preamble before making a link to the particularities of Christianity. By doing so, they might facilitate a higher quality of interreligious interaction and a higher level of desirable cooperation in public life.

In this essay, I explore eight biblical themes related to God's universal grace, themes which Christian theology has often related to knowing God the Father and his work of creation. All of these are themes to which people of other faiths can probably relate more easily than they can grasp the mysteries of a Trinity with which they are unfamiliar.²

God the Father and the goodness of creation

God made the world *good*. Genesis 1 tells us this several times. 'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good' (Gen 1:31). This theme is emphasized repeatedly, as if people might have a tendency to forget that the earth and the heavens were made by God, belong to God, and are therefore both real and good. Of course, people have indeed forgotten this truth. In ancient Greece, various types of Hellenistic religion and philosophy doubted the goodness of the physical world. Many Hindus similarly doubt the reality of the physical world, treating it as an illusion. And these ways of thinking appear even among Christians, who often think that to find authentic spirituality they must flee from the physical world into an unseen spiritual

² The following section is adapted from a chapter in Thomas K. Johnson, *What Difference Does the Trinity Make? A Complete Faith, Life, and Worldview* (Bonn: VKW, 2009).

world. But if the creation is good, we should seek to serve God and find authentic spirituality within the everyday world of creation. We can also accept the everyday gifts of God—family, friends, work, relaxation—as truly good gifts for which we can give thanks and which we can enjoy for the glory of God.

God the Father and the creation of mankind

‘God said, “Let us make man in our image”’ (Gen 1:26). Believing that God is our creating Father answers one of the deepest questions in the human heart: ‘Who and what are we?’ The answer is that we are his creations, made for a relationship with himself, and therefore our human reason, will and emotions should be a created reflection of his own. What a magnificent destiny we have been given! How awesome it is to interact daily with other creatures who have the same temporal and eternal destiny! How monumentally tragic it is when people are described and treated as mere creatures of dust and descendants of animals! This is not only an affront to the pinnacle of creation; it is a personal insult to the Creator.

Believing that God is our Father profoundly changes how we think and feel about ourselves and others. It satisfies both our own longing for significance and our intuitions that our neighbours and relatives are somehow worthy of respect and care. As the Psalmist reflected, ‘When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon, and stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor’ (Ps 8:3–5).

When God created us in his image, he did not leave us with empty hearts and minds, like a computer with no software. We might say that God created us with a lot of software already built in, ready to be activated by life experience. This includes not only the ability to understand God’s world, but also the ability to understand love, justice, loyalty, honesty and the other unseen realities that make life interesting and either frustrating or meaningful. For this reason, we long to experience such moral or spiritual realities, even while we sense that we never experience them totally in this world. Yet our partial experiences of these realities on the human level point us towards God, in whom these realities are fully present and from whom the cries of our hearts receive their answers. God created us with the ability and need to get to know him as our Creator and Redeemer.

God the Father and the development mandate

‘God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground”’ (Gen 1:28). ‘The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it’ (Gen 2:15).

Everywhere we look, people are very busy and working hard. Through their hard work, they create careers and families, businesses and schools, cultural institutions and communities. Seldom do we stop and ask, ‘Why?’ Maybe we do not want to recognize that all our work and activity are not only a human necessity for our own well-being and fulfilment but part of a divine mandate—how God created us. In all this intense activity, we overlook that God created us to be active in his world. This does not mean that we must never rest. It does mean that our everyday activity is

our primary place of service to God, who has given us a 'development mandate' to build families, societies and cultures that honour him as our Creator.

It is possible to divide this mandate into multiple parts. God has given us a mandate and drive to work, to marry, to have children and raise families, to worship, and to create communities. We see these parts of the development mandate lived out across the biblical record and in society today. They are usually expressed through social institutions: marriage, family, work, church, education, science. For this reason, we can talk about such institutions as 'creation orders', recognizing that God has ordered our lives by how he created us. The creation orders are part of God's means of developing and preserving human life and culture from one generation to the next. They delineate the primary places where we serve God and love our neighbours.

Closely related to our work in the world as God's sub-creators is the rapid growth of scientific and technological knowledge. Twenty-first-century society is increasingly built on information and technology, though people seldom pause to wonder how it is possible for people to truly understand the physical world of nature. A proper answer to this question has two components. On one hand, God created the world with a certain order built into it; the orderly days of creation hint in this direction. What we often call the 'laws of nature' are descriptions of certain laws God has built into his creation, part of the creation order. On the other hand, God has created our minds and sensory abilities so that we can perceive and understand his world. Furthermore, God has created a correspondence between the world he made and our perception of it, so that—with much hard work and many mistakes—we can gain such an amazing knowledge of the physical world as to build computers, perform delicate surgeries, or send communication satellites into orbit.

This increasing knowledge plays a massive role in the societal changes of our time. But without acknowledging the orderly creating work of our heavenly Father, we would have great difficulty explaining why such progress in scientific and technical knowledge is possible. Once we recognize that God makes the growth of knowledge possible, we can accept our better computers and improved medical care as gifts from our Father's hand. God certainly deserves far more gratitude than we give him, but this may be especially true in the realm of the growth of knowledge and practical wisdom.

God the Father and practical wisdom

When a farmer ploughs for planting, does he plough continually? Does he keep on breaking up and harrowing the soil? When he has levelled the surface, does he not sow caraway and scatter cummin? Does he not plant wheat in its place, barley in its plot, and spelt in its field? His God instructs him and teaches him the right way. Caraway is not threshed with a sledge, nor is a cartwheel rolled over cummin; caraway is beaten out with a rod, and cummin with a stick. Grain must be ground to make bread; so one does not go on threshing it forever. Though he drives the wheels of his threshing cart over it, his horses do not grind it. All this also comes from the Lord Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom. (Is 28:24–29)

In this passage, Isaiah describes the farming techniques used in his country from around 700 BC. They required practical wisdom, accumulated through trial and error and passed on from one generation to the next. To be a successful farmer, one had to learn these things from one's relatives and neighbours. And Isaiah adds the surprising comment about such a wise and successful farmer, 'His God instructs him and teaches him the right way.' Isaiah clearly saw such practical wisdom as coming from God, even though it might be learned directly from fellow humans. God is the ultimate source of the practical wisdom that people need to live in his creation.

The Bible strongly exhorts people to pursue and seek wisdom. 'Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you' (Prov 4:5–6). This wisdom may be about farming techniques, relationships, avoiding adultery and other sins, fearing God, working diligently, raising children or controlling one's tongue. It may come to us through various means: tradition, personal observation and experience, the Scriptures or even the sayings of various peoples. Such wisdom tends to make life flourish, and people are commanded to seek wisdom because God the Creator is the source of this wisdom.

Believers have generally recognized that there is also a problem in this realm: unbelief leads to false claims to wisdom. The command to seek wisdom must be understood in light of warnings like this one given by the apostle Paul: 'You must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts' (Eph 4:17–18). Darkened hearts produce false claims to wisdom that must be avoided. If we believe in God the Father, we will recognize him as the source of practical wisdom and seek it in the ways he directs.

God the Father and creational revelation

'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge' (Ps 19:1–2). Everything that people make, whether buildings, chairs, paintings or books, is a statement from those people that tells us something about them. Similarly, God's creation tells us about him. God continues to speak through his creation—including our accountability to him, not only about his glory, majesty and beauty. As Paul wrote, 'The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen from what has been made' (Rom 1:18–20).

This speech of God through creation has been given different names: 'natural revelation', meaning God's revelation through nature; 'general revelation', meaning God's revelation that goes generally to all people everywhere; or 'creational revelation', meaning God's self-revelation through creation. It is different from God's special or saving revelation of himself in Christ and Scripture, which should lead to faith and to participating in the believing community, the church. God's creational revelation impacts each person and every community, even those who

may not want to believe or accept God's revelation. People often suppress the truth about himself that God makes known through creation, and this suppression leads to a deep tension within the mind and heart of the unbeliever, who knows that everything good, wise, beautiful or just comes from God but who does not want to acknowledge God as the source of all these tremendous gifts. But all who believe in 'God the Father Almighty' should recognize that God is speaking through his world and is the source of all truth in this world.

God the Father and the universal moral law

At the end of Romans 1, Paul makes a startling statement. After giving a rather repulsive list of the sins that characterize the lives of people who reject God, he claims, 'Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them' (Rom 1:32). What is so remarkable about this statement is Paul's claim that people know the demands of God's law and even know that God punishes evildoers. Sin is not primarily the result of a lack of knowing right and wrong; it is a result of not wanting to do what is right. And all people have at least a substantial knowledge of God's universal moral law.

The older, more traditional terms for how people without the Bible came to know right and wrong were 'the natural moral law' or simply 'the natural law'. These terms were really abbreviations for a longer phrase, something like 'God's moral law as it is revealed through nature'. The assumption is that there is a God-given moral rationality that forms the fabric of creation. It is a part of God's general revelation, a means of his universal grace. Acknowledging the natural moral law is part of believing that our Father is the Creator of heaven and earth, who speaks to us through his world, which he also maintains and sustains.

We should never suggest that God's natural moral law makes his commandments in the Bible less important; after all, we truly need more specific commands that confront us in our sinfulness and arouse us to repentance and faith. But the natural moral law has great value. It means that God's moral principles are built into human reason, emotions and relationships so deeply that his written law finds a profound echo in our hearts and minds, making clear and specific those things we might otherwise neglect or question. It means that his written law fits our human nature and relationships in such a way that both his law written in creation and his law written in Scripture guide us in a direction that makes life flourish. It also means that people are partly prepared for the gospel; when people hear the gospel, they already have at least some experience of God's natural moral law condemning them for their sins and making them partly aware of their need for forgiveness and reconciliation. For this we can be grateful.

God's law, both in creation and in Scripture, always has multiple functions and uses in our lives. Three of these functions of God's law are especially important. First, it confronts us with our sin, making us aware of our sinfulness; this is the 'theological', condemning or converting use of God's law. Second, God's law also tends to restrain sin, even if people do not fully acknowledge or understand it; this is the civil or political (meaning 'community-oriented', based on the Greek word *polis* or community) use that makes life in society possible, so that we do not usually

practice a war of all against all. Third, God's law shows us how to live lives of gratitude to God for his gifts of creation and redemption. This third use (as a guide for the life of gratitude) is active only in believers, whereas the theological and civil uses of the law are active in both believers and unbelievers. If people do not trust in God's forgiveness, they may often have very negative thoughts and feelings about God's law as it comes to them in creation and Scripture, but this does mean that God's law has no role in their lives. They may be partly aware of their need for the gospel, and they are often reasonably good neighbours and citizens (displaying what used to be called 'civic righteousness'), because no one can totally avoid God's law.

God the Father and the universal questions

When God came to Adam and Eve after they had revolted in the Garden of Eden, he greeted them with a question. "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" (Gen 2:8-9). The all-knowing God does not ask questions to gain new information; he already knew that Adam and Eve were playing a silly game, trying to hide from God in the trees. So why did he ask this question? It was a way of starting the dialog with Adam and Eve that would lead to a renewed relationship between them and God.

This new relationship did not immediately overcome the wide-ranging effects of their revolt against God. The subsequent discussion shows signs of a comprehensive alienation—a permanent brokenness in their relation to God, each other, themselves and even the physical world. But at least Adam and Eve are talking with God, and God makes a vague but profound promise that the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent (3:15). This whole dialog started with God asking a probing question that revealed something deeply wrong within Adam and Eve.

Our Creator continues to be a questioning God, and these questions go out to all people by means of God's general revelation. Certain questions seem to come to all people's minds, all over the world and in every generation. We might call these universal questions. What is a human being? What is wrong with the world? What is the meaning of life? Where did everything come from? What has always existed? What is death? Why do we feel guilt? How can we find forgiveness? Is there any real hope? These questions are not mere mind games; often they express deep anxieties that people ponder through philosophy, culture and religion. These questions are much like God's question to Adam and Eve, 'Where are you?' These questions can torment people deeply because deep within they retain some suppressed knowledge of the Creator, whose moral law they know and whose wrath they fear. By means of these questions, God seeks to chase the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve out from their hiding places to begin an honest dialog with God.

The answers to these deepest questions of religions, culture and philosophy are found in the Bible; human experience is the question and faith provides the answer. Or we could say that life is the question and Christ is the answer. When we say we believe in 'God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth', we are claiming that our Father is still the questioning God who raises questions for all people—questions that prepare the way for his answer, which is Christ, the Saviour.

God's universal grace and the teaching of Jesus

Jesus taught us, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous' (Mt 5:44–45). Our Creator gives his rain and sun to all people, even his enemies; in this statement of Jesus, sun and rain probably represent all the things people need to live in this world. This means that all the good things we receive in the political, economic, social, personal and medical realms come from our Father's hand.

God deserves our continued gratitude for his good gifts that come to us in so many ways. Maybe we owe God an even greater debt of gratitude than did our ancestors of a century ago, as God's common grace seems even more bountiful and generous than it was in the past, especially for those who live in the developed world.

If God's universal grace to us today seems even greater than it was to our ancestors in previous centuries, the need to love our enemies is also greater. Enmity among races, religions, parties and communities is the human heritage which we have received. God's universal grace, in which he gives the sun and the rain to his enemies, stands above us in condemnation and inspiration. All who believe in such a God must devote themselves to loving those who are called their enemies, regardless of the cause of the conflict.

We must not overlook that the universal grace of God is one way in which God calls us to repentance and faith. In Paul's sermon to the unbelievers in Lystra, he claimed that God 'has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy' (Ac 14:17). And in Romans 2:4, Paul seems to complete the thought: 'Do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?'

Rather than letting the comfort, safety, peace and affluence of life in the developed world make us forget God, we need to remind ourselves that all these gifts come from God's universal grace. And we need to say very loudly and clearly that the bounty of God's common grace calls all the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve to repentance and faith. Life in a world of plenty should lead us to gratitude toward God, not towards thinking that God is now somehow irrelevant.

Conclusion

It is overwhelming to think about these works of God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. We should stand in awe and amazement, recognizing that he is worthy of all our praise and thanks. All our actions, as well as all our thoughts and feelings, should be part of our worship of our Heavenly Father. If we have not yet considered what it means to believe in the Creator, we must begin to let these truths overwhelm and transform our hearts and minds. Sometimes Christians live almost as if they have not heard that Jesus, the Saviour, is the Son of this God and Creator, and this leads to a distorted life and faith. But this problem can be solved!

Surpassing our previous considerations are Christian claims about the trust people can have in the Creator. Jesus said, 'Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?'

Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of our Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows' (Mt 10:29-31). This is God's providence, the promise that the infinite Creator not only structures the universe and society but also cares for each person.

Throughout the twenty-first century, Christians and other religious believers will surely interact millions of times around the globe. If we Christians talk only about the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus, our friends will have difficulty understanding us. But if we say a lot about the many dimensions of God's universal grace, following the example of the apostle Paul, we can interpret and draw attention to the experience of God's goodness that makes daily life possible for all human beings. These themes not only make the distinctives of Christian proclamation more comprehensible; they also provide much-needed principles for peaceful and responsible life together in global society.

The Evangelical Alliance's Commitment to Religious Liberty in Austria during the Second Half of the 19th Century

Frank Hinkelmann

Even in the late 19th century, being an evangelical Protestant in some parts of western Europe was dangerous. Drawing extensively on original documents, this article describes global evangelicals' determined efforts to secure religious freedom for their compatriots in Austria.

During the Reformation era, Austria was one of the first countries to turn to what later became known as Protestantism. As a result, towards the end of the 16th century, most of the population living in present-day Austria was Protestant—in some areas, up to 90 percent. However, the Counter-Reformation was radically enforced in Austria, forcing thousands of Protestants to either leave their homeland or convert back to Roman Catholicism. Only a few 'secret Protestants' remained, withdrawing mainly to the mountain areas. Not until Emperor Joseph II promulgated a patent of tolerance in 1781 did Protestants in Austria enjoy some religious tolerance and the possibility of practising their faith publicly.

In August 1846, when more than 800 Christians from different countries and Protestant churches met in London to launch the Evangelical Alliance (EA),¹ religious freedom was one of their leading concerns. The meeting was preceded by several years of preparatory work, especially among Christians influenced by the revivalist movements of the 19th century, for whom a closer interaction of like-minded people and common ministry goals became increasingly important. Three focal points were soon to emerge for the EA's work: 'First, the unity of Christians in and for themselves; second, common prayer; third, help for the persecuted'.²

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1 On the history of the Evangelical Alliance, see Gerhard Lindemann, *Für Frömmigkeit in Freiheit. Die Geschichte der Evangelischen Allianz im Zeitalter des Liberalismus* (Munich, Zürich and Vienna: LIT-Verlag, 2011). On Austria, see Frank Hinkelmann, *Geschichte der Evangelischen Allianz in Österreich. Von ihren Anfängen im 19. Jahrhundert bis in die Gegenwart*, 2nd ed. (Bonn: VKW, 2012).

2 H. Schordan, *Wesen, Ziel und Grenzen der Evangelischen Allianz. Vortrag* (Basel: Jäger & Kober, 1893), 20.

In this article, I examine the EA's involvement in the religious liberty situation in Austria during the second half of the 19th century, allowing original sources to speak for themselves.

The situation for Protestant churches in Austria in the mid-19th century

Due to the revolution of 1848 and subsequent repressive measures, even private meetings of any religious nature were rigorously prevented by the authorities. The difficult situation for Protestant Christians, especially members of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, was known in other European countries, and so the Evangelical Alliance took up the issue. Already in the second year of the monthly magazine *Evangelical Christendom*, published by the EA in England, a first report from Vienna can be found:

A petition, praying that all religious denominations might be placed upon an equal footing, and for the emancipation of the Jews, has been circulated in Vienna, but it has provoked a petition of an opposite character.³

A year later, a Lutheran pastor from northern Germany visited mainly the Pietist-influenced parishes of Upper Austria, and his travel reports were printed in *Evangelical Christendom*. He too expressed his concern about further restrictions of religious freedom.⁴ Finally, in 1850, the Hallensian professor of theology August Tholuck (1799–1877), one of the co-founders of the EA, wrote to the first chairman of the British Evangelical Alliance, Sir Culling Eardley (1805–1863):

Could not you, or some other faithful Christians, make a point of travelling through the Austrian dominions, in order to make research as to the state of the Protestants there? It is highly desirable to direct attention to those quarters, the Protestants being left there so destitute or temporal, but, above all, of spiritual means.⁵

The representatives of the British Evangelical Alliance then sought information from Austrian evangelical pastors from Ljubljana, which was part of the Austrian territory at the time:

The editors of the publication [*Evangelical Christendom*] said they wanted to draw the special attention of their readers to this empire. The conditions there call loudly for compassion and help from fellow Christians. In spite of all obstructions by the government of the Danube Monarchy, an information trip should be undertaken at all costs. In addition, *Evangelical Christendom* should serve as a forum for the concern and privations suffered by the Austrian Protestants.⁶

Even though Tholuck and others around 1850 were primarily concerned with the fate of the Lutheran and Reformed Protestant Christians in Austria and even

3 *Evangelical Christendom*, 2 (1848): 167.

