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The Young, the Not-So-Young and the Very Old

At the *Evangelical Review of Theology*, we try to encourage fellow evangelicals to learn from people of all ages, from their twenties to their eighteenth hundreds. This issue is a good example.

The young: We love to encourage young talents with great ideas by helping them develop their work for publication. We're even more excited if they come from the Global South, towards which the Christian centre of gravity continues to shift. This issue presents two fascinating articles by young scholars, grounded in their home cultures but with much broader application: Ben Akano on improving intercultural worship in Nigeria and Francis Samdao's experience of Baptists in the Philippines.

The not-so-young: As WEA Secretary General Efraim Tendero says, 'retiring' is when you go for a new set of tires. Retired Christian teachers still have great wisdom to offer and should not be just put out to pasture. Two of them appear in this issue: Wayne Detzler (one of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's first representatives in Germany, and later a seminary professor and academic dean in the United States) and James Reiher, retired from a senior lecturer post in Australia.

The very old: Protestants sometimes talk and do theology as if nothing important happened in Christian thought between the New Testament canon and Martin Luther. Okay, some have heard of Jan Hus or John Wycliffe, but that still leaves a thousand-year gap. Just as philosophers and literary critics still read Aristotle, Christians should still learn from the great minds of the early and medieval church. In the present issue, Reiher's article draws on church fathers from Papias to Augustine to contribute to our understanding of the composition of the Gospels. Mary Douglas delves deeply into the theology of the Incarnation articulated by Athanasius—one of history's greatest defenders of the orthodox Christian faith—to address the question of why the gospel is often perceived as irrelevant and powerless today.

Since *ERT* became open-access last August, readership and article submissions have increased greatly, but we still haven't received any letters to the editor. Perhaps Wesley Hill's timely, provocative message on approaching areas of difference between professing Christians will change that. Everyone who participates in heated intra-Christian debates should read this essay with an open mind.

The other two articles in this issue are the second installment of Frank Hinkelmann's wonderful historical work on evangelicals in Europe and a revealing topical study by Benjamin Marx on clothing imagery in the Bible.

We are excited to announce that every issue of *ERT*, dating back to 1977, has been posted on our website, <https://theology.worlddea.org/evangelical-review-of-theology/>. We are now more able to honour our past while planning a bright and world-influencing future for this journal. Happy reading!

—Bruce Barron, Executive Editor

As I Hand Off the Baton

Efraim Tendero, WEA Secretary General

This month, I will complete my six years of service as Secretary General and hand over leadership to Thomas Schirmmacher, who has been the World Evangelical Alliance's Associate Secretary General for Theological Concerns.

Unifying the world's innumerable evangelical organizations behind a global vision is not easy. But I have seen the WEA create new opportunities for evangelicals to speak effectively to governments and to civil-society organizations.

As I finish my term, the WEA is on stable footing both organizationally and financially. Our governing board, the International Council, is deeply engaged in ensuring proper governance and accountability. Among the various new programmes we have established, one of the most important is the Global Institute of Leadership, which is greatly enhancing the capacity of our affiliated national alliances that do most of the hands-on work at the country level. We have also expanded our advocacy work with the United Nations in Geneva to new levels of activity and strength, working alongside national alliances that struggle with violations of religious liberty in their respective countries.

The WEA has a powerful voice on the world stage, to an extent that would have been unimaginable just a couple decades ago. Representing hundreds of millions of evangelicals opens doors to senior religious and political leaders around the world. Some may not appreciate our passion for giving witness to Christ and speaking energetically to gospel issues, but we are rarely ignored.

Our 'Roadmap 2030' strategic plan envisions continued progress in building vital, visible and vibrant national alliances and in enabling credible Christian voices to address critical issues at the national, regional and global levels. Moreover, the WEA is reducing competition and duplication among Christian ministries by providing a widely accepted platform for cooperation. And we will continue to accentuate disciple making as part of evangelical DNA.

I've been privileged to work with outstanding, skilled, discerning men and women who guide the WEA's commissions, task forces and administration. I'm pleased that these people will continue to serve in their various capacities.

Thomas Schirmmacher is superbly positioned to lead the WEA forward as its next Secretary General. He is a world-class theologian and a prolific writer who can articulate evangelical views clearly. He has global credibility in intra-faith and inter-faith settings, and his work is solidly grounded in evangelical commitment so that he can facilitate collaboration without compromise. A respected leader and team player, Thomas can productively deploy the expertise of fellow evangelical leaders. His wife Christine and his children have also contributed significantly to the WEA's work.

I believe that the WEA is stronger today than it has ever been, but there remains much room for growth. The WEA is indispensable to the global evangelical movement and I am excited to see what God will do in and through it in the years ahead.

When Christians Disagree

Wesley Hill

In this essay, a widely respected author, known for both his defence of traditional marriage and his irenic treatment of those who view the issue differently, probes the problem of sharp divisions amongst professing Christians and challenges some of the prevailing approaches to these divisions.

The problem of Christian disunity

Open virtually any newspaper or journalistic website, and you're guaranteed to find an article about how politically polarized we in the West are at the moment. It appears to many observers that we are as divided from one another as we ever have been. In my US context, of course, the narratives of these divisions often start with Republican versus Democrat and then cascade into those who say 'Black lives matter' versus 'blue lives matter', those who are pro-choice versus those who are pro-life, those who are pro-LGBTQ rights versus those who are pro-traditional marriage. Bestselling books feature titles and subtitles like these: *Why We Hate Each Other—And How to Heal*; *Why We're Polarized*; and *Disagreement and the Limits of Tolerance*.¹ Whether or not we're more divided today than we have been at other moments in history is highly debatable, but what seems past questioning is that we are highly anxious about the polarization we are experiencing. And no matter how many *Saturday Night Live* skits try to make a joke of contentious family debates around the Thanksgiving dinner table, many of us experience on a daily basis the pain and anguish that division carries with it.

I want to address more specifically, though, the polarization that exists within the church (or churches). I've chosen as my theme 'When Christians Disagree', and I want to write not about division in general but specifically the reality of disagreement among those who share a common faith in our Lord Jesus. And even more specifically, I want to talk about the reality of Christian disagreement about issues of morality or ethics.

After long centuries, the divided churches of East and West are by now used to reflecting theologically on the status of *doctrinal* disagreement. We have grown accustomed to debates over whether the Pope may speak infallibly, whether baptism effects regeneration and whether it should be administered to infants, whether God's

Wesley Hill (PhD, Durham University, UK) is associate professor of biblical studies at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, USA. This message was originally published in *CRUX*, a quarterly journal of Christian thought and opinion published by Regent College, Vancouver, Canada (Winter 2020, vol. 56, no. 4).

1 See Teresa Bejan, *Mere Civility: Disagreement and the Limits of Tolerance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Ben Sasse, *Them: Why We Hate Each Other—And How to Heal* (New York: Griffin, 2018); Ezra Klein, *Why We're Polarized* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020).

eternal decree of election is unconditional, and so on. But as Roman Catholic theologians Michael Root and James J. Buckley have pointed out, we are much less sure of the status of *moral* disagreement:

While doctrinal issues have often in the past been the most ecumenically neuralgic topics, increasingly today ethical issues—abortion and homosexuality most prominently—have become a focus of difference between the churches and of potentially splintering debate within churches. These issues are more laden with emotion than many traditional doctrinal disputes, but ecumenical discussions have yet to address them in detail. We have little sense of just when and how ethical disputes rightly impact communion within and among the churches. When can we live together with difference over such matters, and when does unity in Christ require common teaching?²

How should we think about the fact that Christian believers do not share one mindset on many of the most urgent moral debates of our time? And, perhaps more importantly, what should we do—what does Christian faithfulness look like—in the face of such division?