4 Hinkelmann, *Geschichte der Evangelischen Allianz in Österreich*, 22–24.

5 *Evangelical Christendom*, 4 (1850): 344. See also Lindemann, *Für Frömmigkeit in Freiheit*, 227–28.

6 Lindemann, *Für Frömmigkeit in Freiheit*, 228.

more so with the fate of the Protestants in Bohemia, the emergence of free churches and free church groups, especially during the 1860s and 1870s, brought them increasingly within the focus of the EA in the UK and beyond.

Religious law during the second half of the 19th century

The Protestant Church of Lutheran and Reformed confession had been tolerated since 1781, but not until the *Protestant Patent* of 1861 was the Protestant Church granted some relative legal equality with the Roman Catholic Church. Apart from this, only the Roman Catholic Church was initially recognized by law, and until the end of the monarchy in 1918, only the Old Catholic Church (1877) and the Moravian Church (1880) obtained state recognition by decree, while the Orthodox and Jews were 'recognized in the form of their church and religious communities, but not as such'.⁷

For the sphere of religious freedom, the 'December Constitution' of 1867 was of decisive relevance. It stated in Article 14, paragraph 1 that 'Full freedom of faith and conscience is guaranteed to everyone.' However, during the 19th century this freedom was granted only to citizens.⁸ Furthermore, Article 15 of the Constitution regulated religious freedom only for 'legally recognized religious societies'. These were the only entities entitled to 'the right of common public religious practice'—i.e. public worship. For the free churches, Article 16 of the Constitution was decisive: 'Adherents of a religious confession not recognized by law are permitted to practise their religion *at home*, provided that this is neither unlawful nor immoral' (emphasis added). This provision at least made it possible for them to practise religion together within the extended family. For Free Church circles, this was a greatly appreciated blessing, as one of its theologians, Alois Adlof, explained:

First, the state admits that other religious confessions besides the recognized ones exist here; second, the adherents of these confessions can assemble and order everything that belongs to the practice of religion according to their understanding; thus they can pray, sing, preach, administer the sacraments, and deliberate and decide on the duties imposed on them by their confession; third, if necessary, they can appoint those persons who are to lead their devotions. These are important matters and important liberties.⁹

With the Law on the Right of Assembly of 15 November 1867, free churches were also given, for the first time, the opportunity to admit invited guests to such 'private' meetings. Also of importance was a law of 25 May 1868 regulating the religious confession of children:

7 Stefan Schima, 'Die rechtlichen Voraussetzungen der Ausübung von Religion und Weltanschauung in der Donaumonarchie um 1900', in Rudolf Leeb and Astrid Schweighofer (eds.), *Die Geburt der Modern aus dem Geist der Religion? Religion, Weltanschauung und Moderne in Wien um 1900* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020), 34. In 1890, the Israelite Law finally regulated the concerns of the Israelite Religious Society, and in 1912 the Islam Law was passed.

8 Schima, 'Die rechtlichen Voraussetzungen', 33.

9 Alois Adlof, *Gesetzliche Stellung der staatlich nicht anerkannten Religionsgesellschaften in Österreich. Referat zur Allianz Konferenz der Prediger der freien reformierten Kirche, der Baptisten und Methodisten zu Wien, 15 März 1900* (Budapest: Koloman Rózsa, 1900), 2.

Marital children or children regarded the same way as marital children follow the religion of the parents, provided both parents belong to the same confession. ... It follows from this that when we convert from a state-recognized church, we may also deregister our children if they have not yet completed their seventh year, and that the authorities must take note of this registration.¹⁰

However, Stefan Schima is certainly right in noting, 'Especially in the religious sphere or in the sphere of worldviews, there was a gap between the legal claim and the actual reality.'¹¹

The first media reports on 'sects' in Vienna

The denominational map in Austria would become increasingly diverse in the following years as the first free churches began to form cell groups or establish congregations. Through contacts with the Baptist church in Hamburg, Germany, a Baptist group was established in Vienna in the 1850s. A report from 1860 stated the following:

Finally, we have to report that our dear brothers and sisters in Vienna have once again been in the hands of the authorities and the Catholic priests. Although it could not be proved that they had persuaded anyone to convert, they were nevertheless sentenced to a punishment, albeit a mild one, after much interrogation. However, the Protestant superintendent was instructed to baptize their children according to the [Lutheran] church rite, which he did with cunning and violence, since he met with determined resistance against his amicable approach.¹²

In the media of the time, reference was made to various 'sects'—a term also used for free churches at the time. In 1865, for example, there was a court case against two followers of the so-called 'Believers in Christ'. It is remarkable that even a Bavarian regional newspaper reported in detail about the trial. The report stated, among other things:

The long interrogation of the accused revealed that they held meetings with their 'friends', prayed, sang, read passages from the Bible, and gave explanations. They did not want to name the 'friends' so as not to expose them to 'persecutions'.¹³

These 'Believers of Christ' were also called Nazarenes; this Anabaptist group originated in Switzerland and still exists today. Two elders named Mathias Stritt (age 49) and Eduard Sager (age 45) were sentenced to two and three weeks of aggravated detention, respectively, with fasting. A year later, Stritt, Sager and three other

10 Adlof, *Gesetzliche Stellung*, 3.

11 Schima, 'Die rechtlichen Voraussetzungen', 30.

12 Quoted from Gottfried Rabenau, *Österreichischer Baptismus. Von der Wegbereitung durch kirchliche Reformbewegungen zur Entstehung und Entwicklung der österreichischen Baptistengemeinden* (Unpublished thesis, Hamburg, 1981), 35. Rabenau provides this source: *Missionsblatt der Gemeinde getaufter Christen* 18, no. 5 (1860).

13 *Tagblatt für die Städte Dillingen, Lauingen, Höchstädt, Wertingen und Gundelfingen* 62 (16 March 1865).

Nazarenes were the accused in another trial; Sager was considered the leader of the group and several Austrian papers reported extensively on the court hearing.¹⁴

In the further course of the trial, described by the author of the newspaper article as a 'criminalistic curiosity', Sager was finally sentenced to two months in prison, Stritt and another community member to one month each, and the remaining two to several weeks.¹⁵

According to Lindemann's research, Sager turned to the EA in London, which instructed its foreign secretary, Hermann Schmettau, to intervene with imperial chamberlain Anton Freiherr von Riese-Stallburg. Schmettau travelled specifically for this purpose to Vienna in 1866.¹⁶ Further correspondence from Vienna by the head of the depot of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Edward Millard, continued to draw attention to the fate of Sager and the Nazarenes in the following years.¹⁷ A letter to London dated 31 December 1866, probably written by Edward Millard, stated the following:

Dear Sir—whilst during the happy Week of prayer you enjoy all the privileges and comforts of Christian and social intercourse before the throne of grace, let not those be forgotten who in less favoured countries are called to suffer the loss of their goods and their liberty for the sake of the Gospel. Among these let the name of our friend and brother, Sauger [sic], be mentioned, who at the present time is again in prison for having worshipped God in his own house, after the dictates of his conscience, and in accordance with the Word of God. And even while he is in prison a new case of prosecution has been begun against him for the same offence. His wife, his servants, his apprentices are being subjected to an inquisitorial examination to induce them to betray the place and time where the simple devotional meetings are held, which are so offensive to the tyrannical Church of Rome.

In all probability Sauger will then leave his prison only to enter it again, and if this goes on much longer he will be a ruined man. Sauger may by some be thought peculiar in some of his views, but he is sincere in his desire to serve God according to Scripture, and whilst no charge can be brought against his moral or political character, surely liberty ought to be granted him to follow his own religious convictions. Can nothing be done to bring this iniquity to light? ... Sauger is not the only one thus suffering in Austria; his friends in Vienna have, like himself, repeatedly been imprisoned before. ... Perhaps in this hour of her adversity, and with a Protestant in her Council of State, Austria would listen to an appeal in favour of religious liberty proceeding from so influential a body as the Evangelical Alliance.

14 *Die Presse* 156 (9 June 1866).

15 *Die Presse* 156 (9 June 1866).

16 Lindemann, *Für Frömmigkeit in Freiheit*, 597.

17 Minutes of the Board of the British Evangelical Alliance, 10 December 1867 (EA Archives, London); 'Miscellaneous Foreign Intelligence', *Evangelical Christendom*, 8, new series (1867): 91; *Evangelical Christendom*, 9, new series (1868): 40.

Let, then, a word be spoken in the face of civilised Europe on behalf of the suffering Christian.¹⁸

Finally, at the beginning of the year 1868 *Evangelical Christendom* was able to report:

The unhappy state of religious dissidence in Vienna has for a long time occupied the attention of the Committee of Council. We have the gratification of stating that, according to recent communications from Vienna, in consequences of the accession to office of the new Government, a complete change has taken place. Meetings for religious worship, for which fine and imprisonment had often been inflicted are now generally allowed.¹⁹

New churches and denominations in Vienna

During the late 1860s and the 1870s, the first free-church congregations were planted in Vienna. The Baptists were the first to establish a congregation, in 1869. Here, the agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Vienna, the Englishman Edward Millard, played a leading role, as he also did in the interdenominational activities of the Vienna Evangelical Alliance. Millard had been in Vienna since 1864 (after a brief intermezzo at the beginning of the 1850s).²⁰

In 1870, the Wesleyan Methodist Church sent the Swabian missionary Christian Dieterle²¹ to Vienna to open a Wesleyan mission station. Dieterle quickly succeeded in gathering a small group of about ten people. At the end of the first year in Vienna, it was reported that 'The year closed with encouraging prospects of success',²² but resistance was also present. A report from December 1871, the time of the actual formation of the Viennese congregation, explained:

When the meeting had begun on the 10th of December in Flieher's house, a police commissioner appeared with assistance and immediately rummaged through everything that did not belong in the house. Mr. Dieterle went with him to answer for not having obtained permission to invite people to the meetings by means of publicly posted posters.²³

18 *Evangelical Christendom*, 8, new series (1867): 91.

19 *Evangelical Christendom*, 9, new series (1868): 80.

20 On Millard's contribution for the Baptists, see Johannes Fleischer, 'Vom Brand in Hamburg bis zu Edward Millard: 1847–97', in Franz Graf-Stuhlhofer (ed.), *Frisches Wasser auf dürres Land. Festschrift zum 50-jährigen Bestehen des Bundes der Baptistengemeinden in Österreich* (Kassel: Oncken, 2005), 18–21. See further Franz Graf-Stuhlhofer, 'Edward Millard (1822–1906)', in *Evangelisches Lexikon für Theologie und Gemeinde*, vol. 3 (Holzgerlingen: SCM R. Brockhaus, in press).

21 On Dieterle, see Karl Heinz Voigt, 'Christian Dieterle. Erster methodistischer Prediger in Österreich', *Der Methodist* 39, no. 4 (1993): 7–8; 39, no. 5 (1993): 6–7.

22 Hinrich Bargmann, *Festschrift zur Feier des fünfzigjährigen Bestehens der Methodistenkirche in Wien am 8. Dezember 1921* (Vienna: Selbstverlag der Bischöflichen Methodistenkirche, 1921), 10.

23 Franz Graf-Stuhlhofer, 'Erinnerungsblätter von der Baptisten-Gemeinde in Wien für Edward Millard. Eine Quelle für die Anfangsjahrzehnte der Baptisten Österreichs', in Johannes Hirnsperger and Christian Wessely (eds.), *Wege zum Heil? Religiöse Bekenntnisgemeinschaften in Österreich: Elaia Christengemeinden (ECG) und Islamische Alevitische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich*

A further article reported:

'No meetings accessible to the general public were held until the second half of 1875.' The situation of a preacher who is sent into the field like a missionary, has no congregation and then for five years can hold no meetings open to the public, announce no services and distribute no invitations is certainly not an enviable one.²⁴

Not until July 1875 did the Wesleyan Methodists dare to open a public prayer hall 'in order to tell the people and the authorities that the Methodist Church had settled in Vienna and intended to stay and work here'.²⁵ Even after 1875, the Methodists had to submit a written application for official approval of every meeting they held, and they had to pay a duty each time.²⁶

In addition to the groups already mentioned, other denominations also established preaching stations in the course of the 1870s. These were again mainly foreign denominations that had sent staff to Vienna for a mission to the Jews, including the Irish Presbyterian Church and the Free Church of Scotland, and like the other free churches they also experienced ongoing repression by the authorities.²⁷

In February 1876, the secretary of the British Evangelical Alliance visited Vienna on a European tour. There he met Millard personally for the first time, and Millard arranged an EA meeting. A report following his visit indicated:

Although considerable progress has been made by the Imperial Government in granting religious liberty to the people, it must be confessed that Austria in this respect is still far behind other European nations. The vigilance of the police is directed to all Protestant and Evangelical efforts, and caution has to be exercised, so to avoid the imposition of fines and other penalties. In Austria the truth still has to be learned that perfect freedom of religious action diffuses knowledge, stimulates inquiry, serves the cause of the truth, and promotes loyalty, contentment, and good-will—blessings that strengthen the hands of Governments and elevate the people in the estimation and respect of the civilized world.²⁸

The situation came to a head again in 1877, when the Methodists were forbidden to hold public Sunday schools and meetings with any 'worship character', and thus were also denied the right to sing together and take communion. For the time being, however, they were still allowed to hold 'lectures'.²⁹ At the beginning of March 1879, the Baptists received a general ban on continuing to hold meetings.³⁰

(IAGÖ). *Mit Beiträgen aus anderen Religionsgemeinschaften* (Innsbruck and Vienna: Tyrolia, 2014), 120.

24 Bargmann, *Festschrift zur Feier*, 20.

25 Bargmann, *Festschrift zur Feier*, 11.

26 Bargmann, *Festschrift zur Feier*, 12.

27 On these Anglo-Saxon congregations, see Foreign Evangelization Society (ed.), *A Guide to Evangelical Work on the Continent of Europe* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1874), 80–81.

28 *Evangelical Christendom* 17, new series (1876): 120.

29 *Evangelical Christendom* 17, new series (1876): 387–88; Bargmann, *Festschrift zur Feier*, 13.

30 *Evangelical Christendom* 20, new series (1879): 388. See also Stuhlhofer, 'Erinnerungsblätter von der Baptisten-Gemeinde in Wien', 121.

On 2 November 1879, the police closed down a house worship meeting, although those present were 'all guests invited by means of invitation cards'.³¹ One person was charged by the authorities with having violated the law on associations. In a first trial, however, the accused was acquitted by the district court on the grounds

that according to the law of 21 December 1867, religious associations are excluded from the provisions of the law on associations; and the non-recognized religious groups are permitted the right of domestic religious exercises, provided that they are neither illegal nor immoral.

In addition, according to the Assembly Act, only those assemblies are to be reported which are not limited to invited guests.³²

The public prosecutor's office immediately appealed the verdict, but the regional court upheld the original decision. Nevertheless, the situation had grown so tense that Millard's interdenominational meetings, which he had conducted since 1870 with the knowledge and support of both the Reformed and the Lutheran churches, also had to be discontinued.

Subsequently, conflicts within the Czech part of the Empire attracted the attention of the EA abroad. As a result, the EA decided at its 1879 international General Assembly at Basel, Switzerland to send a deputation to Emperor Franz Joseph I in Vienna to address the issue of religious freedom.

The deputation to Emperor Franz Joseph I and further developments

Even before the actual audience with the Emperor, the EA's request for access caused a media stir. The Viennese daily newspaper *Die Presse* took up the issue several times, treating the intervention as an unjustified intrusion by outsiders into Austrian affairs. It wrote in October 1879 that the EA's original goal was to create 'a federation in which all felt themselves to be members of one great community and could further unite for the moral and humane purpose of helpfully assisting the fellow believers living in dispersion'. However, the article continued, the EA had changed its programme and was now interfering irresponsibly in matters of religious freedom. The author wrote:

In this way of systematic propaganda, the Evangelical Alliance, at its meeting this year, has come to act as advocate in a completely unfounded complaint by Bohemian sectarians in Prague, and in doing so has been so careless as to hear only the complainants and then, without knowledge of Austrian law and the real facts of the case, to decide on a petition to the ruler himself. With this international appearance, however, the Evangelical Alliance has completely abandoned its original peace programme and has turned into a church-political association which, far from promoting religious peace, endangers it not only between the different confessions but even within them. ...

31 Quoted from Graf-Stuhlhofer, 'Erinnerungsblätter von der Baptisten-Gemeinde in Wien', 121.

32 Quoted from Graf-Stuhlhofer, 'Erinnerungsblätter von der Baptisten-Gemeinde in Wien', 121–22.

In 1867, Austria, after suffering severe blows of fate, abandoned its former Catholic state policy for its own good and wholeheartedly embarked on the path of the cultural state, whereupon, among other things, the new religious laws were created, which satisfactorily guarantee freedom of faith and conscience and are, for the most part, freer than elsewhere. These laws, which were bought at great cost, must now not only be carefully guarded, but must also be protected against abuse, such as occurs through foreign missionaries, so that the peace of the Protestant Church is not disturbed and the Catholic Church is given no cause for complaint. This missionary activity has very little in common with true religion. ... Every religious society in Austria has its own clergy and therefore foreign missionaries are quite unnecessary in this respect. In all cases, however, we consider it absolutely incompatible with the dignity and authority of a state such as Austria that a foreign church-political association should present itself in such a way as a mediator between state authority and subjects, as the Evangelical Alliance is about to do.³³

The author seems to have misinterpreted the EA as an association limited to Lutheran and Reformed members, failing to recognize its interdenominational character. However, the author also seemed convinced that religious freedom should apply only to members of recognized religious societies and that new (foreign) denominations were not at all necessary.

The audience with Emperor Franz Joseph I took place on 6 November 1879 at the Hofburg palace in Ofen; from the EA's point of view, it was quite successful.³⁴ The *Neue Evangelisch Kirchenzeitung* in Berlin reported in January 1880:

The stirring of spirits caused by the audience of the Alliance deputation with Emperor Franz Joseph is beginning, if not to subside, at least to be clarified. There are heated arguments back and forth, but in time it becomes clear to oneself and to others what is important. Misled by an article in the Viennese *Presse*, the majority of the Austrian and foreign, political and ecclesiastical press believed, especially at the beginning, that the Alliance demanded a greater degree of freedom for the Protestants [which meant Lutherans and Reformed] in Austria in general, thus also for the recognized churches. ... Now, however, the Alliance—and we with it—want nothing more than that the non-recognized churches be tolerated alongside the regional Lutheran and Reformed churches and that they be allowed to practise their religion freely. ... We are only sorry that ... the *Österreichische Protestant* [a liberal Lutheran church paper] does not always stand equally clearly and firmly on the principle of religious freedom also for Protestants of a different orientation. We repeat that we have no liking for

33 'Evangelismus [sic] und politischer Protestantismus', *Die Presse* 32 (16 October 1879): 2–3.

34 See also Andreas Graf von Bernstorff, *Die Evangelische Allianz. Zu ihrem 50jährigen Jubiläum* (Berlin: Deutsche Evangelische Buch- und Tractatgesellschaft, 1896), 13. On the deputation, see Karl Sarasin, *Bericht der von der Evangelischen Allianz nach Wien abgesandten Deputation im Jahre 1879* (Basel: Schultze'sche Univ. Bchdr, 1880). This official report of about 60 pages contains a detailed report on the situation in Austria (including the Czech part of the country) and also on the deputation itself and its success. Furthermore, the annex contains numerous documents that are relevant to this case.

separation; but if it is unavoidable for the sake of conscience, it should happen peacefully. Especially 'liberal Protestants' should be quite tolerant.

We also repeat the wish that the free churches, if at all possible, should integrate into the national church, so that they do not become instruments of separatism, but for those who do not yet claim to be able to do so, such as the Brethren, the Baptists and others, we hope for the liberating resolution of the Emperor.³⁵

The emperor's decision took a long time. In the meantime, following the breaking up of a Baptist house meeting on 2 November 1879 as mentioned above, charges were brought, and on 17 January 1880 one of the leading members of the Baptist congregations, Joseph Rottmayer, went on trial. Rottmayer was acquitted in the local district court, but the public prosecutor's office appealed and a further trial was held before the Imperial and Royal District Court on 28 February 1880. A detailed report was printed in the *Neue Freie Presse*. As this is a unique and rare source of the time, it is quoted here in full:

A small congregation of Anabaptists, also called Baptists, which is free of any desire to renew historical religious struggles and is content with the harmless practice of its peculiar customs, was recently frightened out of its quiet life by an indictment from the public prosecutor's office, which accused its four leaders of violating section 3 of the Associations Act because of their meetings. The district court acquitted them on the grounds that the law on associations does not apply to religious groups. The public prosecutor filed an appeal on the grounds that these exceptions only apply to legally recognized religious societies, and today the appeal hearing took place.

The accountant in the local branch of the foreign Bible Society, Joseph Rottmayer, spoke on behalf of his co-defendants. He stated that the congregation had 44 members, that he sent out invitations to the church service, which usually took place on Sunday mornings, and that it had not yet been possible to apply for recognition of the sect because it lacked the financial means to formally establish itself. The following interrogation provides information about the teachings of the Baptists.

District Court Judge Fröhlichsthal: What are the principles of the congregation? *Respondent:* The Baptist bases himself on the Word of God and seeks to live according to the Word of God.

Judge: What do you understand by the Word of God? *Respondent:* By this I understand the Holy Scriptures. Those who accept the Bible as truth and believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour in their hearts are accepted into the congregation and make a solemn confession before the assembly.

Judge: Why do you separate yourself from the Catholic religion, which also recognizes the Bible? *Respondent:* Because the Catholic religion is no longer guided by the Word of God.

Judge: Where does your sect get its name from? *Respondent:* From the fact that baptism is by immersion according to the word of Christ.

35 'Erfolge der Allianzdeputation in Oesterreich', *Neue Evangelische Kirchenzeitung* 22 (24 January 1880): 53.

Judge: Where and how does this happen? *Respondent:* In the dwelling of this member is a large baptismal tub, in which the person to be baptized is immersed. There is no baptism by the priest. The act is performed on adults in the presence of the assembled members, men and women. The person to be baptized is not unclothed but wrapped in white vestments. When the ceremony is performed on persons of both sexes, they dress in different chambers. The moral law is strictly observed here.

At the request of the defence lawyer, Dr Joseph Kopp, a decree of the Ministry for Culture and Education was read, according to which the Hussite Church in Bohemia, which is also not recognized, is permitted to practise its religion, provided that it is not immoral and children who are not of school age are not admitted.

Finally, the accused informs that the members of the community do not pay any [church] tax but only make contributions as they see fit, and that the board of elders does not have a higher rank than the other members of the cooperative.

The representative of the public prosecutor's office (Poller) moves for a guilty verdict, pointing out that domestic religious practice in the family circle is permitted, but not worship in a congregation.

In his plea, Dr Joseph Kopp emphasized that however small the matter, the fundamental question was important. The Anabaptists had always been granted the freedom of their religious practice, as often as there was greater light in Austria, while it had to remain latent under the omnipotence of the police. By virtue of the fundamental laws of the state, the practice of their religious doctrine was a legitimate one, even if it could not seek recognition due to lack of financial means. The distinction between domestic and non-domestic worship was also not valid; if it was permitted to sing ambiguous songs in societies, should it not be permitted to recite religious songs in a congregation? The defender hopes that today will not bring a backward movement in freedom of mind and conscience through an unfavourable decision.

The Court rejected the prosecution's appeal as unfounded and confirmed the acquittal.³⁶

Private, domestic church services were subsequently permitted in Vienna, but the holding of public church services remained forbidden for the time being.³⁷ In 1882, the minutes of the EA council meeting in London contained this report:

Mr. Millard's letters also stated that new restrictions were now being imposed upon all Christian work in Vienna. The Wesleyan meetings are forbidden and Mr. Millard's own Bible-Readings, which have been regularly held for the past twelve years, are not now allowed, except after written application on a stamped form, costing a florin each time, and judging from recent experience, the

36 'Aus dem Gerichtssaale', *Neue Freie Presse*, 29 February 1880, reprinted in Helmut Rabenau, *Jubiläumsschrift zum 125jährigen Bestehen der 1. Baptistengemeinde in Wien und Österreich* (Vienna: Baptistengemeinde Mollardgasse, 1994), 51.

37 Sarasin, *Bericht der von der Evangelischen Allianz*, 27. See also the report on the government's answer to a question on the matter posed by two members of parliament, in *Das Vaterland. Zeitung für die österreichische Monarchie* 21 (19 March 1880): 2.

intention is not to give the reply to those applications until too late to hold the meeting proposed.³⁸

Subsequently, the British EA approached the Earl of Shaftesbury to introduce Millard to the new British ambassador in Vienna so that he could intervene diplomatically in the matter.³⁹

In addition, another area of conflict arose during these years: the question of religious instruction for children. As a Christian magazine explained, under Austrian law

the children of such parents who convert to the Protestant Church remain Catholic and are therefore not allowed to attend the Protestant services of their parents from the age of 7 to 15. One can imagine the sad situation this puts the parents in. On the other hand, Protestants who convert to Catholicism may take their children with them. The London Committee of the Evangelical Alliance has raised its voice against this blatant injustice in a petition to Baron Conrad, Minister of Churches and Schools in Austria. May the petition find a willing ear.⁴⁰

Some Catholic figures pressured the authorities to force Baptist parents to have their children baptized as Catholics, resulting in a court case. A shoemaker named Benedikt Märkel filed a complaint against the Minister of Culture, who had ruled on 23 August 1881 that Märkel must have his child baptized within 14 days or else a compulsory baptism would be performed. The Administrative Court in Vienna heard the complaint and ruled in Märkel's favour, stating that 'any further act to bring the child into the Catholic Church had no legal justification.'⁴¹

Despite the court-ordered abolition of compulsory baptism, the EA remained concerned about parents' inability to take their children to their own church, sending a petition to Emperor Franz Joseph I in summer 1883. Following is a portion of that petition:

May it please your Majesty, as the representatives of the Evangelical Alliance of Great Britain and of the United States of America would very respectfully refer to the gracious reception accorded by your Majesty in the month of November, 1879, to a deputation from the International Conference of the Society. ... This letter also respectfully represented to your Majesty that the children of Protestant parents between the ages of seven and fourteen years were prohibited from accompanying their parents to religious meetings, and likewise from receiving religious instruction otherwise than from Roman Catholic teachers. This deprivation of the holiest of parental rights and duties is felt to be a very serious

38 Minutes of the Council Meetings, London, 13 March 1882 (EA Archives, London).

39 Hinkelmann, *Geschichte der Evangelischen Allianz in Österreich*, 36–37.

40 'Kirchliche Nachrichten', *Der Evangelist* 33 (1882): 301. See also 'Religious Liberty in Austria', *Evangelical Christendom* 24, new series (1883): 316–17; 'Sieg der Religionsfreiheit in Oesterreich', *Neue Evangelische Kirchenzeitung* 22 (14 February 1880): 99.

41 'Das Kind muss katholisch werden', *Budweiser Zeitung* 21 (26 April 1882): 3. See also Rabenau, *Jubiläumsschrift zum 125jährigen Bestehen*, 13.

grievance, and the parents of such children earnestly look to your Majesty for permission to exercise the entire control of their children.⁴²

This petition also seems to have received a positive response, as the sources suggest. However, the question of religious freedom for members of the free churches remained contentious in the 1880s. The situation worsened again for the Methodists when, contrary to expectations, in October 1882 the Minister of Worship and Religion once again confirmed the ban on singing and praying in Methodist congregations.⁴³ Two years later, things got even worse:

In 1884, all meetings were completely banned and only after months of prayer and many efforts was the preacher allowed to give lectures to invited persons on the condition that the subject and content of the lecture be announced beforehand to the governor's office, stamped with one guilder.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, a 1920 historical summary indicated that 'for the Wesleyan ministry in Vienna it was of great importance that a delegation of the Evangelical Alliance had an audience with Emperor Franz Joseph and the evangelical communities not recognized by the state received notable favours.'⁴⁵

Not until the turn of the century did free churches in Vienna finally receive freedom to engage in public religious practises. However, existing sources contain no further information about active EA involvement in the situation.

Conclusion

The early years of free churches in Austria, and particularly in Vienna, were characterized by suppression and repression on the part of the state authorities. Especially during the 1850s and 1860s, holding private Bible studies in private households could result in a prison sentence.

The targeted Christians received solidarity and support from outside Austria, especially from the British branch of the EA, which culminated in the EA's deputation to Emperor Franz Joseph I in 1879. Despite all the interventions and political diplomacy, however, not until around 1900 could free churches practise their religion relatively freely.

42 'Religious Liberty in Austria', *Evangelical Christendom* 24, new series (1883): 316–17.

43 Bargmann, *Festschrift zur Feier*, 15.

44 R. Möller, 'Methodisten-Gemeinden in Oesterreich. Ihre Geschichte und ihre Arbeit', in C. A. Witz-Oberlin (ed.), *Evangelische Vereins- und Liebestätigkeit in Oesterreich* (Klagenfurt: J. Heyn, 1905), 278; see also Bargmann, *Festschrift zur Feier*, 15.

45 John L. Nuelsen, Theophil Mann and J. J. Sommer, *Kurzgefasste Geschichte des Methodismus von seinen Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Bremen: Verlag des Traktathauses, n.d. [1920]), 590.

Catholics and Evangelicals and Their Future Relations

Thomas Schirrmacher

Today, Catholics and evangelicals have friendly relationships of mutual respect and cooperation in many parts of the world, but some criticize this friendliness on theological grounds. What forms should their relationship take, given the continuing differences between these two streams of Christianity? In this carefully considered message, the WEA's leader gives his view.

‘Catholics and evangelicals are the two largest faith communities’ within Christianity.¹ Accordingly, one of the most important global conversations that should be occurring within Christianity today is between Catholics and evangelicals. I have enjoyed many warm personal discussions on this matter with Pope Francis and other major leaders of the Catholic Church. I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss the topic publicly today with a global community listening. Such an opportunity is long overdue. I am thankful that Pope Francis will give his greetings directly after my speech.

I have been invited as Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), the largest global evangelical organization. But not all Evangelicals are connected to the WEA. The WEA represents an estimated 600 million Christians, but there are many more Evangelicals, Protestant Charismatics, Pentecostals and Independents with a more or less evangelical outlook who are not connected to us; according to the World Christian Database, counting these would make a total of something like one billion evangelically oriented Christians. Some Evangelical churches belong to the World Council of Churches (WCC); there is a significant and growing overlap between WCC and WEA member churches, since neither body excludes churches that belong to the other body. Other Evangelicals belong to no global body.

Thus, when I speak about ‘Evangelicals’, this is a kind of shortcut term for a broad spectrum of people within and outside the WEA. Some statisticians of religion place Evangelicals, Protestant Charismatics, Pentecostals and Independents in separate categories. I personally think that this does not reflect reality. For example, most Pentecostals hold to the core truths of evangelicalism, and that tendency is only increasing with the growth of Pentecostal engagement in academic theology. Quite

Thomas Schirrmacher, General Secretary of the World Evangelical Alliance, delivered this message to a global dialogue of evangelical charismatic and Catholic charismatic Christians on 15 May 2021.

1 Timothy George, ‘Our Francis, Too’, *Christianity Today*, 4 June 2013, <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert453ts5>.

a number of Independents are also evangelical in their faith commitment, regardless of whether they refer to themselves as such. Many Christians are Evangelical, Pentecostal (or Charismatic) and Independent all at the same time.

The topic of Catholic–Evangelical relations has become more urgent as many national branches of Christian world communions in the Global South, such as Anglicans and Lutherans, have become more independent from their Western mother churches than previously. These branches are often closer theologically to other evangelical churches in their countries than to their mother churches in the West. This dynamic is rapidly increasing the number of theologically conservative churches who are contemplating how they will relate to the Catholic Church.

I cannot speak on behalf of all our WEA member churches or our regional or national Evangelical alliances. We are a de-centralized organization in which no alliance is obligated to follow my lead. And it would be impossible to describe all the views existing in the WEA’s ranks within one lecture. But I hope all will feel that I have tried to capture their diverse positions in a charitable manner.

I know that most of you in my immediate international audience today experience friendly and mutually rewarding relations between Catholics and Evangelicals. Yet in this message I wish to address *all* Catholics and *all* Evangelicals, whatever their current position is on Catholic–Evangelical relations. I believe we need to make a big step away from historical conflicts and to love one another, independently from the question of how we evaluate the theological parameters involved and regardless of whether we believe that our personal encounters with one another or our joint experience generated by the Holy Spirit can override historical divisions.

I have organized the first part of my message around seven possible ways in which we can relate to each other. I will start at the negative end of the spectrum so as to finish on a more positive note.

1. Enemies

Many Evangelicals and Pentecostals view Catholics as their enemies and vice versa. In some countries, such as Brazil, this attitude significantly shapes the religious landscape. Historically, enmity between the two camps has led to considerable hostility and even armed conflict.

What do we do about this situation? What do we say to Evangelicals who feel discriminated against or even persecuted by Catholics? What do we say to Catholics who feel demonized and treated as a religious and political threat by Evangelicals?

Jesus has an answer to this question: ‘But I tell you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who mistreat you and persecute you’ (Lk 6:27–28). This is the Christian way to deal with enemies. It was designed by the Prince of Peace. Any hatred between us or any use of earthly power against each other—whether through the state, in business, or elsewhere—has to stop, if we want to call ourselves ‘Christians’.

This is consistent with the Old Testament too. For example, God told his people who were facing exile and oppression, through the prophet Jeremiah, ‘Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper’ (Jer 29:7).

This is our first calling: Let's overcome enmity by love. There cannot be any theological excuse for remaining in historic trench warfare. No matter how you feel about the other camp, no matter whether you see the others as fellow Christians or not—love is the only possible answer and it needs to be a love that the world can see!

2. Fellow citizens

Let's move on to the next position on the spectrum. It is not much friendlier. There are Catholics and Evangelicals around the globe who more or less ignore each other and just see them as people who happen to live in the same country.

Paul wrote to the church in Rome, 'If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone' (Romans 12:18). I believe that 'everyone' includes Roman Catholics and Evangelicals or Pentecostals. Both sides are obliged to work towards peace among us, if we want to live as Christians. And let me add: this is especially true in election times, which in some countries are misused to praise one's own camp and denigrate the other to win votes.

Should we have dialogue towards a just and peaceful society with atheists and Muslims who reside in our countries, but not with Evangelicals or with Catholics? As co-president of Religions for Peace, the world's largest body for interreligious dialogue, I sometimes see people from the Catholic or the Evangelical camp for whom it seems easier to cooperate for the common good with non-Christians than with the perceived rival within the Christian world.

Catholics and Evangelicals in the broadest sense represent a combined total of more than two billion people today. Both groups live in almost every country in the world and encounter each other every day in politics, academia, business and social matters. What sense does it make for us to talk to everyone else but not to the other large group of Christians? 'The world' expects us to talk. Our own people expect us to talk. No problems are addressed and certainly no problems are solved by refusing to talk to one another. We know this is true in relations between nations or in marriages; why should we act otherwise in our relations with other Christian groups?

The WEA has a Peace and Reconciliation Network working in many countries in the midst of great tensions. Should this undertaking exclude Catholics? The Vatican sees peacemaking as one of the major goals of its diplomatic service. Should this exclude Evangelicals and Pentecostals? Obviously not.

Moreover, Catholics should be champions of religious freedom for Evangelicals and Evangelicals should safeguard the religious freedom of Catholics! 'Religious freedom including the right to change, and publicly profess, practice and propagate one's religion, flows from the very dignity of the human person which is grounded in the creation of all human beings in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26). Followers of all religions and beliefs have equal rights and responsibilities. Where any religion is instrumentalized for political ends, or where religious persecution occurs, Christians are to engage in a prophetic witness denouncing such actions.'²

Catholics and Evangelicals have a huge area in which they agree on social or

² 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct', 2011, <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert453ts6>, section 3.

moral issues and should cooperate for the common good. This can involve issues where we agree with people of good will in all camps, such as on human rights or creation care, yet where we specifically want to push together for more action. On the other hand, there may also be issues where the number of allies outside our camps has become relatively small—for example, speaking up for unborn children in their mothers' wombs or for marriage as the God-ordained place where a mother and father raise children.

This is our second calling: Live in peace with your fellow citizens who belong to the other Christian camp. If you are the majority or in power, grant them real religious freedom and treat them as you would want to be treated if you were the minority. Again, this is something we should do no matter how we evaluate the theology of the other camp!

3. Viewing each other as objects of mission

Ten years after its completion, major Christian leaders of all camps refer to the signing of the mentioned document 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World' by the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, and the World Evangelical Alliance in 2011 as a crucial event in the history of the church. The document speaks about how Christians should witness to adherents of non-Christian religions.