I should say at the outset that this matter of moral disagreement among Christians is not one of idle speculation for me. Quite the opposite! I feel it keenly, painfully, personally on a daily basis. I have spent the better part of my academic and ministerial vocation so far writing and speaking about human sexuality and Christian sexual ethics. I started off in the vein of personal testimony—narrating my life as a Christian, describing my recognition of my homosexual orientation when I was in my teens, and explaining my commitment to abstinence from gay sex because of my convictions about what Scripture teaches. I offered my story to the church in the hope of prompting some much-needed discussion about what appropriate pastoral care for lesbian and gay believers should look like.³ But since then, I have become more involved in the exegetical and theological debate about the moral status of same-sex sexual unions. I contributed a chapter arguing for the so-called traditional view—that marriage, defined as the covenant union of a man and a woman, is the only God-given context for sexual intimacy—to the volume *Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church*,⁴ and I have publicly debated advocates for same-sex marriage in the church.

At the same time, through a circuitous following of the Holy Spirit's prompting (or so I believe), I make my home in a church that largely (though not entirely) disagrees with me about sex. I am a priest in the Episcopal Church, which now permits and indeed, throughout much of its corporate life, *celebrates* same-sex marriage as a divine gift, viewing it as not contrary to the true intent of Scripture. Thus the people who are my closest ministry colleagues and my nearest theological allies are people with whom I have a profound moral disagreement.

2 Michael Root and James J. Buckley, eds., *The Morally Divided Body: Ethical Disagreement and the Disunity of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), ix.

3 See my book *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*, updated and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016) and its sequel *Spiritual Friendship* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2015).

4 Preston Sprinkle, ed., *Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 124–47.

That word ‘profound’ needs a bit of unpacking, so that the full force of the disagreement can be felt. On the one hand, for ‘traditionalists’ like me, the stakes in this moral disagreement couldn’t be higher. I agree with Ephraim Radner, whom I discuss more below, when he writes:

For me, the issue of marriage is not *adiaphora*; it is bound to the central claims of the Christian gospel. This is not the place to rehearse the arguments. But the simple axis of Genesis 1–2, Mark 10, and Ephesians 5, which speak to the creation of man and woman, their union, and the nature of the body of Christ, seems to form a scriptural scaffolding of divine purpose and destiny that any redefinition of marriage must intrinsically deny. ... If I were to use [the term ‘absolute’], I would certainly apply it to the reality of marriage between a man and a woman: this is an ‘ontological absolute’.⁵

I have often wished that I could put the churches’ current disagreement about sexuality into the same category as Paul puts dispute about dietary restrictions in Romans 14,⁶ but it seems to me that Radner is correct: there is a broad scriptural tissue, culminating in the wedding imagery at the end of the book of Revelation, that would tell against seeing marriage and sexuality merely as secondary matters about which believers are free to disagree.

At the same time, for my fellow Christians on the ‘progressive’ side of this debate, the stakes are equally high. Nothing less than the possibility of sinning against the Holy Spirit is at stake when believers like me decline to celebrate same-sex marriages. The Episcopalian theologian Eugene Rogers, for instance, has put it this way in his book arguing for the moral legitimacy and indeed urgency of affirming same-sex marriage:

[The parable of the wedding in Matthew 22] ends with a dire warning about one who does not celebrate. ... That one cuts him or herself off from the work of the Spirit and the life of God. ... [This] dire warning about those who do not celebrate the wedding, who refuse the Spirit’s work ... takes up the earlier, even direr warning that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the unforgivable sin. ... The love stronger than death is ... no abstract power, for Christians, but a particular person, and that is why it is to their peril that the Spirit should be resisted or denied.⁷

And perhaps even more viscerally disturbing than contemplating whether one is opposing the Holy Spirit is the question of whether one’s ‘traditionalist’ stance is

5 Ephraim Radner, ‘Pastoral Faithfulness in Opaque Times’, Covenant blog, 24 May 2018, <https://worldia.org/yourls/ert451hill1>.

6 See Justin Lee, *Torn: Rescuing the Gospel from the Gays-vs.-Christians Debate* (New York: Jericho Books, 2012) and Linn Marie Tonstad, *Queer Theology: Beyond Apologetics* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018) for this way of using Romans 14.

7 Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., *Sexuality and the Christian Body: Their Way into the Triune God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 196, 245, 254. Cf. Willie James Jennings, *Acts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2017), 60: ‘There is joy in coupling that should be celebrated by all who wish life together, especially for gay sisters and brothers whose lives of love are yet to receive the celebratory embrace by the church that they greatly deserve. Even among churches that affirm homosexual marriage, the sound and songs of celebration ring much too quietly and sometimes not at all. ... Calling gay marriage a civil union is a denial of Christian discipleship of the two.’

contributing to the literal deaths of LGBTQ people. Many of my fellow church members would not hesitate to say that non-affirming theology *kills*. That is a thought that disturbs my sleep and haunts me as I try to live a life of cruciform love in accord with the teachings of the prophets and apostles.

Our fates are inextricably tied together

That painful reality of moral disagreement in the church, then, is the context for this article. How are we to think about this unnerving problem of Christian division, and what, if anything, should we do about it?

Often in an effort to think theologically, it is necessary to take a couple of steps back and try to situate a problem within a larger frame of reference. In this particular case, what would it look like to try to place the challenge of Christian disagreement on a bigger theological canvas? Are there biblical and/or theological resources to help us find a way forward?

I propose that the work of the Anglican theologian Ephraim Radner can help us in this regard. For those who may not know his name, let me offer a brief introduction to him and his work, and then I will sketch some of his key contributions to our thinking about the church and, from there, try to tease out some implications.

Ephraim Radner is professor of historical theology at Wycliffe College at the University of Toronto, and before that served as the rector of Church of the Ascension, an Episcopal parish in Pueblo, Colorado. His chief theological interests lie in biblical hermeneutics and ecclesiology: he has written a commentary, for instance, on Leviticus for the Brazos Theological Commentary series,⁸ as well as a recent monograph on the church's practice of reading Scripture figurally,⁹ and he has written several volumes—most notably *The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West*¹⁰—on the theological problem of the fact that, empirically and despite what we confess in the creeds, the church is not 'one' but divided.

In addressing this reality, Radner turns to the Old Testament and specifically the division between the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah that took place after the death of David's son King Solomon. For Radner, this event is not merely an 'historical' one but rather a scriptural 'figure' through which we can see ourselves and our present reality. As Radner puts it, 'The reality of the church's division, as well as the promise for its restoration, is given in the form of Israel's own existence.'¹¹

8 Ephraim Radner, *Leviticus*, Brazos Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008).

9 Ephraim Radner, *Time and the Word: Figural Reading of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).

10 Ephraim Radner, *The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

11 Ephraim Radner, 'The Cost of Communion: A Meditation on Israel and the Divided Church', in Ephraim Radner and R. R. Reno, eds., *Inhabiting Unity: Theological Perspectives on the Proposed Lutheran-Episcopal Concordat* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 136. This essay is perhaps the most accessible entry point into Radner's ecclesiological writings.

He points to the fact that, historically, in the aftermath of the Reformation, it was common to appeal to the books of 1 and 2 Kings as a way of attempting to discern God's will for the newly fractured body of Christ. But Radner sets himself against some of the common ways that church partisans appealed to 1 and 2 Kings. Offering little comfort to Catholic or Protestant disputants, Radner reads the church's division in light of the Scriptural figure of divided Israel and says that we are all, together, staring the reality of our ecclesial death, judgement and exile in the face. Our ecumenical strategies of 'dialogue across difference' or, alternatively, our purifying strategies of withdrawing from compromised churches and starting new, allegedly 'pure' denominations are both alike strategies of rearranging deck chairs on the *Titanic*. Even if we manage to secure some limited good, like greater sympathy and cooperation between Christians, or greater public fidelity to theological doctrines, we are all still located in churches whose very existence contradicts Jesus's prayer 'that they may all be one' (Jn 17:21).

It is a singularly bleak ecclesiological vision, and its excesses have sometimes been criticized.¹² But it is not a vision without hope. By concluding that all of us are ecclesially dead, Radner intends to show how we may all yet receive mercy (cf. Rom 11:32). For ultimately the figure of divided Israel is a *Christological* figure. Jesus the Israelite is born into Israel's divided brokenness; he takes Israel's destiny and failure onto his own shoulders, and he suffers Israel's curse in his own broken body on the cross. He, like Israel, indeed *as* Israel, is exiled, 'cut off' (cf. Col 2:11). Out of that death, God creates new life by raising Jesus on the third day, and, just so, God will raise and reconstitute the church, too, on the far side of exile.

But crucially, this means that our task in the meantime is not to separate from one another and try to escape the church's inevitable death and hoped-for resurrection. Applied to today's situation of moral disagreement, Radner's counsel is deeply challenging insofar as it asks 'progressives' to remain with their 'conservative' sisters and brothers, even though their 'traditionalist' beliefs are seen as death-dealing, and it asks 'conservatives' to remain with their 'progressive' sisters and brothers, even though their 'progressive' views on sex and gender are seen as a denial of the first-order truths of divine revelation. Just as Israel's faithful remnant was not a *replacement* for the people as a whole, so neither should today's divided churches congratulate themselves on their theological rightness and use that as a justification for not living in light of God's promised restoration and reunification of the church at the last day. Rather, we should be prepared to suffer the judgement of division together, recognizing that by virtue of our common baptism and shared confession, our fates are inextricable from one another's. The only hope we have of salvation is journeying with Christ into the darkness of exile, judgement and death, and being caught up together with him in the triumph of the resurrection.

Four proposals for moving forward

In light of all this, we are driven to ask the 'how shall we then live?' question. If Radner is correct that we are all without exception enduring the judgement and death

12 For constructive criticism, see Amy J. Erickson, *Ephraim Radner, Hosean Wilderness, and the Church in the Post-Christendom West* (Leiden: Brill, 2020).

of ecclesial exile, how ought this truth reshape the way we understand our moral disagreements and live in the midst of them?

I want to make four suggestions, all of which build upon and try to extend Radner's theological perspective in more practical, existential directions.

First, *we ought to seek to maintain the highest level of visible communion with our fellow baptized Christians as is possible given our present state of moral disagreement.* If Radner is right that the solution to divided Israel's unfaithfulness was not for the faithful remnant to remove themselves from the Israelite and Judahite majority and that, likewise, the solution to the church's division is not for any of us to withdraw from Christ's broken body, then we must look for ways to live out our solidarity with each other as visibly as we can, recognizing our shared place in the ruins of the church.¹³ There will be painful calls we will have to make as we discern what this solidarity should look like. I, for example, cannot in good conscience officiate at a same-sex wedding, and my progressive sister, by analogy, may not be able in good conscience to share a speaking platform with me, given the harm she understands my theology to inflict on vulnerable people. But may we both look for ways to embody our 'impaired communion', taking seriously both poles of that useful phrase, 'communion' and 'impaired'?

Second, just as Israel's prophets—and God through them!—bore with Israel as they pleaded for the people's repentance and warned of impending judgement, so *we too should take the church's present state of division as a call to patient endurance.* As any seasoned pastor will confirm, one of the great mysteries of sanctification is why God transforms our lives at such a snail's pace, seemingly, or why God waits so long to interrupt sinful habits. Why is it that, after impressing upon Martin Luther the undiluted scandal of free grace, God permitted his raging anti-Semitism and foul language to continue apparently unabated? Why is it that, after granting Jonathan Edwards an awe-inspiring vision of God's grandeur and holiness, God allowed Edwards to go on owning slaves? Why is it that, after drawing me to faith in Jesus when I was a child, God has not yet seen fit to deliver me from the besetting sins that I battle? This is the mystery of life 'between the times', as we live out our days in between our dying with Christ in baptism and our final bodily resurrection at Jesus' appearing. And it is, too, the mystery of the church's corporate life, as we steward the treasure of the gospel. Hence, the call to us may be, above all, a call to patient endurance, to 'stay put' in the sinful and broken churches we inhabit, and to continue to pursue—for the umpteenth time if need be—dialogue with our ideological opponents, summoning them and ourselves to repentance.

Oliver O'Donovan clarifies that such 'staying put' is not a matter of surrendering our cherished moral beliefs. We are not to violate our consciences. And yet we must remain open to the surprises God may have for us and how we may be instructed even by those we think are wrong:

The only thing I concede in committing myself to such a process [of dialogue between 'gay-affirming' Christians and 'traditionalist' Christians] is that if I could discuss the matter through with an opponent sincerely committed to the

13 Cf. R. R. Reno, *In the Ruins of the Church: Sustaining Faith in an Age of Diminished Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002).

church's authorities, Scripture chief among them, the Holy Spirit would open up perspectives that are not immediately apparent, and that patient and scrupulous pursuit of these could lead at least to giving the problem a different shape—a shape I presume will be *compatible* with, though not precisely identical to, the views I now hold, but which may also be compatible with some of the views my opponent now holds, even if I cannot yet see how. I do not have to think I may be mistaken about the cardinal points of which I am convinced. The only thing I have to think—and this, surely, is not difficult on such a subject!—is that there are things still to be learned by one who is determined to be taught by Scripture how to read the age in which we live.¹⁴

Radner, in the context of his essay about 'staying put' in churches with whose members one disagrees about moral issues, has tried to imagine concretely what this might look like:

While it is hard for me to believe that there is some new truth yet to be revealed about ... sexual behavior that will overturn the basic traditions of the Church's doctrine, nonetheless we must acknowledge the possibility of still learning something we did not know before on the matter. And where else shall we learn this than with those who challenge us about our exhausted outlooks? A pertinent analogy is the experience and understanding of something like witchcraft, the debate around which in the seventeenth century led not only to a critical reassessment of the parameters of its practice and meaning, but also, interestingly enough, contributed to a fertile burst of exploration and insight into the physical sciences. ... The basic teaching of the Church concerning the existence of the evil one and of evil in general did not change. But because of these debates, Christians now approach the question of witchcraft very differently and much more circumspectly than in the sixteenth century. That is surely a blessing. Similarly, there is every reason to hope that God might lead us into some greater light around the issue of sexuality even in our era, a hope that properly demands an embodiment in patient listening and discussion, none of which need constitute an abandonment of our basic teaching.¹⁵

The third point I would offer as a kind of extension of Radner's theological logic: *We should face the fact that people usually don't change their minds or their lives through being told to change.* I remember a tense conversation I had one time with a fellow believer who was troubled by my seeming unwillingness to break fellowship with 'false teachers'—that is to say, publicly LGBTQ-affirming pastors and Christian leaders. He asked me why I wasn't more forthright, more prophetic, in my denunciation of theological and moral compromise. I don't recall everything I said in response, but I remember asking my friend this question: 'Does that *work* when you do it? Do you find that forthright denunciation leads your opponents to change their minds?'