There are many Evangelicals who place Catholics in that category—namely, as non-Christians. Sometimes they even do not see Evangelical converts as truly believers saved by the work of Jesus on the cross, as long as they remain official members of the Catholic Church. On the other hand, many Catholics view Evangelicals or Pentecostals as sectarians or heretics, as extremists or a danger to society. Pope Francis graciously apologized for such attitudes when visiting the Pentecostal Church in Caserta, Italy on 28 July 2014 and asked Catholic church leaders to refrain from such language, but not all have listened to him. Geoff Tunnicliffe, then the WEA's Secretary General, thanked him the same day on Radio Vatican, apologized for sins on the Evangelical side, and promised that the WEA would change its language too.

There is also the unsolved question that the Catholic Church sees Protestant churches not as churches at all (according to the Vatican II documents), but just as Christian communions, and the statement that only the Catholic Church is the church in its full-orbed expression (in the document *Dominus Iesus*). In many Asian and some other countries, Catholicism and Protestantism are officially seen as two different religions and most Christians in those countries follow this practice.

Well, even if anyone in Catholic–Evangelical relations views the counterpart as not being part of the body of Christ, still everything stated in 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World' applies! Using political power, bribery, manipulation or lies against others including Catholic and Evangelicals is against the will of Jesus! That document used 1 Peter 3:15–17 as its scriptural motto: 'But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience.' The document declares, 'If Christians engage in inappropriate methods in exercising mission by resorting to deception and coercive means, they betray the gospel and may cause suffering to others.'

A Catholic who exhibits immoral behaviour towards Evangelicals is betraying the gospel, and so is an Evangelical who exhibits immoral behaviour towards Catholics! Whoever follows Jesus' command and preaches to others also needs to follow all the other commandments of Jesus themselves.

Here are the opening sentences of the 'Christian Witness' document: 'Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Therefore, proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world are essential for every Christian. However, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.' So even if you do desire to convince the other side to come over to your side, both sides deserve to be dealt with according to the mindset of Jesus. Christians see others always as in the image of God, even if they totally disagree with them. In Christianity, their human rights do not stem from being Christians but from being created as men and women, because God created all people and he created them equal.

This is our third calling: Treat each other with the mindset of Jesus. Even if you think that others are not believers or not real churches, this is no excuse for acting contrary to the gospel principles taught by Jesus and his apostles. Let there be love, respect and peaceful theological discussion, but let us abstain from using political, economic and any other kind of earthly power against each other.

4. Interlocutors

'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World' reminds Christians that in doing mission they must observe the commandment, 'You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour' (Ex 20:16). The document states, 'Christians are to speak sincerely and respectfully; they are to listen in order to learn about and understand others' beliefs and practices, and are encouraged to acknowledge and appreciate what is true and good in them. Any comment or critical approach should be made in a spirit of mutual respect, making sure not to bear false witness concerning other religions.'

To do this, we must take time to listen to and study thoroughly the views of others, so as to ensure that our statements about the other are truthful and fair. Again the 'Christian Witness' document states, 'Christian witness in a pluralistic world includes engaging in dialogue with people of different religions and cultures (cf. Acts 17:22–28).' And should this not be true of our engagement with fellow Christians as well?

I want every Catholic leader worldwide to know Evangelical positions not from hearsay or from the media, but first-hand from Evangelicals themselves. In most cases, such direct conversation dispels false conceptions and fosters better understanding, which in turn can even lead to reducing discrimination against Evangelicals.

I also want to hear first-hand what Catholic leaders and Catholics stand for and have to say. I do not want to depend on hearsay or the media. Sometimes, through such interaction, I learn that the other side is further away from evangelical Christianity than I thought. But more often, I discover what we have in common, that I need to examine their positions more carefully, or that there are things I need to learn from them.

Ongoing dialogue about central theological issues is necessary so that we can

come together whenever possible without theological compromise and have a clear grasp of exactly where and why we do genuinely disagree. And friendship is a better platform than mutual antagonism on which to discuss deep differences in theology.

Five billion people in the world do not understand why people called Christians, named after Jesus Christ, battle each other over the question of whether the others are really Christians. In such behaviour, we become guilty of God's evaluation of us: 'God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you' (Rom 2:24 quoting Is 52:5).

If you feel that someone else has not spoken fairly of you, you still have this obligation: 'Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift' (Mt 5:23–24). Just as God reconciled us to him even when we were still his enemies, so God wants us not to wait until the other side repents, but to be proactive and search for reconciliation, even when our brother does not seem to be looking for it.

To refrain from talking or even to forbid others to talk to the other camp and to view such engagement as proof of theological compromise overlooks the fact that God has created us in his image with the ability to establish and improve relationships through verbal communications. You cannot end any war or any tension if the parties involved are not willing to talk to each other, at least with a mediator.

This is our fourth calling: Talk, listen, study, discuss. We need more ongoing dialogue and personal encounters on all levels—between Catholics and Evangelicals as neighbours, fellow citizens, local leaders, and all the way up to the global level.

5. Humans in need of God's grace

In Scripture, Jesus speaks two judgements that I pray will not be spoken over us. While on earth, he described a Pharisee who came to the Temple and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like the others' (Lk 18:11). This statement was opposed to the 'evangel', from which we get the word Evangelical—the gospel, which was captured in the other man's prayer: 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner' (Lk 18:13).

If a Catholic thanks God that he is not like those Evangelicals, or the other way around, no one can claim that this is Christian behaviour. Such people are subject to Jesus' second judgement. This one comes from the *risen* Lord in his letter to the church at Laodicea: 'You say, "I am rich ... and do not need anything." But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked' (Rev 3:17).

And Paul reminds Christians, 'So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!' (1 Cor 10:12). Rather than boasting that we are in the right camp, we should pray and repent. Then God will hear from heaven: 'If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land' (2 Chron 7:14, NIV).

The gospel is the message that God's grace alone can save and heal us. We are called 'Christians' because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for our sin and was resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit, and this alone and nothing else guarantees our everlasting fellowship with God. How in the world can any side in

our dialogue forget this when dealing with the other side? None of us is saved because he or she formulated the best theology ever, is free of sin and error or has a natural right to be accepted by God. God's saving grace through Jesus Christ, as the centre of Christian faith, must be visible to the world in how we deal with and talk to each other.

This is our fifth calling: Catholics and Evangelicals should pray for a humble spirit, asking God to have mercy on others just as we need it ourselves. Grace and love should shape our relations, so that the world can connect our name 'Christians' to reality.

6. Fellow 'Christians'

The vast majority of Christians around the globe hold more things in common with each other than they disagree on. This is at least how it looks from the outside. This is true for the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church as much as the statements of faith of the vast number of Evangelical, Pentecostal, Charismatic or Independent churches. An Evangelical student could read a 1,000-page book by a Catholic author on the Trinity and who God is, without even realizing that it is a Catholic book. Bible commentaries are shared across all confessions, and the number of academic commentaries pushing for traditional confessional positions has become very small. Intra-Christian discussions of human rights, religious freedom, peace and reconciliation cross all church camps.

This is the reason why non-Christians often refer just to 'Christians'. Yes, Christians of all kinds have so much in common that it is appropriate to put them all in one box when comparing them to other world religions or non-religious worldviews. Like it or not, all Christians often are seen in the same boat by others.

In making these comments, I do not mean to overlook the serious doctrinal differences between the churches. We very clearly formulated them in the 2016 dialogue document between the Theological Commission of the WEA and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, which addressed 'Scripture and Tradition' and 'The Role of the Church in Salvation'.³ I would strongly encourage you to read this document. It reflects careful listening on both sides. As a result, the authors correct many misunderstandings, identify theological convictions that we have in common, express praise for each other's positive contributions, and indicate where our positions have moved towards each other. Yet the document also identifies areas where there is a huge and sometimes growing gulf between the two sides. Although it points out significant differences, the overall tone is full of love and respect.

Let me give an example of a topic where we once were divided and now no longer are, and one where we are more divided than 200 years ago.

A good example of a positive development concerns religious freedom. When the Evangelical Alliance was founded in 1846, religious freedom was part of its DNA, whereas the Vatican at that time saw religious freedom as a product of atheistic and secular philosophies and still very much promoted and relied on the establishment of Catholic states. Today, both parties join in championing religious freedom for all,

³ This document was reproduced in the April 2018 *Evangelical Review of Theology*; see <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert453ts7>.

not just as a valid political principle, but as part of Christian doctrine. We agree that God does not want the State or anyone else to force anyone to believe in the triune God or to intervene in the beliefs and consciences of people. Christian faith is genuine trust in God from the deepest of our hearts; it cannot be forced or fabricated.

I also see a positive move with regard to the doctrine of justification of faith, even though there still is some debate in my own camp on this point. In fact, I believe the greatest threats to New Testament teaching on justification and salvation by grace and faith within the evangelical movement are not coming from the Catholic Church. Rather, they are the result of problems within the Evangelical movement. These problems include biblical illiteracy, some new interpretations of Paul's letters, and teachings that minimize or deny the holiness and justice of God, rendering juridical justification unnecessary. And then there is the growing influence of versions of the so-called health-and-wealth gospel, which could be seen as questioning the idea of God's free gift of salvation and the Holy Spirit.

I am sure that very few Catholic theologians today would contend that the teachings of the Council of Trent can be found directly in the letters of the New Testament. The Pope and many Catholic spokespeople are embracing justification by faith, which is amazing in itself regardless of whether or not Evangelicals judge that they have gone far enough. I quote from the sermon that Pope Francis delivered at Lund, Sweden, in October 2016, when the Pope and the Lutheran World Federation had invited major Christian leaders, including the then Secretary General of the WEA and myself, to celebrate 500 years of Reformation:

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

Besides areas of doctrine where we see great progress towards one another, at the same time other areas stay untouched or the gulf has even widened over time. Catholic teachings on Mary pose a greater obstacle to Protestants today than during Luther's time, and the gulf in this area has grown with each new declaration by a Council or Pope concerning Mary. And a real Catholic-Protestant discussion on Mary has not yet occurred in any of the official dialogues, as far as I know.

This is our sixth calling: Let us progress in our theological dialogue, with the Bible at hand, with a humble and prayerful spirit, asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten us. Let us clearly point to the things we have in common; at the same time, let us not shy away from our differences. Our beliefs are not put at risk when we compare and discuss them with other Christians.

7. Fellow believers

Much of the increased convergence in unity between the Catholic Church and believers from Evangelical, Charismatic and Pentecostal churches is the result of the

overall charismatic movement. It especially emphasizes life and experience more than following theologies or the statements of theological commissions. Many personal bonds have grown in this way that outweigh any church politics or any theological statement. As a result, a growing number of Catholic and non-Catholic Christians pray together, read the Bible together and even worship together—albeit by default without sharing the Lord's Supper.

There is a second factor that contributes to the sense of spiritual unity today. That is the great number of Christian believers facing persecution and martyrdom for Christ. As Pope Francis has pointed out often, those killing Christians because of their faith do not distinguish between the different churches and confessions. They kill people because they are named for their Saviour Jesus Christ, because they pray to Jesus Christ or because they follow the commandments and principles of Jesus Christ (Rev 12:17b; 14:12). Amidst extreme sufferings, Christians from different churches have been brought together and found rest in worshipping God together. Very early in my life, I found it very difficult to question the faith of martyrs, or of anyone who was willing to risk their life for Jesus, only because they belonged to a church whose theology I questioned.

My personal conviction, that Pope Francis is a believer filled with the Holy Spirit, comes first of all from my prayers with him, even though it is backed by my evaluation of what he says and stands for. This personal judgement does not bind others. Evangelicals, Charismatics and Pentecostals around the globe always have taken the liberty to use their actual experience and study of others as a basis for their evaluation of their faith. When Anglicans and Pentecostals within the WEA share the Lord's Supper, it is also more on the basis of mutual spiritual experience than the result of the work of a theological commission. Within the WEA, I see various churches and Christians happily working, praying and worshipping together, and I conclude from those observations that the Holy Spirit in others can be felt or experienced or however you want to describe it, even though those judgements are not absolute and surely do not replace God's final judgement.

Therefore, let us ask the key question that is at stake here: *Can doctrinal differences be superseded by personal experience in joint prayer and felt unity?*

Let's start with one side of the story. I think there is a valid place for those kinds of experiences and private judgements. The Christian faith is a very personal thing. The Holy Spirit does not fill only the body of Christ collectively, nor is he bestowed only on its leaders; rather, he fills every individual believer. Every believer has his or her own history with God. Every believer should not just be able to recite correct phrases to others, but should trust God himself, understand and express his faith—within the range of his gifts and abilities—and be able to 'witness' about his faith, that is, to explain the unchanging revelation from God in the light of his ever-changing life and experience. The Christian faith is embodied in real life and in the history of personal relations, with God and with humans, as to love God and to love one's neighbour as oneself are the highest commandments.

The Apostolic Council of Acts 15:1–33 was about a very serious theological matter. The whole church met—the Apostles, elders, delegates from the churches and apostolic teams. The end result was summarized by the person presiding, James, who claimed that their conclusion must be true because it was in line with Scripture.

But even though the interpreting and declaration of Scripture by the authorities was the council's final step, the theological discussion actually centred on reports of experiences. Peter, Paul and Barnabas won the day, so to speak, because of the many moving stories they told, arguing that God had decided the matter already by sending his Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, as they had witnessed it. Acts tells us that Peter addressed those gathered as follows: 'Brothers and sisters, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us' (Acts 15:7–8). And Acts adds: 'The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them' (15:12). Telling those stories was Christian and biblical theology at its best, not some inferior method of theological argument! The Apostolic Council followed official leadership, reason, experience and finally Scripture. The four did not exclude each other, but strengthened each other!

The New Testament is also clear that we first of all have to judge ourselves: 'Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?' (2 Cor 13:5, NIV). That is true even for the Lord's Supper: 'Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup' (1 Cor 11:28, NIV).

But now to the other side. All this does not supersede the need to tackle very serious doctrinal questions. The Christian faith follows revelation that has been given over to writing, and it is a doctrinal religion based on historic facts. Holy Scripture is as important for the faith and the church as is the Holy Spirit, its author and the only guarantee that the will of God can materialize in our daily life.

I think the tension between experiences of unity and awareness of deep doctrinal differences is the misery felt by many engaged in intra-Christian dialogue. We know that God wants all Christians to join together in prayer, yet we see a long road before us with regard to overcoming theological differences; sometimes it even seems to be a road with no end.

'Live a life worthy of the calling you have received'

What adds to this tension is the fact that working towards unity of the body of Christ is not an option that we can put aside for the time being, but a clear command of Jesus (e.g. Jn 17) and the apostles (e.g. Eph 4). We could avoid this tension if unity were just a nice thing to have, not a necessity. We could just be happy with the camp we are in and stop wasting time on theological disputes. But we have no choice here; as long as our unity is incomplete, we have to continue striving for it.

The history of the Evangelical Alliance from 1846 to today exhibits a strong concern for the unity of all Christians. We are all impoverished if we are not in unity. Yes, this must be a unity in faith, a theologically based unity. But the idea never was that the membership of the WEA defines who is in and who is out of the body of Christ, but that the WEA would be a tool to work towards the unity of the whole body of Christ.

The Global Christian Forum was started 25 years ago by the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, the World Evangelical Alliance and the Pentecostal World

Fellowship as a low-key place to meet with Christian leaders even outside all those bodies. Those involved in this undertaking believed that Jesus' mission of unity does not end with our organizational boundaries and that all those bodies should not exist to enlarge their membership for membership's sake, but should add to the goal of unity with all those who believe that Jesus Christ is God and their Saviour. Today many of the cautious visitors from earlier years are vital participants in the Forum.

We are also aware that the institutional membership of our churches is not identical with the body of Christ—that is, all those who trust in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and are brothers and sisters of Jesus himself. Along with Geoff Tunnicliffe, who was WEA Secretary General at the time and presented an Evangelical view of evangelism, I attended the Bishop's Synod on Evangelization presided over by Pope Benedict XVI, discussing how to evangelize those Catholics who are members of the church through baptism but show no sign of Christian faith or life. Pope Francis has mentioned often that a pure paper membership in the Catholic Church does not save us. For Evangelicals, it is obvious that nominal Christians who belong to our churches but do not believe in Jesus as their Saviour are not members of the body of Christ.

There is no cheap way out here. Yes, the body of Christ cannot live without doctrine or without clear formulations of theological truth. But neither can we surrender our fundamental commitment to the goal of unity in faith. Our requirement to pursue Christian unity is itself a Christian doctrine.

Of course, the means of expressing that unity before the watching world may—and should—be debated, but we cannot ignore Jesus' prayer for the church in John 17:18–23 just because living it out might be very difficult and seem unrealistic. Indeed, the World Evangelical Alliance was founded to embody this very prayer.

Jesus prayed: 'As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ... My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me' (John 17:18–23).

This is the largest frame possible. In its unity, the church mirrors the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Its unity preaches loudly and clearly to the world. Only God can create this unity of the body of Christ through reconciliation in his blood, as Paul teaches clearly in Ephesians 2:11–22 using the example of believers from Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds. As humans we constantly tend to build walls between us, which can be overcome only through God reconciling us with him and among each other.

But the opposite is also true: disunity and a cacophony of Christian messages to the world hinder the spread of the good news.

All great ecumenical movements in history have sought unity for the sake of Christian mission. This was true of the World Evangelical Alliance when it united Protestant churches in 1846, just as it was true of the World Council of Churches in 1948 uniting Protestant, Orthodox and Oriental churches. When Pope Francis

visited the WCC in Geneva for its 70th birthday, he chose to call that organization back to its history of putting mission first, stating that without witness to the gospel, no unity would be possible.⁴

Again, this is not to downplay our theological differences. *For Christians, unity follows from the truth, not from cheap compromises.* Yes, there are wrong ways to create unity among Christians. Finding the least common denominator is one of those wrong ways. In that approach, the gospel tends to become smaller and smaller with each new player who becomes involved. Just following the majority or the most powerful actor is a wrong way as well.

But no necessary warning about wrong ways to achieve Christian unity can nullify our task to strive for the unity of the body of Christ and to proclaim one Lord, one voice and one body, as it is stated in Ephesians 4:1–6: ‘I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ... Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.’

Living in unity means ‘to live a life worthy of our calling’. Three times in Ephesians 4, Paul mentions our calling as Christians as a basis for the importance of seeking unity. Being a Christian entails being humble, gentle and patient towards everyone, especially other Christians.

Does this mean that we should forget about truth? No! If there is only one God (*theos*), then in the end there can only be one truth about God (theology). If there is only one Spirit, and if it is the Spirit’s task to lead us into all truth, the Spirit and his truth will not divide but unite us. And if there is only one faith, we never have to choose between unity and faith; rather, a deeper and clearer faith will always lead to unity, and greater unity will lead to a deeper and common faith.