14 Oliver O'Donovan, *Church in Crisis: The Gay Controversy and the Anglican Communion* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008), 33.

15 Ephraim Radner, *Hope among the Fragments: The Broken Church and Its Engagement of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004), 53.

In our present state of division, as we all ponder how we might actually win over (as opposed to merely sideline and silence) those with whom we disagree, it is urgent that we recover a vision of properly *evangelical* change—which is to say, change that is fuelled and sustained by the good news of God in Christ. Calling our theologically wayward sisters and brothers to abandon what we take to be their wrong views can accomplish only so much; the terrors of the law can expose sin and show the way of righteousness, but they cannot enable any of us to walk that way. Only the grace of Christ can do that.

I recall an unforgettable moment when I heard an older Roman Catholic theologian, a scholar of St. Augustine, pause in the middle of a seminar and say, ‘You know, Augustine believed it was tasting God’s grace in the Eucharist that woos us and transforms our lives. It’s not through trying harder but through tasting something sweeter that we are changed.’¹

Peter Leithart, whose commentary on 1–2 Kings borrows heavily from Ephraim Radner’s work, has put it this way:

The prophets to ancient Israel did not preach a legalistic message of moral reformation but an evangelical message of faith in the God who raises the dead. ... The message of the prophets is not, ‘Israel has sinned; therefore, Israel needs to get its act together or it will die.’ The message is, ‘Israel has sinned; therefore, Israel must die, and its only hope is to entrust itself to a God who will give it new life on the far side of death.’ Or even, ‘Israel has sinned; Israel is already dead. Cling to the God who raises the dead.’¹⁶

Israel is not exhorted to change her thinking and behaviour so much as Israel is told that God is even now displaying God’s saving righteousness, truth, light and life: so come enjoy that life; taste and see that it is good.

Finally, Radner’s work suggests that *we adopt a posture of reverent agnosticism regarding God’s final purposes in our divisions*. We do not know the end of the story the Spirit is currently writing in the churches. We do not yet know what twists and turns may yet be ahead of us as we wander the road of ecclesial exile and judgement, nor how God will cause all of them to work together to conform the church to the image of his Son Jesus Christ. And so, in the meantime, as we look forward to the resurrection of the church, we should be prepared to entrust even our Christian enemies to the mercy of God.

One of the stories that I keep on my ‘text playlist’—the texts that I return to again and again when I need encouragement—is this one from Alan Jacobs:

On Easter Sunday 1800, in St. Paul’s Cathedral, the very heart of the Church of England, do you know how many people received Holy Communion?

Six. Six.

Throughout the eighteenth century church attendance—not just the receiving of Communion—had declined throughout England, even as the population had grown. There were fewer and fewer churches offering fewer and fewer services. For instance, in 1714 seventy-two churches in London offered the

¹⁶ Peter Leithart, *1 and 2 Kings*, Brazos Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 18.

service of Morning Prayer every day; just eighteen years later that number had declined to forty-four.

And yet by the middle of the nineteenth century, thanks largely to the rise of Anglo-Catholicism, there was an explosion of church attendance and church-building throughout England, along with an emphasis on the centrality of Holy Communion that had not been seen in England since the Middle Ages. It was not something that anyone had expected.

It might also be worth noting that many of the prime movers of Anglo-Catholicism were former evangelicals—‘former’ not because they had rejected the key tenets of evangelicalism, but because they had found evangelical spirituality limited and insufficient to meet their needs. A strongly biblical evangelicalism was the seed-bed of renewal for English Catholicism. Nobody expected that either.

Christian renewal happens in strange ways and at strange times, but it happens. I wouldn’t write off even the Church of England just yet.¹⁷

He might have simply written, ‘I wouldn’t write off the church just yet.’ God has imprisoned us all in disobedience (Rom 11:32) that he might have mercy on us all.¹⁸

17 Alan Jacobs, ‘It Could Be Worse; It Might Get Better’, *The American Conservative*, 21 December 2012, <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert451hill2>.

18 I treat the implications of Paul’s words in Romans 9–11 for our connectedness as Christians in another contemporary context in Wesley Hill, ‘No Salvation Without the Other’, *First Things*, 7 September 2018, <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert451hill3>.

The European Evangelical Alliance: An Historical Sketch

Frank Hinkelmann

In the April 2020 ERT, Frank Hinkelmann, Austrian church historian and president of the European Evangelical Alliance, told the fascinating tale of how the EEA, now part of the World Evangelical Alliance, was originally founded as a counter-movement to it. In this sequel, Hinkelmann continues the story by describing the EEA's evolution and significance up to the present.

The EEA's beginnings

In 1946, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) was celebrating its 100th anniversary. Up to that time, the British Evangelical Alliance (BEA) had been the main driving force behind the WEA. However, in the years following World War II, the BEA went through a crisis and was not able to adequately provide leadership to the WEA.

Meanwhile, a new evangelical movement was coalescing. Following the war, North American Christians became increasingly interested in cooperation with Christians in Europe¹ and beyond. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) thus emerged as a key player in the further development and renewal of the global evangelical movement.² The NAE held to the classic evangelical beliefs and to the authority of Scripture yet rejected the polemical and separatist approach of fundamentalism. The so-called 'new evangelicals' driving this effort included such key figures as Harold John Ockenga and Billy Graham.

When the NAE initiated the establishment of a new global evangelical body in 1952, calling it the World Evangelical Fellowship, evangelicals in a number of European countries struggled with what they perceived as a North American

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1 Hans Krabbendam, 'Introduction: American Evangelical Missions in Postwar Europe', in John Corrigan and Frank Hinkelmann (eds.), *Return to Sender: American Evangelical Missions to Europe in the 20th Century* (Munster: LIT-Verlag, 2019), 9–16; Hans Krabbendam, *Saving the Overlooked Continent: American Protestant Missions in Western Europe 1940–1975* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2020).

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

fundamentalist takeover, especially in light of the WEF's position on Scripture. The use of the term 'infallible' became an obstacle. This concern led to the founding of the European Evangelical Alliance (EEA) as a counter-movement to the WEF, with the Scandinavian countries, Germany and the German-speaking part of Switzerland serving as the main drivers of this process. Along with some theological difference regarding how to view Scripture, some Europeans, especially the Scandinavians, felt a distaste for the NAE's anti-ecumenical scepticism and did not want to position themselves against the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The founding members of the EEA were the national evangelical alliances (EAs) of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland and Austria.³ Soon afterwards, the BEA also joined, becoming a member of both the WEF and EEA. France joined the EEA in 1956 and Spain in 1965. These two EAs had already been members of the WEF, but most EEA founding members did not join the WEF until the late 1960s.

The 1950s and 1960s

Theological and strategic issues

Interestingly, the earliest constitution of the EEA from the early 1950s only described how the organization would operate and hardly touched on the question of mission and vision. It stated simply, "The founding of the "European Evangelical Alliance" is due to practical reasons. It should strengthen togetherness, and the outer and inner exchange amongst one another and with other groups should be promoted."⁴ (Even the original German gives no hint at the meaning of 'outer and inner exchange'.)

Few extant sources offer insight into the EEA's mission and vision during its first two decades, but the programmes from EEA General Council meetings (GCMs) reveal a heavy emphasis on theological concerns. At each annual GCM, lectures were delivered, usually by well-known evangelical theologians from the country where the GCM was taking place. Sample topics were 'The Meaning of the New Testament about the Unity of the Church of Christ as Foundation of the Evangelical Alliance' (1956), 'The Place of the Holy Spirit in Witness and in Evangelism' (1964), 'The Meaning of the Roman Catholic Council in Light of the Bible' (1964), 'Should We Defend Fundamentalism?' (1965), and 'The Meaning of New Testament Words in "Modern" Theology' (1966).

In 1962, the GCM approved a resolution that summarized the EEA's main focus well:

From its foundation, the Evangelical Alliance sees itself as a brotherhood of Christian believers from churches and free churches. It sees its mission in unceasing personal and common prayer. It confesses the whole of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the sole and fully sufficient foundation of its faith and life. From here the Evangelical Alliance's most urgent tasks are the evangelistic proclamation of the message of salvation for everyone,

3 'Konstitution der Europäischen Evangelischen Allianz', n.d., probably around 1954. All archival sources are from the EEA archives, currently stored in Pöchlarn, Austria.

4 'Konstitution'.

the encouragement of all Christians to a credible proof of life and a Bible-oriented ministry of watchfulness over all heresies of our time.⁵

One recurring theme at EEA events was the authority of Scripture. Especially during the 1960s, the battle against modern theology attracted considerable attention, leading finally to a declaration on the authority of Scripture in 1965, which had been three years in the making.⁶ This statement targeted the growing influence of theological liberalism deeply rooted in many of the traditional Protestant denominations in areas such as Germany, Switzerland and Scandinavia. As another example, Walter Künneth from Erlangen, Germany, spoke at the EEA Council Meeting in London in September 1968 on 'The Foundational Crisis of Today's Theology'.

A second consistent aspect of the EEA was its focus on prayer. As Rev. Peder Olson of Norway worded it in 1964, the characteristic feature of the EEA was corporate prayer,⁷ especially during an annual week of prayer each January.

Third, evangelism was a central theme. As early as 1954, the EEA endorsed Billy Graham's European rallies, inviting him to return for further evangelistic campaigns in 1955⁸ and thereafter. During this time, a Danish representative even suggested at one GCM that the EEA should become an evangelistic organization.⁹ Although this proposal was not taken up by other national EAs, the focus on evangelism remained strong and new ways to proclaim the Gospel in Europe were considered. As a result of these discussions, opportunities for evangelistic radio broadcasts moved to the forefront of the agenda for several years.¹⁰

Intra-evangelical and inter-church relations

The relationship between the EEA and the WEF remained controversial and tense for some time.¹¹ In October 1960, a joint gathering of the WEF and EEA took place in Tonbridge, England. Swiss delegate Traugott Huber, in his report on the event, objected that the GCM had more of the character of an 'alliance conference' (even though the EEA still treated it as its own council meeting) and that it wasn't clear at all what was EEA and what was WEF at the gathering.

Indubitably, Huber wanted to see a clearer distinction between the two groups. He referred to what he had perceived as a strong International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) influence at the WEF's founding conference in the Netherlands, where the WCC was repeatedly called (probably by NAE representatives) a 'terrible association'. In concluding his observations regarding the 1960 meeting, he urged

5 'Tagung des Rates [Meeting of the Council] der Europäischen Evangelischen Allianz in Berlin am 23–25. Oktober 1962', 13.

6 The development of this declaration was commissioned at the 1962 GCM; see 'Tagung des Rates', 10.

7 'Tagung des Rates', 8.

8 Protocol of the EEA General Council meeting at Bad Hall, Austria, 22–25 September 1954, 2.

9 'Notizen der Ratssitzung der Europäischen Evangelischen Allianz Bad Hall', September 1954, 2.

10 'Tagung des Rates', 2, 7, 10–12.

11 See for example the November 1957 letter from Arthur F. Smith, BEA chairman and WEF president, and Gilbert W. Kirby, General Secretary of the BEA, to the EEA members, expressing 'shock' about the 'ignorance and the misunderstanding concerning' the WEF.

the Swiss EA to clarify the nature, purpose and calling of the EEA while also encouraging the EEA to clarify the 'marking of lines' between the groups.¹²

Huber may have been a relatively extreme voice on the anti-WEF front, but things began to change only in 1962 when Gilbert W. Kirby, General Secretary of the British EA, also became Secretary General of the WEF.¹³ At the September 1967 GCM in Vienna, the topic was finally resolved. Rev. M. Derham of London presented a paper on the WEF, clearly stating that the 'fundamentalist American influence within the WEF has strongly diminished'¹⁴ and recommending that the EEA become the WEF's regional branch. After intense discussion, the council voted unanimously to encourage all EEA member countries to also join the WEF.¹⁵ All except Austria and Sweden (which only sent two observers to WEF's General Assembly in Lausanne) did so by the end of 1968.¹⁶

Although several documents expressed caution regarding the fundamentalist ICCC, there seems to have been far less reluctance to connect with key WCC leaders. In fact, WCC General Secretary W. A. Visser't Hooft was one of the main speakers at the 1956 GCM. He presented a paper on 'The Uniting of the Children of God in the World', followed by an open discussion.¹⁷ Some years later, the EEA board met with Paul Vischer, then research secretary of the WCC, primarily to discuss the relationship between the EEA's week of prayer and the ecumenical 'Week of Prayer for Christian Unity', both of which occurred each January. Although the meeting 'took place in good atmosphere', 'no practical conclusions were drawn'.¹⁸

The EEA's attitude towards the WCC remained surprisingly positive despite some growing theological differences. Only following the fourth WCC Assembly in July 1968 at Uppsala, Sweden, did the EEA president, in his annual report, express concern about developments within the ecumenical movement, stating that the EEA 'doesn't have an unreserved and unconditional yes to the path of ecumenism'.¹⁹

Organizational issues

At a more practical and organizational level, two issues arose repeatedly during the EEA's first two decades: finances and the need for a general secretary. As early as 1954, the GCM minutes indicated that 'the need of a part-time and soon a full-time general secretary and a common treasury to support the same was discussed'. Proposed duties included encouraging inter-denominational fellowship, stimulating

12 'Bericht über die Ratssitzung der Europäischen Evangelischen Allianz vom 25.–28. Oktober 1960, gehalten in Mabledon, Tonbridge, England', 7.

13 'Europäischer Rat der Evangelischen Allianz. Besprechung mit Generalsekretär G. Kirby im CVJM-Haus, Markensenstr, Berlin 30 a', 28 September 1962.

14 'Rat der Europäischen Evangelischen Allianz. Ratstagung in Wien vom 19.–21. September 1967', 2.

15 'Rat der Europäischen Evangelischen Allianz', 4.

16 'Europäische Evangelische Allianz. Ratstagung vom 17.–20. September 1968 in London. Bericht des Präsidenten.'

17 Programme of the annual conference of the European Evangelical Alliance in Bern, 18–21 September 1956.

18 'Tagung des Rates', 3, annual report by the EEA president.

19 'Europäische Evangelische Allianz. Ratstagung vom 17.–20. September 1968 in London. Bericht des Präsidenten', II–7.

and organizing evangelism, making presentations, assisting the national EAs, organizing rallies and conferences, and producing literature. Several countries' representatives spoke favourably about working towards retaining a general secretary.²⁰

The head of the Danish EA took on the role of general secretary temporarily on a voluntary basis. Not until the late 1960s, however, did the EEA officially create the position, and even then it remained unpaid, usually being filled by a member of either the British or German EA. Even the question of whether the EEA should have a bank account and budget was still under dispute in 1963.²¹

The 1970s and 1980s

The 1970s and 1980s saw growing activity by the EEA, corresponding with a growing self-awareness of the evangelical movement in Europe.