In Ephesians 1–3, Paul uses in-depth teaching to prepare for Ephesians 4. He reveals to us who God is and who Jesus is; he explains forgiveness, the resurrection, the ascension and other central topics of Christian teaching. One needs to read these chapters over and over again to understand the whole depth of their message. Paul paints a magnificent picture of God’s universal purpose for the church of Jesus Christ. It is so magnificent that it seems quite distant from the reality of our often-ugly local churches. So what practical outcome does the teaching in Ephesians 1–3 have? That’s easy: ‘Thus I admonish you’ (Ephesians 4:1) to live and work for unity! Paul’s admonitions in Ephesians 4 are not the end of biblical revelation and teaching, but the practical result of it. ‘Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ’ (Eph 4:15).

Let us pray that the Spirit of God will protect us from wrong ways of pursuing Christian unity, but even more so, that we will make truly biblical and spiritual paths to Christian unity the centre of our thinking about the one church, the one body of Jesus Christ.

4 Thomas Schirrmacher, ‘Pope Calls upon World Council of Churches to Return to Emphasizing Evangelism’, *Bonner Querschnitte*, 27 August 2019, <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert451ts8>.

How the Evangelical Alliance in Germany Is Addressing Abuse of Religious Power

Martina Kessler and Volker Kessler

In 2015, the Evangelical Alliance in Germany established a mediation centre to deal with power abuse in religious contexts. After a short background discussion of religious power abuse, the paper explains the history, procedures and guidelines of this mediation centre, along with its potential and limitations.

This paper is a field report on the mediation centre of the Evangelical Alliance in Germany (EAD)¹ on the abuse of power in religious contexts. The EAD is the national affiliate of the World Evangelical Alliance.

We have unintentionally become ‘experts’ on power abuse in Christian organizations. Since 1998, we have been leading the Akademie für christliche Führungskräfte, which belongs to a network of 13 theological colleges in Europe.² In 1999, we started lecturing and publishing about power abuse in the church and Christian organizations. The first edition of our book *Die Machtfalle* (The Power Trap) appeared in 2001. This book has since been translated into Dutch, Russian, Portuguese and Hungarian. In 2017, we totally revised the book because of new insights we had collected through our involvement with this topic over almost two decades.³

As a consequence of these publications, we are often invited to conferences worldwide to speak about power abuse. After these lectures, individuals frequently

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1 There has been a debate about the EAD’s name. In Germany, we have many evangelical migrant churches, which regard themselves as international churches located in Germany, not as German churches. These churches can better identify themselves with the name ‘Evangelical Alliance in Germany’ instead of the ‘German Evangelical Alliance’. Therefore we prefer this term although it is a bit bulky. We abbreviate as EAD (‘Evangelische Allianz in Deutschland’ in German).

2 For more details on this network, see ‘About GBFE’, <https://worldlea.org/yourls/ert453mvk1>.

3 Martina and Volker Kessler, *Die Machtfalle: Machtmenschen—wie man ihnen begegnet*, 5th ed. (Giessen: Brunnen, 2017).

share their personal stories with us. Others contact us after reading the book. Most of the people who have contacted us saw themselves as victims, but a few admitted to us that they had abused or still were abusing their power.

Occasionally, a church or Christian organization asks us to mediate in a conflict related to power abuse. Thus it was quite natural that Martina was asked to join the mediation centre on religious power abuse.

After providing a short introduction to the field of power abuse, we will describe the various activities of the EAD mediation centre, followed by a brief evaluation and ideas for improvement.

Power abuse in religious contexts

We have treated religious power abuse extensively in our aforementioned book. Therefore, in this section we will limit ourselves to a prominent example from the New Testament and a short literature review.

Power-seekers like Diotrephes

Often power abuse is carried out by power-seekers. By this term, we mean people who are addicted to power.⁴ Power addicts can be found in every area of life. There are legions of examples in politics and business. In this paper, we focus on power addicts in the church or church-related organizations.

A prototype can be found in the New Testament itself. The letter known as 3 John refers to Diotrephes, ‘who loves to be first’ (verse 9) and does not acknowledge the authority of the writer of the letter. He ‘is talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers, and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church’ (10).

We have only these two verses about Diotrephes. Obviously, he opposed the writer of this letter, who introduced himself as ‘the elder’ (1). And he opposed the brothers who followed this elder. Verse 10 must be understood in the context of house churches in early Christianity. Christians often met in the house of a wealthy member. Then there were ‘brothers’ who travelled from place to place and preached in the local churches. They relied on the hospitality of the church members, which Diotrephes denied them in these instances.

The name ‘Diotrephes’ means ‘nurtured by Zeus’. This name was sometimes chosen as an epithet in order to demonstrate one’s power.⁵ We do not know whether ‘Diotrephes’ was the real name of the person addressed in 3 John 9 or if the elder was using it in an ironic sense. We also do not know whether Diotrephes really had the leading position in his church. We know that he loved to be first and that he had at least some power.

Applying the interpretive framework of power bases,⁶ it can be concluded that Diotrephes had at least three power bases. First, he had power to punish; i.e. he could expel people from church. Second, he had power by information control, because he did not welcome the teaching brothers and thus prevented them from preaching in

4 Kessler and Kessler, *Die Machtfalle*, 17.

5 Hans-Josef Klauck, *Der zweite und dritte Johannesbrief* (Zürich: Benziger, 1992), 100.

6 Volker Kessler, ‘Leadership and Power’, *Koers* 7, no. 3 (2010): 539–43, <https://doi.org/10.4102/koers.v75i3.95>.

the church. Third, Diotrephes exploited his relational power base by spreading malicious stories about the elder, with the purpose of weakening the church's trust in the elder.

In verse 9, Diotrephes is characterized as *philoproteuon*, which literally means 'to love to be first' (NIV) or 'to strive to be first'. The term *philoproteuon* appears only here in the New Testament, but it can be found in several descriptions of tyrants.⁷ Clearly, the intention of 3 John is to unmask Diotrephes as a 'church tyrant'.

This behaviour is quite characteristic of power-addicted people. They want to be in first place. They want to have full power and control. For tactical reasons, they might forge an alliance with others, but in the end they would prefer to rule alone.

German publications on religious power abuse

In the following, we focus on publications in Germany and the German-speaking churches, especially German free churches or similar movements within the mainline churches.⁸ The German discussion started intensively around 1996 or 1997, when three foreign books about spiritual abuse were published in German by three different evangelical publishers. Two books were written by American authors: one by David Johnson and Jeff Van Vonderen and one by Ken Blue.⁹ Both books have been quite prominent in the worldwide evangelical scene. The third book, written by the Norwegian Edin Løvås about power-seekers in the church, seems to be less known in the English-speaking world.¹⁰

Since then, much more has been published on the topic.¹¹ In most of these publications, the authors share their experiences, either from their own lives or stories they heard while counselling or providing therapy for the victims.

Little empirical research has been conducted on religious power abuse. Lisa Oakley and Kathryn Kinmond carried out an empirical investigation of spiritual abuse in the UK.¹² Marian Winter, one of Volker's master's students, studied power abuse at mission agencies in Canada, Germany and South Africa.¹³

Defining religious power abuse

We speak of *power abuse* when people are coerced by a person with power to do something they would not have done on their own and by which the powerful person

7 Martin Leutzsch, *Die Bewährung der Wahrheit: Der dritte Johannesbrief als Dokument urchristlichen Alltags* (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1994), 91, 171.

8 At the moment, the Roman Catholic Church in Germany is having its own intensive discussion about sexual abuse in the church and Catholic organizations.

9 David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen, *The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1991); Ken Blue, *Healing Spiritual Abuse* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993).

10 Edin Løvås, *Markmennesket i menigheten* (Oslo: Ansgar Forlag, 1987). Lisa Oakley and Kathryn Kinmond, *Breaking the Silence on Spiritual Abuse* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 125–35, have a long list of references, but they list neither Løvås nor any other non-English publication on spiritual abuse.

11 Another famous German book is Inge Tempelmann, *Geistlicher Missbrauch: Auswege aus frommer Gewalt*, 3rd ed. (Witten: SCM R. Brockhaus, 2012).

12 Oakley and Kinmond, *Breaking the Silence on Spiritual Abuse*, 3.

13 Marian Winter, 'An Analysis of the Abuse of Power by Leaders in Christian Organisations: Cultural Comparisons from Canada, Germany and South Africa' (MTh dissertation, University of South Africa, 2017), <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert453mvk2>.

gains some benefit, either for himself or herself or for a related organization. As a result, personal boundaries are violated, often causing severe emotional and physical harm.¹⁴ If the abuse of power happens in a religious context, questions of faith may be raised as well.

In *religious power abuse*, often called *spiritual abuse*, spiritual themes are used against Christians in the name of God. This phenomenon usually occurs in religious settings and infringes upon the spiritual lives of those affected. According to the British authors Oakley and Kinmond, ‘Spiritual abuse is coercion and control of one individual by another in a spiritual context. The target experiences spiritual abuse as a deeply emotional personal attack.’¹⁵

In many cases, these types of abuse are hard to recognize because they are usually carried out in very subtle ways. Sometimes, power-seekers disguise themselves as ‘servants’. This method is indeed very tricky and sad, because such people take a good biblical metaphor for leadership, servant leadership, and then abuse it for their benefit.¹⁶ Thus it sounds very biblical on the surface, but their practice is not biblical at all!

Intercultural aspects

How to deal with power-seekers can differ from culture to culture. Our understanding of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ use of power depends largely on the culture we grew up in.

The first extensive study of intercultural management was published in 1980 by the Dutch scholar Geert Hofstede. Interviewing IBM employees in 53 countries or cultures, he identified four dimensions which can be used to measure cultural differences. One of these dimensions is power distance, defined as ‘the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country accept and expect that power is distributed unequally’.¹⁷ The power distance index is thus described from the perspective of the powerless. A large power distance index means that the less powerful accept and—to a certain degree—expect that power will be distributed unequally, granting more rights and publicity to the powerful. On the other hand, the behaviour by the powerful that would be acceptable in such a culture would meet resistance in a different culture with little power distance and would quickly be denounced as power abuse. For example, Switzerland’s power distance index is very low whereas Russia’s is very high. Thus, Russian immigrants to Switzerland cannot allow themselves the same liberties in their new country as they would in Russia. In contrast, the Swiss leadership style of pronounced grass-roots democracy could be regarded as weak in Russia.

14 This definition is discussed at length in Martina Kessler (ed.), *Religösen Missbrauch verhindern* (Giessen: Brunnen, 2021), 14.

15 Oakley and Kinmond, *Breaking the Silence on Spiritual Abuse*, 21. They use the abbreviation SA for spiritual abuse, but we do not follow that notation because SA commonly refers to South Africa.

16 Volker Kessler, ‘The Dark Side of Servant Leadership’, in *Servant Leadership, Social Entrepreneurship and the Will to Serve: Spiritual Foundations and Business Application*, ed. L. Bouchaert and S. van den Heuvel (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 103–21.

17 Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 46.

The Australian Shahid Khan studied how subordinates perceive power abuse by superiors. He especially investigated the influence of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on the perception of power abuse.¹⁸ Khan concluded that power abuse happens in every culture but is perceived differently. The larger the power distance, the less likely it is for subordinates to interpret their superiors' behaviour as abusive.¹⁹

These findings demonstrate the presence of a strong cultural element in the discussion of power abuse. Thus, we should be cautious about calling an action power abuse if we are not familiar with the culture in which it happened. The Bible does not give us a perfect or ideal number for the power distance index. But it does show us some red lines that should not be crossed, such as when powerful people bend the law for their own benefit (Lev 19:15; Isa 10:2).

Activities of the German mediation centre on religious power abuse

In 2015, the EAD established a mediation centre, a sort of 'first-aid' centre, to address religious power abuse. It serves as a place of counselling and first aid for people who have experienced religious abuse or the abuse of power in churches and Christian NGOs. As we will see, the establishment of this centre was not completely voluntary.

2014: Background of the centre's formation

In 2014, a large government-backed German TV station, NDR, broadcasted a documentary with the title 'Mission under False Flags: Radical Christians in Germany'. Some evangelicals protested against this documentary, whereupon the TV station NDR reacted with further coverage.²⁰ Board members of the EAD objected to the documentary because it created the impression that all evangelical churches were like what was described. The EAD president, Michael Diener, freely acknowledged that power abuse, unfortunately, could happen in some extreme evangelical churches. Journalists then asked Diener what the EAD proposed to do about such power abuse. Diener promised to set up a mediation centre to deal with power abuse in churches linked to the EAD.

2015: Establishment of the mediation centre

In 2015, the EAD board met and established a mediation centre to which they appointed six contact persons. As a well-known expert on religious power abuse in Germany, Martina was one of them. The appointed team members have some experience working with victims of religious power abuse. Their work is based on eight guidelines:²¹

18 Shahid Khan, 'Impact of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions on Subordinates' Perception of Abusive Supervision', *International Journal of Business and Management* 9, no. 12 (2014): 241.

19 Khan, 'Impact of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions', 246.

20 'NDR wehrt sich gegen evangelikalen Shitstorm', *Christ & Welt*, 23 August 2014, <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert453mvk3>.

21 These guidelines can be found at <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert453mvk4>. In the beginning, ten guidelines were published. But some of the guidelines created wrong expectations; thus a revision was necessary, which was finally done in 2021.

1. The contact persons are bound to absolute confidentiality.
2. They are primarily listeners and interested parties with the aim of clarifying possibilities and supporting those who are seeking advice in finding a way out of their crisis.
3. The contact persons are ready to hold or attend discussions at the request of any of the parties involved.
4. The contact persons will enter into a conversation with third parties (e.g. the accused persons) only in consultation with the person who raised the concerns.
5. The aim of the discussions should be that the person with concerns and the accused person enter into a conversation. If this is not or not yet possible from the point of view of the concerned person, that individual can instruct the contact person to present the complaint on his or her behalf.
6. If the case concerns a church community, it must be clarified with the concerned person whether a possibly associated umbrella organization may participate in the discussions.
7. The contact persons do not work with a therapeutic mandate in this context, but may direct people to pastoral and therapeutic help.
8. The contact persons will refer to other support offers such as mediation, supervision or coaching, particularly in cases of community conflicts that may have been chronic for a long time.

These contact persons work on a voluntary basis. No honorarium is paid for consultations with possible victims. The contact persons have agreed to provide up to three coaching sessions with the victims. The EAD provides no financial support to the centre members except for travel expenses.

Persons who believe they have been affected by power abuse can submit an online request, which will be referred to one of the contact persons.²²

2017: Expert symposium

On 3–4 May 2017, the EAD mediation centre hosted an expert symposium, ‘Recognizing, Understanding and Preventing Religious Abuse in Christian Churches, Communities and Organizations’. About 25 experts from Germany were invited. The symposium featured two plenary lectures: Lisa Oakley summarized empirical research in the UK²³ and Volker Kessler delivered an introductory paper on power, with theological-ethical, sociological and intercultural aspects.²⁴ Eight short papers with different thematic focal points were presented. The papers were collected and distributed to participants. Overall, it was interesting to see the similarities in many of the conclusions reached.

Most of the participants were in agreement that they were not opposed to religious leadership per se. The key question ‘What is the difference between good

22 See ‘Mitarbeitende der Plattform “Religiöser Machtmissbrauch” der Evangelischen Allianz in Deutschland’, <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert453mvk5>.

23 Oakley and Kinmond, *Breaking the Silence on Spiritual Abuse*.

24 See Volker Kessler, ‘Leadership and Power’.

leadership and abusive leadership?’ arose. This discussion led to creation of a brochure in the following year.

2018: Brochure

One outcome of the symposium was the acknowledgement of a need to provide more hands-on information to Christian churches and organizations on healthy church structures and how to recognize and prevent religious abuse of power. Thus, the mediation centre developed a four-page brochure, available online.²⁵ Its title comes from the advice given to church elders in 1 Peter 5:3: ‘Be examples to the flock.’ The brochure’s preface starts with the statement, ‘Unfortunately, religious power abuse also happens in Christian communities.’

The brochure points out the line between good use of religious power and its abuse. It lists seven criteria for a mature community:

1. People are instructed to believe in a mature way.
2. Even leaders can be criticized.
3. Leaders see themselves as learners.
4. Open communication is practised.
5. Servant leadership is transparent.
6. Leaders have professional and spiritual support.
7. Leadership is respected.

Each of these seven criteria is explained by a short paragraph. However, the brochure also states:

There are no final test criteria for mature or immature governance structures in communities and other organizational structures. Some things may look good and appear mature, and yet there can be easily recognizable destructive structures in the subsurface that unfold their effect in secret. These hints may help to uncover and provide assistance.

Criterion seven is needed to protect those who dare to take the burden of leadership. Note that power abuse can also occur from the bottom up. Church members might accuse the leaders of being power-seekers, just because they do not agree with the leaders’ decisions. In such a situation, leaders can easily be ‘burned’. Therefore, the community must ensure that criticism is expressed in ways to which others can listen and have the chance to react.

2019: SPRING festival

Once the mediation centre had been established, how would Christians find out about it? We decided to publicize it at the SPRING festival (see <https://www.meinspring.de>), an annual event hosted by the EAD. About 3,500 Christians come together in a village and spend almost a full week together at this festival.

In 2019, several parts of the SPRING festival programme dealt with religious power abuse. First, Martina offered two seminars on the topic. Both attracted a large

²⁵ See ‘Herzlich willkommen bei der Plattform “Religiöser Machtmissbrauch”’, <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert453mvk6>.

audience and were overbooked, Second, conversation groups were offered twice during the festival. The message announced when promoting them was ‘Let’s speak openly. Conversation groups on power abuse chaired by pastoral counsellors.’ The doors had to be closed ahead of time due to high demand. Third, for several hours Martina represented the mediation centre at the EAD exhibition stand. Several couples approached her there seeking advice.

The idea of these activities was to inform festival visitors about power abuse and to offer support where needed. We hope that over time, through such efforts, the existence of the mediation centre will become more widely known to the public.

2021: Book, Preventing Religious Power Abuse

People who have experienced power abuse in the church sometimes tend to reject all religious leadership. This is certainly not our goal or the position of the EAD. Already, the 2018 brochure addressed this tension between good leadership and abusive leadership. We subsequently decided to publish a book in order to explore this tension in greater depth, using the seven guidelines from the 2018 brochure as a starting point. In the end, ten authors from different denominations within the EAD contributed one chapter each on issues related to good and abusive leadership:²⁶

1. Developing protective factors of faith and preventing abuse of power through maturity and resilience (Tobias Faix)
2. Obedience: a virtue?! (Volker Kessler)
3. Servant leadership is transparent (Angelika Marsch)
4. ‘It is communicated openly’ (Andreas Klotz)
5. Leaders can be criticized (Martina Kessler)
6. Leaders remain ready to learn (Florian Köpke)
7. Leaders need professional and spiritual support (Rolf Gersdorf)
8. Leadership between responsible action and dangerous interference: a tightrope walk (Hans-Günther Schmidts)
9. Respect your leaders (Ansgar Hörsting)
10. ‘Those up there’ love us—we love them (Heinrich Christian Rust)

It was good to have authors from different denominations because it shows a spirit of unity within the evangelical movement.