Theological and strategic issues

In 1973, the EEA finally adopted its first constitution, in which for the first time it also officially addressed its vision and mission:

The EEA exists to raise awareness of the unity of believing Christians and to make the Gospel known to all people in Europe. It seeks to promote, encourage and help the theological and evangelistic work of those in Europe who can accept the EEA's basis of faith. It supports such work so that the Gospel can be proclaimed more effectively, and so that Christian witness and service can be extended and strengthened in all parts of the continent.²²

As the EEA grew in both membership and ministry during the 1970s and 1980s, the question of its mission, vision and role was raised repeatedly. At the 1976 GCM, EEA president Wilhelm Gilbert set out his understanding of the organization's future role. He identified three main areas of activity: (1) a functional role of promoting evangelical communication, evangelism and global partnerships; (2) an inspirational role of encouraging believers; and (3) a visionary role, maintaining a hope for true revival and encouraging prayer.²³

A European conference on revival, held by the EEA in September 1981 in Haamestede, the Netherlands, attracted some key scholars on revivalism such as Richard Lovelace, professor of church history at Gordon-Conwell Seminary, USA; Edwin Orr, originally from Northern Ireland and at the time professor in the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, USA; and George Peters, former professor of missions at Dallas Theological Seminary, USA and then founder of the 'Seminar für missionarische Fortbildung' at Bad Liebenzell (later Akademie für Weltmission), Korntal, Germany.

20 Protocol of the EEA General Council meeting at Bad Hall, Austria, 22–25 September 1954, 2.

21 'Tagung des Rates', 2.

22 Konstitution 273–9.73–100', which states that this constitution was accepted at the 1972 EEA General Assembly in Jonköping, Sweden.

23 European Evangelical Alliance, 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Council Held at the London Bible College in England from 19–21 September 1978', 9.

A revised constitution was introduced in 1984 after detailed discussion at the 1983 GCM, followed by a questionnaire to all member EAs in early 1984. This document defined the EEA's purpose afresh for the 1980s:

It is the purpose of the European Evangelical Alliance to implement and to present the unity of all believers in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. This purpose should be implemented through the following activities:

- Creating a better understanding and a deeper fellowship among European evangelical Christians.
- Suggestions for evangelism and mission and exchange of information on evangelistic needs and opportunities.
- Encouragement of joint activities.
- Exchange of information.²⁴

In the latter half of the 1980s, only a few new strategic initiatives were introduced. As proposed by the Austrian EA, the GCM initiated an EEA Youth Alliance (YEEA) in 1985. Its purposes were to give the EEA council an overview of the situation of youth ministries in Europe, connect representatives of European youth ministries, and develop a plan as to how youth ministries could be enhanced in the national EAs as well as within the EEA.²⁵ The EEA board had discussions during 1985 regarding how to attract young people and women as board members.²⁶ At the 1986 GCM, the Austrian delegate Dietrich Reitzner, a member of the EEA's youth committee, proposed that each member might bring two youth delegates to each GCM. Although the council accepted this proposal in general, it was not willing to grant the youth delegates voting rights as Reitzner had suggested.²⁷ The YEEA's efforts achieved minimal success. In a 1987 report, the YEEA expressed its disappointment that despite several requests only one national EA had nominated youth delegates.²⁸

Intra-evangelical and inter-church relations

Strengthening unity and cooperation amongst evangelicals was at the forefront of EEA programmes during the 1970s, along with a continuing emphasis on evangelism. One expression of such evangelical cooperation was The EA Relief Fund,²⁹ later renamed TEAR-Fund, as an evangelical counterpart to ecumenical relief organizations. Although as of the late 1960s, some voices within the EEA expressed reservations about new evangelical institutions competing with traditional Protestant organizations, this attitude changed during the early 1970s. TEAR-Fund is a prime example of the change, as from 1971 onwards it was strongly endorsed by the GCMs and the EEA strongly encouraged national EAs to cooperate

24 'Europäische Evangelische Allianz. Satzung 1984', 2.

25 'Protokoll der Ratstagung der Europäischen Evangelischen Allianz in Aalborg, Dänemark vom 7. bis 8. Oktober 1988', 8.

26 'Protokoll der Sitzung des Präsidiums der EEA am Freitag, 29.11.85, 13.30 Uhr und Dienstag [sic!], 30.11.85, 9.15 Uhr in Düsseldorf', 2.

27 Minutes of the EEA Council Meeting in Bad Homburg, October 17–21, 1986, 1.

28 Youth Committee of the European Evangelical Alliance, 'Bericht zur Ratstagung der Europäischen Ev. Allianz, 23.–27. Oktober 1987' (Männedorf, Switzerland), 8.

29 'Ratstagung des Rates der Europäischen Evangelischen Allianz vom 9.–12. Oktober 1969 verbunden mit der EEA-Konferenz in Nürnberg', 4.

with this new initiative.³⁰ As a result of further cooperation, the Conference of European Evangelical Aid Agencies (CEEAA) was established.³¹

At the 1974 GCM, following the Lausanne Congress for World Evangelization, the question of forming a European Evangelical Mission Alliance (EEMA) came to the fore, and mission agencies and networks were invited to develop a definite proposal.³² Many other new initiatives were facilitated and supported, such as the Eurofest '75 youth festival in Brussels, the MISSION student conference over the New Year's Day holiday in 1975–1976 and a series of evangelical communication initiatives,³³ which later developed into the European Evangelical Communicators Association (EECA).³⁴ Another example was a conference of evangelical European theologians, led by John R. W. Stott of England and Peter Beyerhaus of Germany in August 1976, which led to the founding of the Fellowship of Evangelical European Theologians (FEET).³⁵ Furthermore, in the late 1970s and 1980s a group worked on the accreditation of evangelical colleges in Europe,³⁶ later forming the European Evangelical Accreditation Agency (EEAA, today the European Council for Theological Education).

It might surprise some readers that the EEA's relationship with the ecumenical movement is not mentioned again after 1968. The available sources do not indicate any further dialogue. This is probably an expression of a drifting apart between the two camps. As the evangelical movement grew in relevance, it invested all its efforts in strengthening its own structures.

Socio-political issues

In the late 1970s, a new strategic theme appeared for the first time on the EEA agenda. In 1977, the EEA started to address religious liberty issues in Spain, Greece and Eastern Europe, speaking up on behalf of evangelicals whose rights were threatened.³⁷ This concern for religious liberty has remained part of the EEA agenda ever since.

Organizational issues

The 1970s and 1980s were a time of growth, as Italy (1975), Portugal (1977), Greece

30 'Tagung des Rates der Europäischen Evangelischen Allianz vom 28. September–1. Oktober 1971 in Schaffhausen/Neuhausen, Schweiz', 6.

31 Minutes of the EEA Council Meeting in Bad Homburg, 17–21 October 1986, 3.

32 'Protokoll der Ratstagung im Bibelinstitut Nogent sur Marne bei Paris, Frankreich, vom 24. bis 26.9.1974', 2–3.

33 See 'Europäische Evangelische Allianz. Protokoll über die Ratstagung vom 23.–25. Sept. 1975 in Bethesda und Bellahøj Kirche, Bronshøj, Kopenhagen'.

34 See European Evangelical Alliance, 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Council Held at the Hotel Colibri Castelfdefels, Barcelona, Spain, 18–20 September 1979', 2.

35 EEA 1979 Minutes, 4; European Evangelical Alliance, 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Council Held at Stadtmission Lausanne, Switzerland, 29 September–2 October', 2.

36 See e.g. European Evangelical Alliance, 'Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee at the Ons Centrum, Driebergen, the Netherlands, 30–31 May 1979', 2.

37 EEA, minutes of the Council meeting at Patmos Conference House, Siegen, Germany, 12–13 September 1977, 8–9.

(1978), the Netherlands (1979) and French-speaking Belgium (1982)³⁸ joined the EEA while representatives from additional national EAs attended GCMs as guests and observers. Despite travel restrictions, a growing number of Eastern European evangelical leaders connected with the EEA. Representatives came to GCM frequently from Yugoslavia, East Germany, Hungary, Romania and Czechoslovakia during the years 1975–1982; there was even a Soviet participant in 1982.

As a result of this growth, the need for at least a part-time, paid general secretary gained increasing attention. A letter dated 1 April 1976 indicated:

The Executive Committee at its last meeting also discussed at length the problem of providing an adequate secretariat for the EEA, which was becoming more necessary in order to deal with the increasing contacts among evangelicals within Europe and their relationships with the rest of the world through bodies like the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. It was agreed to ask each national alliance for its views on the need for a full-time secretary for the EEA, including the question of raising at least a proportion of his financial support from member alliances or from other sources within Europe. The Executive Committee recognised that the growing strength of evangelicals in this continent called for a new, wide concept of coordination, and that this could not be served by the present joint secretaries with their many responsibilities.³⁹

However, once again a lack of financial resources prevented the realization of this desire.⁴⁰

The EEA's growth in focus and ministry during the 1970s and 1980s went along with a strengthening of evangelicalism in Europe and the formation of evangelical institutions in many countries. By the end of the 1980s, there were multiple evangelical networks in Europe: the CCEEA, EEAA, EEMA, FEET and YEEA, plus two networks jointly organized by the EEA and the Lausanne Movement—the Commission on Women's Concerns (CWC) as well as the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization's European Branch. The European Evangelical Communicators Association (EECA) seemed to have been dissolved at this time, as it was no longer mentioned by any sources.

The 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century

The 1990s were a decade of fundamental change, not only in European society but also for the EEA. One expression of this change was the growth in EEA membership. By 1991, with the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the GCM had a broad representation of Central and East European countries.⁴¹ Many became EEA members, including Hungary (possibly 1988), Romania (1991), Czechoslovakia (1991), Bulgaria (1992), Croatia (1992), Albania (1993), Slovakia (1993) and Estonia (1995 or 1996).

38 In the following years, further talks took place with the EA in the Flemish part of the country; see EEA, minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee at the Belgian Bible Institute, 30 November 1982, 5.

39 Gordon Landreth, joint EEA secretary, letter to an unknown group of recipients, 1 April 1976.

40 EEA Council meeting, 12–13 September 1977, 2.

41 Participant package for EEA Council meeting, 19–21 October 1991, Salou, Spain.

Organizational issues

Some issues from earlier periods did not go away. At the 1991 GCM, the BEA once again raised the issue of a full-time general secretary, and the EEA board considered it during the following year. The board was generally open to the idea—but only if the BEA would cover the cost! The British rightly responded that it would be unhealthy for the EEA to be so dependent on a single financial source. Instead, it was proposed to include a contribution towards the salary of a full-time general secretary in each of the national EAs' budgets for 1993–1994.⁴² The general secretary at the time, Karl-Wilhelm Hees of Germany, had proposed an arrangement by which each member EA would contribute financially to the EEA in proportion to the size of its own national budget.⁴³

No sources indicate any response to Hees' proposal. However, in 1992 the EEA found a different solution. Stuart McAllister of Operation Mobilisation (OM) was nominated and elected as general secretary, giving the EEA 25 percent of his time.⁴⁴ As McAllister remained on staff with OM and was raising his personal support, he did not have to rely on an EEA salary. Soon thereafter, an office was established in Vienna and McAllister's secretary, Susanne Bart, also began to work part-time for the EEA, again sustained financially by a personal support team.

Already in 1991, a committee was working on a revision of the EEA constitution and bylaws, which the GCM approved in 1992.⁴⁵ For the first time, explicit references to defending religious freedom were added, at the request of the Spanish EA. Another new purpose was to represent evangelicals to churches, governments, and the general public across Europe.

Also at the 1992 GCM meeting, the EEA's financial situation, especially in light of the cost of its plans to establish a socio-political office in Brussels, was discussed intensively. As one council delegate emphasized, 'It is quite dangerous for two countries [the UK and Germany] to carry the EEA financially.'⁴⁶ The challenge to retain financial stability would continue for some time, especially as the budget grew from approximately 113,000 euros in 1999 to 337,000 euros in 2006.⁴⁷ Derek Copley, who became EEA president in 1996, wrote in a letter of September 1996:

We are still living in a somewhat unreal world in EEA. We only survive because of the personal support to the McAllisters and Susanne and if they were to disappear, then we would be in real difficulties. Somehow we need to build up greater financial resources on an annual basis so that we are well prepared if we actually need to use the money in future.⁴⁸

42 Protocol for EEA Council meeting, 19–21 October 1991, Salou, Spain, 1–2.

43 Memo of Karl-Wilhelm Hees, dated 15 March 1991 and contained in the delegate package for the 1991 Council meeting.

44 'Europäische Evangelische Allianz Ratstagung, 16–18 October 1992, Rome', 2.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid, 3.

47 Gordon Showell-Rogers, 'Reviewing and Dreaming', internal document, 23 February 2006. The large budget increase was partly due to the growth of the EEA's work, but primarily because several people were now having their personal support sent to the EEA to pay their salaries.

48 Derek Copley, letter to Frank Probst (of the Swiss EA and treasurer of EEA), 18 September 1996.

Indeed, in summer 1997, McAllister announced his resignation; he left at the end of the year to join Ravi Zacharias International Ministries. It took some time to identify a successor, and not until early 1999 did Gordon Showell-Rogers, previously with International Student Christian Services (ISCS, now called Friends International), who had also served with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) as Austrian director, assume the position of general secretary. He too brought his own financial support structure with him.

The first years of Showell-Rogers' leadership were characterized by continuing growth, as new national EAs came into existence and many of them promptly joined the EEA: Turkey, Finland and Poland in 2000, Latvia and Macedonia in 2002, Sweden (re-joining) and Kazakhstan in 2003, and Ireland in 2004.

Another structural innovation was the introduction of an affiliate membership. In 2001, the Council created this new membership category, and various pan-European evangelical agencies joined the EEA as affiliate members soon afterwards. These included the European Educators Christian Association, the International Bible Society, Trans World Radio (all three of these had previously been 'extraordinary' members), Agape, Greater Europe Mission, IFES, International Teams, the Zacharias Trust, Scripture Union, TEMA/Mission and Youth for Christ (all 2001); Viva Network (2002); the Luis Palau Evangelistic Association and OM (2003); and Jews for Jesus (2004). Other achievements included the launching of an EEA website and the appointment of associate staff members, who helped to increase the organization's capacity in youth ministry, leadership development and fund raising. Showell-Rogers' greatest strength was on the relational side, connecting well with many of the NEAs and networking effectively.

Theological and strategic issues

At the 1994 GCM, EEA general secretary McAllister indicated that he still did not have clarity on his exact role. He raised several strategic questions: What needs to be done to strengthen national EAs and establish new ones? How intentional are national EAs about recruiting new members within their country? How can we handle our financial challenges? A 1996 document called 'Towards a Healthy Evangelical Alliance', composed by president Copley, addressed how to help boards of national EAs become more visionary, representative and strategic in their work. In spring 1996, an action plan for the years 1996 to 1999 was established. Following are some of the points contained therein:

- To see the Council meeting become an effective and strategic forum within the next two years.
- To see new EAs in at least four countries by 1999.
- To see all EAs in Europe progressively conform to the pattern to be agreed upon by the Executive Committee.
- To see increasing mission emphasis with concrete goals and active partnerships, particularly in the most unreached parts of Europe.
- To see our EEA partnership programme defined, developed and functioning.
- To see development of resources to cover all previously agreed-upon plans and goals.