Evaluation of the contacts and the initiated approaches

Typical inquiries

The contact persons of the mediation centre meet once a year to evaluate their work. So far, about 30 people have contacted the mediation centre annually. This number seems quite low. According to the reactions at the SPRING festival and similar events, the number of affected persons is obviously higher.

We can only speculate about the reasons for the low number. Probably, many afflicted persons do not yet know about the mediation centre. Others might hesitate

26 Martina Kessler (ed.), *Religiösen Machtmissbrauch verhindern*.

to contact an unknown person by phone but will gladly speak to someone they meet personally. Others might have given up and do not see any solution to their problem.

Out of these 30 contacts per year:

- about one-third really have experienced religious power abuse;
- about one-third might have experienced religious power abuse, but in any case, they are trying to use the EAD contact person to win a confrontation. Their goal is to enforce their will, not to clear up power abuse;
- about one-third turn out to need counselling or therapeutic help.

Obviously, it can be quite challenging for the EAD contact person to determine where the real problem lies. Is this really a case of power abuse? Or is the person who contacted the mediator a neurotic critic? Sometimes the contact person can help to clarify the situation by speaking with the opponent, but this can happen only if the person who has called allows it (see the eight guidelines discussed above). Often, the reaction of the opposing party is an indicator of power abuse.

Sometimes it is just good for the affected persons to have a listening ear. Often they have already left the church or organization, and reconciliation is not achievable. But they need somebody to hear their story and to support their recovery.

In one case, the contact person asked the afflicted person, 'What is your aim?' The person replied, 'I would like somebody from the association to which my former church belonged to listen to me.' The EAD contact person arranged a meeting but did not take part in it. Later, the afflicted person declared that the meeting was helpful in reaching closure.

Limitations and obstacles

Of course, the work of the contact person has its limitations. Most significantly, they only have the power of the Word. They have no formal authority and cannot discipline anybody. Therefore, it is quite a challenge to find a suitable name for this mediation centre. It should not promise something which cannot be delivered. Since there is no hierarchy within the EAD, the mediators have no formal authority over the involved churches.

Second, a conflict of interest can arise if the case involves a member of the EAD board, which currently has 73 members.²⁷ Most of the members are leaders of church associations or mega-churches. In 2018, one of these church leaders was publicly accused of power abuse, and the people who raised this issue gave some evidence. But since the mediation centre receives its mandate from the main board of the DEA, it was almost impossible for the centre to mediate in this case. In such instances, an independent platform would be desirable.

One illustrative example could be the office of the Public Protector as it has existed in South Africa since 1995.²⁸ Although the Public Protector is appointed by the president, no person or organ of the state may interfere with its office's functioning. In fact, when Thuli Madonsela held that office, she carried out a

27 The number can vary from time to time; see 'Hauptvorstand', <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert453mvk7>.

28 See Wikipedia, 'Public Protector', <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert453mvk8>.

successful corruption investigation of South African President Jacob Zuma, even though he had appointed her.

Third, recent Christian movements have taught that leaders may be criticized only by peer leaders. Thus, for example, leaders who view themselves as ‘apostles’ would accept critique only from a peer apostle. In these instances, the leader would not accept an ordinary contact person from the mediation centre as an adequate communication partner. He or she would interact only with the president of the EAD, and maybe not even with that person.

Conclusion

We are convinced that there is a need for a mediation centre like this, and the Swiss Evangelical Alliance has adopted a similar system.²⁹ We encourage the Evangelical Alliances in other countries to start a mediation centre like this, knowing that it might be difficult to do so in a culture with high power distance.

Some improvements are clearly needed. First, the mediation centre must become more widely known. Second, a procedure should be set up for serious cases in which many people are suffering under the same power addict. In those cases, the power base of the mediation centre might not be sufficient to address the problem. Third, the EAD should set up a procedure for cases in which an EAD board member is involved.

29 See Swiss Evangelical Alliance, ‘Clearing-Stelle’, <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert453mvk9>. The wording of the Swiss site is almost identical to that of the former German website.

Virgilio Enriquez and Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Dialogue: Discerning a Theology of Solidarity in Philippine *Kapwa*-Culture

Fritz Gerald M. Melodi

Christians should be collectivist (in the sense of caring about their community) but not to the extent of abandoning Christian truth to peer pressure or popular opinion. How do we find a balance? This article approaches the question by comparing a Philippine psychologist to the 'Christ-for-us' theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Walang sinuman ang nabubuhay / Para sa sarili lamang
Walang sinuman ang namamatay / Para sa sarili lamang
(No one lives only for oneself; no one dies only for oneself)

— Eduardo P. Hontiveros, S.J.

Cultures are social crucibles that shape their members in pervasive ways. Cultural traits such as collectivism and individualism have been shown to determine decisions at the personal level.¹ Cultures imperceptibly socialize their members into their values and norms, often punishing members who fail to conform to what Charles Taylor calls the 'social imaginary'.² Christians, however, have been called to be a chosen people and a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9) and are therefore aliens and foreigners (1 Pet. 2:11) embedded within the matrix of culture. How, then, can Christians be faithful to God while still functioning with their particular cultural contexts?

Reflecting from a distinct Philippine context, I seek to answer this question and discern a path for Christian faithfulness by presenting a critical and constructive dialogue between Christian theology and my own culture. To do so, I explore Dietrich Bonhoeffer's (1906–1945) relational understanding of God in Jesus Christ as inherently God-for-us, in conversation with the psychologist Virgilio Enriquez's (1942–1994) model of Filipino personhood rooted in the *kapwa* or 'shared-self' for the sake of faithfulness. I argue that a synthesis of Enriquez's model and Bonhoeffer's Christ-centred sociality allows for the identification of a spiritual theology of

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1 Rebecca LeFebvre and Volker Franke, 'Culture Matters: Individualism vs Collectivism in Conflict Decision Making', *Societies* (2013): 140–41.

2 Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23–24.

solidarity, one that is inherently other-centred but grounded in the being of Christ. Solidarity, grounded in the social being of Christ, thus forms Christians to be ethically discerning and faithfully active in the world in behalf of others.

The other-centredness of *kapwa* psychology, as described by Enriquez, is a cultural influence in which the Philippine church is embedded, a psycho-sociological nexus that shapes Christians in that context. One must therefore draw from Christian Scripture and tradition to explore this 'deep structure' for the purpose of ethical and faithful living. I will draw from Bonhoeffer's understanding of God as *pro me*, *pro nobis* ('for me', 'for us') as a way to critically dialogue with Filipino personhood as proposed by Enriquez.

Understanding the *kapwa* in Filipino psychology

Filipino psychology in context

Sikolohiyang Pilipino ('Filipino Psychology', hereafter SP) is a critical-emancipatory conception and practice of psychology that began in the 1960s and 1970s.³ Approaches to conceiving social science apart from its perceived colonialist framework began to emerge in the Philippines in the 1960s. Within this milieu arose the pioneering work of Filipino psychologist Virgilio Enriquez.

Enriquez saw SP as the study of *diwa* or the 'psyche' and attempted to develop a way of doing psychology, oriented in the Filipino socio-historical experience, that would be more relevant, nuanced and liberating.⁴ Enriquez did not claim to be developing a model of Filipino psychology apart from a universal psychology. Rather, he contended that one must begin with the particular and contextual and then compare the data collected with other contextual experiences from other places, identifying similarities and dissimilarities so as to achieve some sense of a universal psychology.⁵ Enriquez's interdisciplinary research into the Filipino psyche described a model that is highly collectivist, relational and intuitive. At the core of this model is the other-centred motivations of the Filipino psyche captured in the Filipino word *kapwa* (others).

Kapwa as shared identity in Filipino personhood

At the core of Filipino personhood is *kapwa*, which captures the idea of shared identity that Enriquez considered the super-ordinate value in the Filipino psyche.⁶ *Kapwa* in SP is a concept derived from the Tagalog language and is often translated as 'others' or 'fellow-being'. For Enriquez, however, the Filipino notion of *kapwa* reveals a cultural consciousness and identity. *Kapwa*, as Enriquez conceptualizes it,

3 Narcissa Paredes-Canilao and Maria Ana Babaran-Diaz, 'Sikolohiyang Pilipino: 50 Years of Critical-Emancipatory Social Science in the Philippines', *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* 10 (2011): 765.

4 Virgilio Enriquez, *From Colonial to Liberation Psychology: The Philippine Experience* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1997), 25, 59–60.

5 Rogelia Pe-Pua and Elizabeth Protacio-Marcelino, 'Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino Psychology): A Legacy of Virgilio G. Enriquez', *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 3, no. 1 (2000): 65, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-839X.00054>.

6 Katrin de Guia, 'Indigenous Values for Sustainable Nation Building', *Prajna Vihara* 14, no. 1–2 (January-December 2013): 180.

is the 'unity' of the self and others. Whereas the English use of 'others' delineates the self from others, *kapwa* emphasizes one's shared identity with others. A *kapwa* psychology arises when Filipinos start to become aware that other people (*ibang tao*) are not different from the ego (*ako*). This means that the self is shared and includes others outside the self.⁷ The Filipino psychology of *kapwa* is capable of embracing both the insider and the outsider. Although the concepts of inclusion and exclusion are common to many cultures, Enriquez argues that for the Filipino, even those who are excluded are part of the *kapwa*.

Filipinos, for Enriquez, are motivated relationally by a *kapwa* psychology. One of Enriquez's more prominent students, Katrin de Guia, has stated that a person who is guided by a strong sense of *kapwa* can be recognized by his or her people-centred orientation in service, leadership and community participation.⁸ Generally, however, Filipinos are motivated by their perceived relationship and connection to others; thus, Enriquez perceives *kapwa* as the core value for them. The worst member in the Filipino society is the one who does not recognize one's *kapwa* and is therefore a *masamang tao* ('evil person').⁹

Social interaction guided by *kapwa* is what Enriquez calls *pakikipagkapwa*. This is a relational conviction that goes beyond mere propriety or pleasantry. It means dealing with other people as equals, regarding them with the 'dignity and being of others'. In the Filipino linguistic understanding, *pakikipagkapwa* clearly has an inherent ethical dimension as this word rules out the exploitation of others.¹⁰ Whereas *pakikipagkapwa* is the deeper and profound mode of social interaction, *pakikisama* ('companionship') is a more superficial form of social interaction for Enriquez, though still emanating from the shared self. The relational mode of *pakikisama* can be viewed as kind companionship, but it can also mean merely yielding to the will of the group, majority or another individual. Enriquez categorized *pakikisama* as the accommodative value Filipinos experience when they attempt to improve (or maintain) a particular relationship. Enriquez rejected and lamented what he considered a Western misconception that the presence of *pakikisama* demonstrates Filipinos' predominant concern for maintaining 'smooth interpersonal relationship' or mere conflict avoidance. *Pakikisama* for Enriquez is often a way to accommodate the outsider in order to move towards a deeper, insider level of relationship.¹¹

However, I would lean more towards the understanding developed by anthropologist F. Landa Jocano as closer to the reality on the ground. Jocano maintains that *pakikisama* is understood as a form of interaction that can range from 'simple politeness to deliberate yielding of one's own idea, position, or principle in favor of those of another for future concessions or immediate reward'.¹² For Jocano,

7 Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 45.

8 Katrin de Guia, *Kapwa, the Self in the Other: Worldviews and Lifestyles of Filipino Culture-Bearers* (Pasig City, Philippines: Anvil Publishing, 2005), 28.

9 Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 62.

10 Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 47.

11 Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 71.

12 F. Landa Jocano, *Slum as a Way of Life: A Study of Coping Behavior in an Urban Environment* (Quezon City, Philippines: PUNLAD Research House, 2002), 197.

pakikisama occurs when one attempts to be viewed favourably by another party, to establish and maintain a positive relationship, to exploit a certain situation, to conceal some form of inadequacy, or to 'acquire security within the group'.¹³ Thus it is rightly perceived as 'going along with' in order to enhance or maintain a favourable impression or, as Enriquez aptly puts it, being accommodative.

There is a sense that *pakikipagkapwa* as a social value emanating from the core value of *kapwa* can contain ethical vagueness. For Father Dionisio Miranda, the notion of 'social value' is misleading as it seems to fuse cultural norms with ethical-moral values.¹⁴ Once a conflict occurs between moral values and cultural norms, one can then perceive the difference between them. For instance, a situation may cause one to question a cultural norm, if it contradicts a treasured ethical-moral values. Conversely, a person may question an ethical-moral value and choose to merely conform to the cultural norm. The same norm may also be deemed non-binding in another culture. Thus, it seems that the other-centredness of *pakikipagkapwa* may lack a concrete ethical ground for its application. This is seen in encounters of *utang na loob* ('debt of gratitude'), where the tendency towards social and ethical vagueness may result in unjust and exploitative relationships in the 'agrarian field, employer-employee relationships, parent-child inter-action, [or] political life'.¹⁵ Cultural norms may be present without proper ethical grounding, resulting in mere conformity and potentially in immoral behaviour.

Assessing the *kapwa* model

Enriquez's *kapwa* model, however, is still useful to identify the relational core of a Filipino personality.¹⁶ I share the concerns that some have raised as to the ideological motives behind Enriquez's model,¹⁷ but despite these, he has identified relational patterns and dynamics that describe Filipinos' cultural norms and heightened sense of sociality.

For Enriquez, unlike many Western models of personality that begin with an independent self, Filipino psychology begins with the shared identity of the self, *the self in the other*. Hence, Filipinos tend to highly value relationships and desire to conform to the expectation of others. Of course, I do not mean to characterize the Filipino as merely compliant, since Filipinos also have been shown to exhibit a strong sense of *paninindigan* (conviction) along with the relationality and solidarity of *pakikipagkapwa*. Some studies have found that teaching Filipino children to obey was perceived as more important than helping them become independent and self-reliant.¹⁸ Filipino culture tends to be more collectivist than individualist, fostering

13 Jocano, *Slum as a Way of Life*, 198.

14 Dionisio M. Miranda, *Loob: The Filipino Within: A Preliminary Investigation into a Pre-Theological Moral Anthropology* (Manila: Divine Word Publications, 1989), 51.

15 Miranda, *Loob*, 53.

16 Maria Elizabeth Macapagal, Mira Alexis Ofreneo, Cristina Montiel and Jocelyn Nolasco, *Social Psychology in the Philippine Context* (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2013), 13.

17 A. Timothy Church and Marcia Katigbak, *Filipino Personality: Indigenous and Cross Cultural Studies* (Manila City: De La Salle University Press, 2000), 11.

18 Macapagal et al., *Social Psychology*, 58.

more of a relational and interdependent self than an independent and separated self.

For Father Jaime Bulatao, the Filipino self is embedded in the group. He uses the metaphor of fried eggs that lose their boundaries when fried together; the yellow yolk is visible but the whites lose their separation. Similarly, Filipinos are self-embedded in the primary group and seek their security and approval from the group. This orientation is evident in *hiya*, which Enriquez rightly characterizes as propriety but could also mean social embarrassment, shame, guilt and timidity.¹⁹ It is also evident in the Filipino perception that the family is the central relational structure. Children are raised to perform their filial duty and maintain strong family bonds. Filipinos identify themselves significantly through the *magkamag-anak* (relatives). This tendency extends even to non-kin relationships such as the *ninong* (godfather) and *ninang* (godmother). The Filipino language as a lexical-conceptual source therefore exhibits relationality and sociality as deeply significant. Hence the Filipino's strong sense of the importance of conforming to group norms.²⁰

Theological sociality in Bonhoeffer

We now turn to Dietrich Bonhoeffer's understanding of God's sociality and community, which will serve as a critical interlocutor with Filipino culture as represented by Enriquez.

A study of God is necessarily a study of humankind, and a study of humankind will necessarily entail a study of community. Thus, our understanding of God will shape our understanding of human nature and human relationships. In his dissertation, *Sanctorum Communio*, Bonhoeffer writes, 'A concept of God is always conceived in relation to a concept of person and a concept of a community of persons. Whenever one thinks of a concept of God, it is done in relation to person and community of persons.'²¹ Thus, for Bonhoeffer, persons stand in relation to God and find their ethical individuality in this I-You relationship.²²

Christ is God for us

God's relationality is concretely grounded in the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer begins his doctrine of Christ within the formula of the Chalcedonian creed of Jesus as fully God and fully human. This implies that Jesus as God is present in eternity, but as a concrete human person, Jesus is also present in time and place. Bonhoeffer presents this Christological puzzle as a tension about Christ's being. Jesus cannot be known as only divine, but necessarily also as man and vice versa. A Jesus who is pure timeless spirit does not exist, and a Jesus who is limited by time and place is not also the Christ. A Christian must then affirm the God-man as a proper starting point of Christology.²³

19 Church and Katigbak, *Filipino Personality*, 164.

20 Macapagal et al., *Social Psychology*, 35–36.

21 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 'Sanctorum Communio', in *The Bonhoeffer Reader*, ed. Clifford J. Green and Michael P. DeJonge (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 20–21.

22 Bonhoeffer, 'Sanctorum Communio', 34.

23 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, trans. Edwin H. Robertson (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1960), 45.

However, the issue is not whether truly Christ is present with us, because he is present as the God-man. Rather, how can Christ be present with us his body the Church?²⁴ For Bonhoeffer, Christ is present with us because of his intrinsic relationality, i.e. the very structure of his being.²⁵

The structural outline of Christ's person and presence is thus, for Bonhoeffer, the *pro me* ('for me') structure ('the structure I can relate to' or a structure in relation to me, us or humanity). For Bonhoeffer, Christology is relational. Christ does not exist for himself but always in relation to people. Christ's being, his 'essence', is relational, a being towards others. Christ does not exist in some abstract and spiritual plane but concretely in redemptive relation to us. Thus, one may not separate his *act* and his *being*, since they are singular.

Bonhoeffer would reiterate these Christological features in his prison letters, calling Jesus the 'man-for-others'.²⁶ In these short notes, Bonhoeffer repeats or even intensifies a concrete and *worldly* sense of human-divine encounter. God's transcendence is not to be understood in his pure aseity and impenetrable isolation but in his being-there-for-others, his divine love and mercy towards humanity, especially in the cross.²⁷ Bonhoeffer grounds Christ's being-for-others in *stellvertretung*—vicarious action in behalf of others. Christ, the innocent party, bears on himself the guilt and punishment of humanity, and is accursed for bearing our sins. But despite dying on a criminal's cross, Christ's 'vicarious love triumphs'.²⁸ Relationship with God is thus not a 'religious' relationship with some abstract and theoretical being, but is now found in our experience of new life as existing-for-others through our 'participation in Jesus Christ'. Experiencing Christ is not a detached and solitary mysticism reaching towards the infinite but is expressed in our ethical responsibility towards our neighbour in reaching towards the proximate.

That God's being in Jesus Christ is being-for-us does not mean that God is bound to the world or that God needs the world. Christ's being-for-us is not a matter of necessity but of a freely chosen delight to be in fellowship with God's creation. God's sociality does not mean that God needs something to be complete or that God loses God's identity in creation. But God in freedom has bound himself to the world in reconciliation and inclusion into trinitarian fellowship.²⁹

Human sociality and Christology

Human relationality is grounded in the relationality of the divine. Thus, for Bonhoeffer, human persons are *not* solitary creatures, as beings-in-themselves. Rather, their individuality, the 'I', cannot arise without the presence and recognition

24 Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*, 47.

25 Clifford Green, 'Human Sociality and Christian Community', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 117.

26 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, enlarged edition, ed. Eberhard Bethge (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 382.

27 Andreas Pangritz, 'Who Is Jesus Christ, for Us Today?' in *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), 150.

28 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Communion of Saints: A Dogmatic Inquiry into the Sociology of the Church* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 114.

29 Charles Marsh, *Reclaiming Dietrich Bonhoeffer: The Promise of His Theology* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1994), 14.

of the 'You'. For Bonhoeffer, an individual is never only an individual but always in-relation-with others. I am an individual because there is another who exists apart from myself.³⁰ Persons can be persons because another person exists.

In this way, human persons are such inherently relational creatures that they need one another so as to express their individuality. This sociality of the individual is not rooted in the capacity of the 'You' to create the 'I'; rather, it exists because God created us to be relational. In this sense, relationality is the image of God. As God is relational, humans are also relational.³¹ Bonhoeffer therefore understands the *imago Dei* not in terms of purely individualistic components, such as our capacity to reason or our possession of a soul, but as the capacity to be in relationship.³² Bonhoeffer understands human sociality as a continuity of God's own sociality. Just as God freely chooses to relate to humanity in relationship and love through Christ, so is humanity intrinsically free to be for others.³³

But our freedom to be for others has been marred by sinful egotism. Sin was the 'third power' in the divine-human community. Bonhoeffer calls sin the 'narcissism of the human will'.³⁴ The self-seeking trajectory of sin has resulted in broken community, manifesting itself in various structural and individual consequences. However, through Jesus Christ's vicarious action on the cross, community is rebuilt—both the community of God and community amongst human persons. Jesus abolishes the barrier between God and humanity, and thus he also abolishes the sinful narcissism among persons.³⁵ Bonhoeffer writes, 'That is why the principle of vicarious action can become fundamental for the church of God in and through Christ.'³⁶

The church as a community, along with the Christian as its member, inherently bears within it Christ's vicarious action as the new 'life-principle' of its new being. Conversion in Christ by faith is thus a conversion, our recovery of true humanity towards being-for-the-other as the image and imitation of Christ.³⁷

Kapwa and theological sociality in critical dialogue: The emergence of a theology of solidarity

Having examined the dynamics of the *kapwa* and theological sociality in Bonhoeffer, we can now bring these two concepts together in critical dialogue. I argue that a theology of solidarity for the sake of faithfulness can be discerned from a synthesis of the two.

30 Bonhoeffer, 'Sanctorum Communio', 24–25.

31 Bonhoeffer, 'Sanctorum Communio', 27–28.

32 Green, 'Human Sociality', 116.

33 Clifford J. Green, *Bonhoeffer: A Theology of Sociality*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 192.

34 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, trans. Bernard Noble (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 162.

35 Bonhoeffer, 'Sanctorum Communio', 30.

36 Bonhoeffer, *The Communion of Saints*, 107.

37 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, rev. and unabridged ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1979), 341.

The *kapwa* collectivist culture is formative for Filipinos in that it provides them with motivation for social behaviour, a source of value and meaning and a coherent scheme for understanding the world. The orientation towards the other, as shared identity, can be a source of inspiring moral action and solidarity, as especially seen in emergency situations. However, other-centredness can also be a source of unethical conformity and immoral accommodation, as we see regularly on high school campuses, in corporate and government offices and in national politics. Anthropologist Melba Maggay, asking the question why the Philippines was so easily colonized, observed that accommodative *kapwa* 'deep-structure', in its aberrant form, has been the culprit in the Filipino's colonial 'slavish malleability, making us subject to manipulation and control by powerful forces'.³⁸

The *kapwa* culture socializes its members in filial duty, sacrificial acts and even political solidarity. Thus, the collective and shared identity of the group becomes a primary motivating factor. The same socialization, however, fosters group control through *hiya* (shame), *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude) or *pakikisama* (compliance). Enriquez was quick to denounce any negative meaning associated with these 'values' as part of his agenda of rehabilitation. One significant criticism directed towards his project, however, was that if colonial thinking asked 'What is wrong with the Filipino?' the SP movement replied, 'Nothing can be wrong with us!'³⁹ Enriquez's politico-cultural presuppositions should thus be evaluated in a more critical light.

Miranda's critique of Enriquez's model concerning the notion of social value is significant. There is a moral ambiguity that drives the notion of social value since it does not distinguish between cultural norms and moral values. As a result, it lacks a clear moral ground for application.

Bonhoeffer's theological account does *not* deny Filipino collectivism and relationality. In fact, the Filipino understanding of personhood as oriented primarily in one's shared identity with others finds correspondence in Bonhoeffer's theology. But for Bonhoeffer, one's knowledge of humanity as relational does not come merely from culture; it is inferred from God's work in Christ. In other words, God in Christ is relational and thereby, as God's creatures, human beings are also relational. The correspondence between Enriquez's *kapwa* model and Bonhoeffer's theological anthropology is evident. In terms of anthropological understanding, Enriquez and Bonhoeffer fundamentally agree that the self is not solitary.

Bonhoeffer's other-centred anthropology, however, is grounded in the theological. God in Christ has freely bound himself to the world. Thus, God is free not *from* humans but *for* them. Christ's very being is thus for-us and nothing apart from it. As God in Christ embodies being-for-others, so the new humanity, the church as people in Christ, partakes in his nature as also being-for-others. Christian existence can never be being-for-itself as this is un-Christian. Instead, Christian social relations are defined by Christ's nature as being-for-others.

A Christian theology of solidarity within the Philippine context can thus be discerned: to be in solidarity for others is the concrete form of participating in Christ. Or as Filipinos would say, *Ang pakikiisa kay Kristo ay pakikiisa sa kapwa* ('To be

38 Melba Maggay, 'Why Is It Easy to Colonize Us?' *The Inquirer*, 28 January 2020, <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert453fgmm1>.

39 Church and Katigbak, *Filipino Personality*, 11.

united with Christ is to be united with others'). The *kapwa* is the site where Christ takes shape in the world. In identifying with Christ by faith, one thus participates in Christ's divine life of being-there-for-others. The Christian's radical identification with others is participating in Christ's radical identification and action towards human beings.⁴⁰ The Christian self exists only as it relates and acts in behalf of others through Christ.

Pakikiisa or *pagkakaisa* (unity or 'being one with others') in Enriquez's model is understood as the 'highest level of interpersonal interaction possible'.⁴¹ What is deemed good or detrimental for one is also applied for the other. There is a significant identification with the other, such that the other is thus seen as an 'extension of one's own self'.⁴² This conception again bears an analogical relationship to that of Christ's own identification with and for humanity as part of his sociality.

Sin for Bonhoeffer is essentially the act and mode of being as self-seeking and narcissism. It is being *makasarili* ('selfish'). Therefore, the person who is redeemed by Christ through faith has turned away from one's narcissism and become directed towards Christ. Bonhoeffer writes, 'This is the gift of faith, that man no longer looks on himself but on salvation alone, which has come to him from without.'⁴³ The old human nature in Adam has 'died' and now the new nature is for Christ: 'man exists for and through Christ.'⁴⁴ A Christian's transformation of life in Christ is not mere abstraction or an individualistic and private spiritualization. Rather, it is a concrete transformation in the sense of becoming a person for others.

Practical portraits of cruciform solidarity

A solidarity grounded in Christ is necessarily a cruciform solidarity: a willingness to suffer in the practice of solidarity in behalf of others. The vicarious action of Christians for others as a participation in Christ's life of being-for-others opens up for the Christian the possibility of suffering *with* and *for* others who are also suffering, vulnerable or oppressed. This cruciform solidarity of self-renunciation is the abandonment of the self for others, even to the point of pain. Bonhoeffer writes:

It is a question of abandoning oneself 'for' one's neighbour, for his good, but with the readiness to do and bear everything in his stead, indeed if need be to sacrifice oneself for him, to act vicariously for him. ... We are required to give up any claim to goods or honour, even to the whole of life itself.⁴⁵

The willingness to risk suffering for others, in this sense, is not masochism or suicide—both of which, for Bonhoeffer, are still products of self-will. A Christian does not go around in search of suffering. Rather, suffering can be understood as the natural result of cruciform discipleship to Christ, or of self-denial.⁴⁶ The possibility of suffering is apparent in Christian solidarity because discipleship may lead to

40 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, trans. Neville Horton Smith (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 195.

41 Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 55.

42 Enriquez, *From Colonial*, 55.

43 Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 170.

44 Bonhoeffer, *Act and Being*, 175.

45 Bonhoeffer, *The Communion of Saints*, 130.

46 Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, 97.

cultural norm-breaking. Thus, the Christian, though not intentionally planning to suffer, obeys God's will through one's participation in Christ, which includes readiness to take the risk of suffering.⁴⁷ This capacity and willingness to suffer along with others implies the renunciation of worldly power. Identification with the oppressed and with those who are suffering means a willingness to be on the side of the vulnerable, powerless and disenfranchised.

Two instances of contemporary application seem appropriate: populism and the COVID-19 pandemic. First, cruciform solidarity means renouncing the seductive security of nationalist, populist regimes. The manipulative demagoguery of populist voices can be distinctly identified in its vigorous appeal to 'speak and act in the name of "the people"'.⁴⁸ Nationalist and populist voices raise the spectre of the outsider (such as immigrants or ethnic minorities) as pernicious elements in society. A cruciform solidarity resists the will to power of populist rhetoric as antithetical to Christian discipleship and instead remains open to the possibility of encountering Christ in the outsider and the willingness to suffer and act on their behalf.

Second, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in massive global upheavals and has added complexity to our social interaction. Along the way, we have seen contentious debates over wearing masks and the cancellation of church gatherings.⁴⁹ Some have objected to the alleged curtailing of personal rights and religious freedom as part of efforts to contain the virus. The nature of the contagion, however, should lead Christians to affirm steps that can help to protect the health of others. A cruciform solidarity calls the Christian towards expressions of self-denial such as physical distancing, mask wearing and temporarily avoiding large gatherings, so as to avoid putting at risk those who are more vulnerable.

Conclusion

As Christians who are inescapably embedded in culture, we must remain sensitive to how cultural forces shape us. Culture is as inevitable for us as water is for fish. But we must interpret culture from a Christian perspective, much as the apostle Paul addressed the Colossian situation in light of his high Christology. While remaining embedded in culture, particularly a collectivist culture, Christians should be formed not only by their context but also by learning the Christological grammar of solidarity as a practice of Christian faithfulness. Thus, although Filipino *kapwa*-collectivism may retain a strong formative function, it ought to be seen in the light of Jesus who defines what it means to be in solidarity. To engage in Christian *pakikipagkapwa* (being-for-others) is a Christ-mediated act of solidarity and ethical responsibility. The moral ambiguity of some elements of *kapwa* collectivism is thus potentially diminished as they are placed within the rubric of Christology. The

47 Reggie Williams, 'Christ-Centered Concreteness: The Christian Activism of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Martin Luther King Jr.', *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 53, no. 3 (September 2014): 191, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dial.12115>.

48 Rogers Brubaker, 'Why Populism?' in *Populism and the Crisis of Democracy: Concept and Theory*, vol. 1, ed. Gregor Fitzj, Jürgen Mackert, and Bryan S. Turner (London: Routledge, 2019), 30.

49 Tapas Kumar Koley and Monika Dhole, *The COVID-19 Pandemic: The Deadly Coronavirus Outbreak* (New York: Routledge, 2021), chap. 7.

Christian Filipino will live in Christian solidarity with and for others as a form of *paninindigan* ('conviction') and not out of mere compliance from social control. One's understanding of *kapwa* becomes actualized not only as one's shared identity with the collective, but as a Christian existence of participating in Christ.

The comparison between Bonhoeffer and Enriquez carried out in this essay provides a grammar for living life faithfully for others. *Kapwa* for Enriquez means finding the self, or a common humanity in the other. But for Christians, this is not purely filial, political or communal commonality but theological. Finding one's self in the other is grounded in the incarnational Christ-for-us whom the Christian imitates. Christians find themselves in the other person (whether Christian or not) and act in solidarity because of their commitment to discipleship. Taking up one's cross as discipleship is thus the denial of the individualistic self and a step towards solidarity in behalf of others, caused by Christ's loving and radical vicarious action for humanity.

Book Reviews

Chris Keith, Helen K. Bond, Christine Jacobi and Jens Schröter (eds.),
The Reception of Jesus in the First Three Centuries

Martin W. Mittelstadt and Caleb Howard Courtney (eds.),
*Canadian Pentecostal Reader: The First Generation of
Pentecostal Voices in Canada, 1907–1925*

Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Religion in the University*

Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*

Eamon Duffy, *A People's Tragedy: Studies in Reformation*

Lynn Cohick, *The Letter to the Ephesians:
The New International Commentary on the New Testament*

The Reception of Jesus in the First Three Centuries

**Chris Keith, Helen K. Bond, Christine Jacobi
and Jens Schröter, eds.**

Volume 2: *From Thomas to Tertullian:*

Christian Literary Receptions of Jesus in the Second and Third Centuries CE

London: Bloomsbury, 2019

*Reviewed by H. H. Drake Williams III, Associate Professor of New Testament,
Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium*

The investigation of memory in early Christianity has developed greatly in the past several years, as a result of discussions based on the writings of Maurice Halbwachs, Jan Assman, Barry Schwartz, Harold Riesenfeld, Birger Gerhardsson, Bart Ehrman, Samuel Byrskog, Kenneth Bailey, James Dunn, Michael Bird, Dale Alison and Craig Keener. In *The Reception of Jesus in the First Three Centuries*, an international cast of more than 70 contributors provides a methodologically sophisticated resource in this growing field. The essays in these three volumes demonstrate the reception history of Jesus and the Jesus tradition in the first three centuries of Christianity. It is a ground-breaking work that provides a wealth of information.

The editors' introductory essay answers such foundational questions as what is meant by 'Jesus', tradition and reception. The editors encourage the reader to think beyond discussions of the New Testament canon and consider how the memory of Jesus was preserved in a variety of texts and traditions as well as in artwork.

The opening article also explains the *Wirkungsgeschichte* (reception history) approach by which the articles in these volumes proceed. Each essay focuses on how

the past was remembered. They are also concerned with reception rather than with redaction (i.e. the editing of received material).

The next essay, by Schröter and Jacobi, addresses the reception of Jesus in the second and third centuries. The authors state that the review of literature from these centuries is not complete and exhaustive but demonstrates the variety of receptions of Jesus in various different genres of literature. The writings reveal the new challenges concerning the meaning of Jesus and his message as well as ones regarding the life of early Christian communities, their self-perception, ethics and confrontation within the Roman Empire.

The literature considered in this volume begins with what the editors deem to be later New Testament writings such as Colossians, Ephesians and the Pastoral Epistles. It then turns to a group of early Christian writings which illustrate memory of Jesus: the *Epistle of Barnabas*, Ignatius' writings, Polycarp's *Letter to the Philippians*, the *Apology* of Quadratus and the *Epistle to Diognetus*. Various types of gospel literature deserve consideration such as *Protoevangelium Iacobi*, *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, *Gospel of Peter*, and the *Diatesseron*. Memory of Jesus as found within the Jewish-Christian gospels as well as other noncanonical Gospel material, including the *Egerton Gospel*, *Epistula Apostolorum*, *Fayum Gospel*, *Gospel of Judas*, *Gospel of Mary*, *Gospel of Philip*, *Gospel of the Savior* (P. Oxy. 840), *Gospel of Thomas*, *Gospel of Truth*, Marcion's Gospel, and scribal additions to the 'canonical' gospels, is evaluated.

Another distinct second-century genre considered in this volume is apocalypses: the *Apocalypse of Peter*, *Second Esdras*, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Other writings evaluated are the Acts of John, Acts of Peter, Acts of Thecla, Third Corinthians, Martyrdom of Paul, Christianized Texts, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Odes of Solomon, Origen, Papiian Fragments, Second Clement, Tertullian, *Traditio Apostolica* and Valentinian Gnosticism.

Following the introductory essays, the volume examines each piece or grouping of literature, considering the place of Jesus within the works. All essays contain an introduction, a portrayal of Jesus, a reception of Jesus, a conclusion and a bibliography.

Readers will be surprised at the extensive evaluation of literature in which Jesus does not seem to be present. For example, Mark Grundeken's chapter about the *Shepherd of Hermas* helpfully identifies the presence of the memory of Jesus in a document that does not explicitly refer to Jesus or Christ. The articles by Jörg Frey concerning the *Gospel of the Nazareans*, *Gospel of the Ebionites*, and *Gospel of the Hebrews* present substantial investigations about the memory of Jesus in documents that we possess only in fragments.

Several essays contain noteworthy contributions. For example, Paul Foster's essay on Ignatius of Antioch's letters rightly points out how these letters provide a key basis point for the understanding of Jesus in the early second century. Essays on the second-century gospels helpfully portray the source of tradition about Jesus, whether it be from other canonical gospels or from Gnosticism. Tommy Wasserman's article, 'Scribal Alterations to the Canonical Gospels', provides material that evangelicals seeking understanding of these texts of Scripture will appreciate. Some essays contain lengthy biographies, such as Ralph Noormann's

article on Irenaeus and David Moessner's article on the Papiian fragments, whereas others contain only four or five sources, such as Todd Brewer's article on the *Gospel of Philip*.

The survey of this literature from the second and third centuries represents a great contribution to scholarship. Although the ideas about Jesus contained in many of these writings may have been examined previously, the treatment was uneven. *From Thomas to Tertullian* provides a more balanced approach to the second- and third-century reception of Jesus without the early church's judgement about orthodoxy.

Evangelicals will struggle with aspects of this second volume. As noted, it places five New Testament epistles in the second century, assuming a pseudepigraphal authorship. It also treats many Gnostic documents on the same level as those with messages that align with the New Testament canon. Although many evangelicals will be anxious to explore the memory of Jesus as found in Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, they may struggle with a volume that considers these church fathers alongside documents such as Third Corinthians or Valentinian Gnosticism.

***Canadian Pentecostal Reader: The First Generation of
Pentecostal Voices in Canada, 1907–1925***
Martin W. Mittelstadt and Caleb Howard Courtney (eds.)

Cleveland, TN, USA: CPT Press, 2021

Pb., 507 pp.

Reviewed by Brian C. Stiller, Global Ambassador, World Evangelical Alliance

This book is a treasure trove of early Canadian Pentecostalism, drawn from the words of the people who themselves made history. I was raised in the home of a superintendent of Saskatchewan Pentecostal churches, sleeping on church benches during prayer meetings or on a makeshift bed so a pastor had a place to sleep while visiting the 'bishop's' home. Deeply immersed in its language, music and rhetoric, this collection describes well the world of classical Pentecostals in Canada, which was my world too.

What makes the *Reader* unique is that it is the first collection on the life and times of those who launched this movement in Canada, organized and framed to give the reader a historical sense of the people, their ideas and consequent movements. Also, the book is specifically about the Canadian experience. Azusa Street, we were often reminded, was our 'upper room', making the history of US Pentecostalism seem to Canadians as if it was our only history. Although we had our own founders, we tended to know more about the US Pentecostal history than our own, apart from the occasional Canadian memoir. However, since the Canadian Pentecostal founders published their own newsletters from the start, in reading their words we are submerged in the language, concerns and events of these early-twentieth-century spiritual fore-parents.

Essential to understanding our ethos and founding experience is that Pentecostals were an orally based community. The editors note, "Their liturgies—

singing, prayers, preaching, and testimonies—were learned and collected orally. They prized people, experiences, and stories more than books, theories or classrooms. Pentecostals were quick, however, to convert their stories into newsletters. These publications engaged readers by imitating oral literature liturgies; editors included articles of testimony, preaching and at times even song.’ Because of that tradition, the founders resorted to newsletters as their prime means of spreading and consolidating new messages.

The book begins in Toronto, where James and Ellen Hebden founded their mission. Devoting two chapters to this important place and community, it describes the essentials around which the Pentecostal movement in Canada was formed. The next two chapters move to Winnipeg, where the Argue family was key in researching the message and importing Pentecostal embers from Chicago. A. H. Argue and his family fanned out with the message from Winnipeg, the gateway to western Canada.

The *Reader* then picks up the story in Ottawa, where the McAlister family was central to the building up of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) across the nation. Here arose the problematic notion of the ‘new issue’, later referred to as ‘oneness’ or ‘Jesus only’, a doctrine that emerged from the USA’s Assemblies of God. The doctrine proved to be schismatic, eventually resulting in an alternate Pentecostal denomination, the Apostolic Church of Pentecost, with its churches mostly located in western Canada.

The Saskatchewan story begins with an American, Ole John Lovik, who worked as a farmhand in the province, married, came into contact with the Pentecostal message and then attended a school in Rochester, New York. Upon returning to the Saskatchewan city of Swift Current and hearing of the oneness doctrine, they began baptizing only in Jesus’ name, a central feature of this message. Lovik came to hold meetings in a large church in Saskatoon, which became the basis for early Pentecostal activity in central Saskatchewan. Also, pastors and evangelists travelled from Winnipeg to hold meetings in the province, always reporting healings and telling of prayer for the infilling of the Spirit; an important part of the evening programme was the prayer meetings following the public services. The denominational break between the Apostolic Church of Pentecost and the PAOC had its legal and organizational foundation in Saskatchewan.

The editors then take us to the early initiators in British Columbia, beginning in Vancouver. It was not uncommon in the Pentecostal community for two women to join in doing evangelistic work, with one or both of them often playing musical instruments. (My mother travelled across Saskatchewan holding meetings, playing a guitar while her colleague led worship.) British Columbia had the ‘formidable dynamic duo’ of Margaret Peden and Ella Andrews, who planted the Good News Mission in New Westminster. Two chapters give voice to their *Good News Bulletin* and the *Pyramid Temple Bulletin* of ‘Evangelist’ Henry Taylor, respectively.

The *Reader* provides texture and actual writings of the early founders, thus deepening our understanding of the early influences of Pentecostalism in Canada. Its perspective is distinctly Canadian, communicated by editors who unapologetically identify themselves as members of the PAOC. They express their Pentecostal loyalty and interest in promoting the story with candor, so the reader is not misled.

The newsletters presented in this book take us into the language, theology and experience of the early Pentecostal community. By its nature, a movement moves on, and today's Pentecostal churches are quite different from the early ones, but there are distinct memories and a consistency with the general biblical and theological framing constructed in those early days. The discussion of this oral tradition helps to put in context the feelings and emotions of their meetings and writings and how they have been passed down.

As one reads these newsletters, one senses that the early Pentecostal leaders were truly characters. Colourful and dynamic, they declared their faith and promoted their work without shame. They had no hesitation in suggesting how wonderful and entertaining their meetings were. One report of a presentation at a high school: 'Evangelist Argue gave a musical program consisting of a trombone solo and a song with his banjo. He followed this with a short sermon and acrobatic performance.'

The editors chose not to include *The Testimony*, the PAOC's newsletter, as it can now be accessed online. But the book captures what key people thought, believed and experienced as they laid the groundwork for the Pentecostal movement in Canada. I thank the editors and publishers for making this important material available.

Religion in the University **Nicholas Wolterstorff**

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019

Pb., 172 pp., index

Reviewed by Jim Harries, missionary in East Africa and adjunct faculty, William Carey International University, Pasadena, USA

If religion isn't disappearing (as many scholars once anticipated would happen), then surely, because it shapes scholars, any 'ethic of the scholar' should permit religion in the university. So argues Wolterstorff in this short book.

Max Weber, Wolterstorff's 'straw man', considered that religion had no place in the academy. For Weber, the practice of religion required 'intellectual sacrifice'. Weber was wrong, and Wolterstorff explains why by taking an essentially philosophical approach, simplified for laymen to understand, in defence of the open integration of religion into contemporary university scholarship.

Recent discoveries have undermined what up to 50 years ago was a general, common-sense prohibition amongst academics against openly drawing on religion. We have since learned that theories refute rather than build and that paradigms shift. The orientation amongst some academics, to the effect that the practice of academia itself serves God even if one does not refer to God, has been found to be inadequate! All people do not possess a common, fixed set of secular thoughts. Instead, they judge things subjectively by their importance, according to values derived by drawing insights from beyond a text, including ones from cultural traditions and religion. Nowadays, universities legitimize many voices, such as those of females and ethnic minorities (a tendency that would have been unheard of 50 years ago). So why

not legitimize ways of knowing that start with belief and build on trust rather than proof—i.e. religious ways of knowing?

Wolterstorff asks whether religions (ways of life), because they are internally argued, can therefore be considered not rational. He deconstructs the requirement for religion to be founded in argument or in ‘natural theology’, pointing to recent research on the epistemology of testimony. Religions are no more products of malfunctioning reason than are other fields of human endeavour. Belief systems built on revelation, on insights acquired in ecstasy, or on amazement at the finely tuned nature of the cosmos must be taken as legitimate epistemologies, he suggests.

Academia is norm-laden. It does not use reason in neutral ways, but so as to serve particular agendas. The strength of academia lies in its openness to argumentation, not in being secular. Such openness to argument should be extended to the presentation of religious truth—truth suffused with significance. Religions should not be singularly protected from criticism! They are not mere add-ons to secular foundations that are supposedly universal to humanity; rather, all foundations of human living have religious origins. Prophetic words should be permitted to challenge secular and other existing foundations of academia. Wolterstorff himself, in bringing us this challenge, is such a prophet.

Wolterstorff gives us a tour of scholarly affirmations in favour of religion in the university. With merely 172 pages and much white space per page, this layman’s guide does not pretend to be comprehensive. The narrow path it treads, endeavouring to illustrate relevant brands of argumentative terrain, replete with twists, turns, ups and downs that the reader must manoeuvre, resembles the mental equivalent of a mountain bike course. However, the brevity of the text makes it a manageable read.

This book challenges readers to look more profoundly at the role of religion in academic thinking. It would provide an excellent basis for a graduate-level course examining the reasons why, philosophically speaking, religion should be allowed to penetrate every corner of university life. It could prove a valuable catalyst stimulating thoughtful discussion across disciplines.

***The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and
Worship, revised and expanded edition***

Robert Letham

Phillipsburg, NJ, USA: P&R Publishing, 2019

Pb., 576 pp.

*Reviewed by Andrew Messmer, Academic Dean, Seville Theological Seminary and
Associated Professor, Facultad Internacional de Teología IBSTE; Affiliated
Researcher, Evangelische Theologische Fakultät*

After 15 years, Robert Letham has updated his well-known work on the Trinity. Its structure and content remain basically the same as the first edition, but there are some notable changes. The new version is 80 pages longer, includes a new excursus after chapter 12 and an extended discussion in chapter 17, and omits the two prior

appendices. Additionally, throughout the book Letham incorporates and interacts with recent debates and publications.

The book is divided into four sections: biblical foundations, historical development, modern discussion and critical issues. The first section discusses the Trinity in the Old and New Testaments. Letham's treatment is comprehensive but not profound. A welcome addition is his discussion of *prosopological* exegesis in the Fathers, which is experiencing something of a revival in modern hermeneutics. His treatment of the New Testament is arguably better than that of the Old, with a strong summary of the New Testament's triadic and ternary patterns.

The second section comprises nine chapters, with six dedicated to the patristic sources and only three to the medieval and Reformed ones. Although most of the important authors are discussed, not all receive due attention (e.g. Hilary of Poitiers, Peter Lombard). Letham helpfully provides extended summaries of the major works on Trinitarian theology, although one could wish for more penetrating insights. There is a confusing phrase in chapter 4 (also present in the first edition), where Letham states that 'Logos speculation and the monarchy theme' tend toward 'subordination and modalism, respectively' (this should be reversed). Letham ends this section with perhaps the book's best chapter, on Calvin.

The third section treats eight 20th-century theologians from both East and West. Letham ably summarizes their major ideas and contributions, with an especially helpful critique of the panentheistic tendencies found in some of these authors. His chapter on modern Eastern (especially Russian) theologians is helpful for Westerners and will hopefully stimulate further interest.

Finally, Letham turns to what he calls 'critical issues' (which appears to mean practical issues). He discusses how the Trinity relates to the incarnation, worship and prayer, creation and missions, and personhood. His last chapter, on personhood, brings the work to a suitable close, since it treats the issue of union with God, otherwise known as glorification in the West and *theosis* in the East.

Overall, Letham's primary theological influences seem to be Gregory of Nazianzus, Athanasius, John Calvin and T. F. Torrance, making his approach essentially patristic as received and interpreted through the Reformed tradition. Although a Western theologian, Letham is conversant with Eastern theology and open to critiques of Western Trinitarian reflection, such as its custom of beginning with the oneness of God and its inclusion of the *filioque* clause. Given the book's ambitious plan, it is a good resource as an introduction—but by no means a shallow one—to some of the most important aspects related to the doctrine of the Trinity.

One important critique of the work is Letham's thesis that the New Testament witnesses to a development in Trinitarian reflection, moving from an undeveloped trinitarianism that is predominantly binary (especially in Paul) to a more developed trinitarianism that more clearly expresses the relationships between Father, Son and Spirit (especially in John). After all, if Letham believes that Jesus really delivered the upper room discourse recorded in John 13–17 (as I assume he does), then this form of Trinitarian thought was available to the Apostles from the very beginning. Thus, while Letham correctly notes that John contains more explicit Trinitarian language than is found in Paul's letters, this is not the result of development over time but must be explained on other grounds.

This book is an ideal textbook for Bible colleges and seminaries, whatever their denominational affiliation. Each chapter is divided into logical and manageable portions, and they read as if they were Letham's teaching notes, making the content easy to digest.

A People's Tragedy: Studies in Reformation
Eamon Duffy

London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2020
 272 pp., illustrations

*Reviewed by Francis Jr. S. Samdao, Teaching Fellow,
 Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary, Baguio City, Philippines*

Eamon Duffy, a Catholic historian and emeritus professor of the history of Christianity at the University of Cambridge, applies his expertise by elaborating on important people, events and texts in the late medieval era and the Reformation period in England. The book's first part contains six studies concentrating on the Reformation itself; the second has five chapters explicating how the Reformation has been written about and understood, particularly by those outside Protestantism. As such, this book is significant for anyone who studies the basics of church history.

Duffy explores the Middle Ages and the Cathedral pilgrimage in England, informing readers of the importance of shrines, temples, images and relics. Also, he counters the common understanding of practices such as offerings and indulgences during this era. This explanation provides a new angle for those who have a critical perspective regarding the practice of indulgences. Students of the monastic movement will benefit from chapter 2, which focuses on the demise of a monastic tradition on 18 November 1539.

Duffy's explanation of the power struggle between Roman Catholicism and Anglican Protestantism in 1569, specifically the failed rebellion of the Catholic Northern nobles against Queen Elizabeth I, is very informative. Interestingly, Duffy acknowledges the gift of the Reformation to Christianity in chapter 7, in a way that anti-Catholic Protestants may find enlightening.

Duffy delves into the English historian James Anthony Froude, whose works were not proofread carefully, and argues that the way he perceived sixteenth-century evidence was too anachronistic. Then he discusses A. G. Dickens, the leading historian of the English Reformation; and Hope Patten, an Anglo-Catholic vicar who was devoted to the Virgin Mary and known for restoring the Anglican Shrine of Our Lady Walsingham. The book ends with Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*, the England Reformation myth, and Duffy's argument that some known events about the Reformation are fiction (e.g. Martin Luther posting 95 theses on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg in 1517).

It is significant that Duffy presents his main argument and delineates the trajectory of the book at the outset. This strategy helps readers navigate the dense information provided. Without a doubt, this volume is characterized by extensive detail and meticulous research. I appreciate his tackling various topics and historical figures not discussed in many introductory books on church history. This volume

would be a good companion for a church history course, particularly one covering the Protestant Reformation, since it presents a different perspective.

I enjoyed Duffy's assessment of both the defects and merits of the King James Version and its historical background. Though he recognizes the importance of the KJV in the English world, he critiques Christian fundamentalists in America who still perceive this translation as the 'authorized version'. Also, Duffy marvellously explores Richard Baxter and his influence on Puritanism.

It would have been beneficial if Duffy had provided the dates of birth and death of the people he discusses. This omission seems to assume that readers will be familiar with these European figures. For readers from the Global South (like me), the information provided to identify figures such as Thomas Stapleton, William Allen and Gregory Martin, as well as Douai English College, the Rheims New Testament and various teachings that counter the Reformation can be difficult to situate. Second, I would have appreciated further explanation of how the various chapters connect to his chosen title, *A People's Tragedy*. Overall, even though he presents his narrative from a Catholic perspective, Protestants can benefit from this scholarly volume.

***The Letter to the Ephesians: The New International
Commentary on the New Testament***
Lynn Cohick

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020
Hb., 521 pp.

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Lynn Cohick, provost and dean of academic affairs at Northern Seminary, provides this very helpful and comprehensive replacement for an earlier volume in the New International Commentary on the New Testament series. Her research follows her earlier, shorter commentary on Ephesians for the New Covenant Commentary series.

This new commentary is distinguished by several features. First, an extensive and lengthy introduction devotes considerable space to the question of authorship and the letter's recipients (both disputed issues for Ephesians), in addition to purpose, date, setting, structure and theology. Second, the commentary contains a number of excursions on well-chosen subjects, including the meaning of 'in Christ', body and head language, the vexing question of faith in Christ or the faithfulness of Christ, and important socio-cultural contexts that inform our reading of the letter, such as the status of children and slavery in the ancient world.

Furthermore, although the main text used is the New International Version, Cohick interacts with the Greek text and matters of textual variants in the footnotes, thereby satisfying both the advanced scholar and beginning student. She has read widely and engages well with a range of primary sources, both Jewish and Greco-

Roman, as well as all the major commentaries on Ephesians, relevant work on the wider Pauline literature, biblical theology, linguistics, social, religious and cultural contexts, historical works and much more. Cohick works hard to integrate the findings of modern linguistics into her exegesis—in particular, applying the shift in understanding of tense and ‘aspect’ that has taken place in recent decades. Finally, she writes clearly and well, pulling off the rare feat of uniting careful and balanced exegesis with creative insights, while also thinking theologically and applying her findings to the church today.

In her introduction, Cohick makes an excellent and thorough case for Pauline authorship of both Ephesians and Colossians (often seen as companion letters). She notes that scholars in the ancient world determined authorship more on the grounds of content than style, given the frequent use of co-authors and secretaries (both clearly referred to in the Pauline canon). She rightly challenges commonly held assumptions about the literary priority of Colossians, and her sections on pseudepigraphy and forgery are well-informed by evidence from modern scholarship on pseudepigraphic letters and both Jewish and Greco-Roman primary sources. By contrast, modern New Testament scholarship tends to judge Ephesians to be non-Pauline based on often subjective readings of the letter’s style and theology. After a careful examination of the disputed text of Ephesians 1:1, she posits, albeit tentatively, that the original manuscript did contain the words ‘in Ephesus’.

Cohick’s consideration of the first-century contexts for the letter wisely balances attention to the cult of Artemis, the Imperial cult, the fears of magic and the powers, and the state of Judaism, rather than trying to attribute to just one of these contexts the propelling motivation for Paul’s writing of the letter. She is not convinced that Paul would have used formal rhetorical compositional devices and so, rather than drawing on rhetorical criticism, she focuses on ancient letter-writing practices to better understand the letter’s structure and message. Her introduction to the theology of Ephesians contains an especially insightful section on the modern debate over Christology in Paul, alongside an excellent discussion of proto-Trinitarian theology in the epistle.

Although Cohick refers to the ‘vast secondary literature’ in her preface, there are far fewer monographs and articles on this letter than on other Pauline epistles of similar length (e.g. Galatians and Philippians) and, surprisingly, relatively few of the monographs that focus on Ephesians appear in her bibliography. For example, in the excellent excursus on supersessionism, it would have been good for her to consult Lionel J. Windsor’s 2017 commentary in the series on this very topic; in her helpful references to Artemis, Michael Immendörfer’s 2017 monograph on the subject would have proved beneficial.

Cohick’s exegesis really shines when she addresses the second half of the epistle. Her expertise in the study of women, children and slavery shows in her engagement with Eph 5:21–6:9. Many of her observations on the relationship between the text and the social context of Paul’s day are refreshingly insightful and make a substantial contribution to the study of Ephesians.