- Articulation and presentation of a missiology of hope, including theological reflection, strategy, models and methods.⁴⁹

As mentioned above, at the end of 1997 Stuart McAllister resigned as general secretary of EEA and Gordon Showell-Rogers was appointed as his successor. Rudolf Westerheide, at the time an EEA board member, summarized why the board was proposing Showell-Rogers as the new general secretary:

For a long time, we have been trying to lead the EEA into a new era. However, now we are at the point where we need to build up what has been begun. Stuart [McAllister] acted as a catalyst, opening new things, pushing forward with vision and strategic thinking. The vision is set. Now we need to consolidate, and this would require a different type of person than Stuart was.⁵⁰

Intra-evangelical and inter-church relations

Besides developing its own ministries, the EEA also began to become involved in other initiatives, such as the European Round Table (ERT), a 1991 initiative that sought to connect major evangelical players and networks in Europe to foster greater cooperation and more effective evangelism. The groups invited to become part of the ERT included the EEA, the Lausanne Movement, AD2000, Discippling a Whole Nation (DAWN), the International Charismatic Coalition, and the Coalition for the Evangelisation of Europe (CEE), which consisted of OM, Youth with a Mission, Youth for Christ, Campus Crusade or Agape, and IFES. Out of the ERT grew the vision for Hope for Europe in 1994, co-sponsored by the EEA and the Lausanne Europe Committee. Hope for Europe was a relationally based network of evangelical leaders from across Europe, aiming at five goals:

- to nurture a culture of hope for Europe;
- to promote body life or networking beyond local church expressions, across cities, nations and the continent;
- to encourage Europeans to think and act European;
- to restore biblical perspectives on Europe's past and future; and
- to seek effective engagement with challenges of the present.⁵¹

In May 1996, a first New Europe Forum Conference was held in Brussels, followed by further conferences in the subsequent years. Hope for Europe continued to operate into the following decade. A 'Hope 21' conference (so named because it was looking forward to the twenty-first century) under the theme 'Shaping Europe's Future Together' was held in Budapest from 27 April to 1 May 2002. It was co-sponsored by the EEA, the Lausanne Committee and the CEE, with some 25 different two-day consultations conducted by various networks in addition to plenary sessions and national consultations. In his 2002 annual report to the EEA General Assembly, Showell-Rogers wrote that he believed the three main goals of Hope 21 had been wonderfully achieved. He described them as follows:

49 EEA Action Plan for 1996–1999, dated March 1996.

50 EEA Council Meeting minutes, Sofia, Bulgaria, 21–25 October 1998, 4.

51 Jeff Fountain, 'Towards Hope II', <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert451hinkelmann1> (14 December 2020).

1. Strengthen pan-European networks.
2. Trigger further reflection about Europe as a whole and about the responsibilities of the evangelical church in Europe at the start of the 21st century.
3. Encourage people from each nation to consider the implications of the conference for their own nations.⁵²

However, the EEA's desire to clarify its long-term relationship with Hope for Europe did not lead to a partnership agreement as hoped, but only to a memorandum of understanding.⁵³ In retrospect, Showell-Rogers concluded:

My Job Description had expected 80 percent of my time to be spent on 'Hope for Europe' (HfE)—which was perceived as the viable vehicle for European cooperation. For all its vision and potential, I soon recognised that this vehicle would struggle to provide continuity for Europe's evangelicals, and that the EEA (constituted and with a core constituency) also needed strengthening at its core. That became clear to others (though it took time to process the full change of paradigm). An external friend of the EEA facilitated joint meetings of the EEA, the EEMA (who I believed needed to be central to the conversation) and the HfE processes—leading eventually to a Partnership Agreement between the EEA and EEMA and a Memorandum of Understanding between EEA/EEMA and HfE.⁵⁴

Socio-political issues

Along with the EEA's numerical growth during this period, key new initiatives were also introduced. At the core of this expansion was the EEA's socio-political work at the European Union (EU) institutions in Brussels, starting in 1993 under the leadership of Julia Doxat-Purser. Although the initial agreement was for a trial period of one year,⁵⁵ the work in Brussels soon became a vital part of the EEA's ministry, looking at how evangelicals could contribute to and influence EU policies while also representing evangelicals to EU institutions.

The beginning of this undertaking was not easy. Doxat-Purser wrote in retrospect:

Back in 1994, few EAs engaged in politics and most Evangelicals saw socio-political engagement as a distraction from the Gospel, rather than part of their Gospel mission. Some, especially Germans, thought it would be dangerous to be involved. If the Brussels rep was to represent Evangelical views to the EU, then Evangelicals needed to have views. We didn't! ... So EEA stuck almost exclusively to religious freedom.⁵⁶

52 EEA October 2002 General Assembly, General Secretary's Report, 2.

53 'Reviewing and Dreaming', 1.

54 Gordon Showell-Rogers, '1999–2009 Progress Review and the EEA's Response to the European Environment 2009', 1.

55 'Bericht über die EEA Vertretung in Brüssel' (Fortschritte 1994), part of the 1994 GCM participant package.

56 Julia Doxat-Purser, 'EEA: The Socio-Political Story 1994–2020 through Julia's Eyes', unpublished internal document, 1.

A 1996 document described the purposes of the EEA ministry in Brussels:

1. to monitor, evaluate, and inform on issues flowing through the EU;
2. to represent the EEA at key discussions with various EU officials on church and society concerns;
3. to deepen understanding among European churches about contemporary European affairs and developments;
4. to facilitate a network of committed individuals across the whole of Europe to engage effectively in their roles as committed Christians;
5. to call and prepare special consultations to address specific issues or expose EU or government officials to thinking from evangelical perspectives;
6. to help in matters of religious liberty and mobilise assistance and information as and when needed; and
7. to assist national EAs to develop their own programme and efforts to address national needs and issues.⁵⁷

For a number of years, even some EEA board members questioned the validity of this socio-political ministry, especially in light of the financial costs involved.

2010 to the present

I limit my remarks on the past decade for two main reasons. First, as a professional historian, I believe we still lack the historical distance needed to present and interpret meaningfully the events of this time period. Second, having been an EEA board member since fall 2013, I am too closely involved with the organization to take a detached approach.

In 2010, Niek Tramper of the Netherlands succeeded Showell-Rogers as general secretary. Tramper had served with IFES Netherlands previously. During his tenure, the EEA headquarters moved from the UK to the Netherlands. However, Tramper stepped down from his position in 2012. An important part of his difficulty was financial, as the EEA was not able to cover raise funds for his salary.

Soon thereafter, Thomas Bucher of OM stepped in as interim general secretary, and he was named to the permanent position at the 2013 General Assembly. Bucher has devoted considerable effort to consolidating the work that was pioneered before his appointment.

For the first time, the EEA's socio-political ministry in Brussels was no longer questioned, as a dedicated funding source gave this work a healthier financial foundation. Advocacy on behalf of evangelicals, the launch and dissemination of the Global Charter of Conscience drafted by Os Guinness, a Europe-wide coordinating role during the 2015–2017 refugee crisis, and creation of the European Freedom network to fight human trafficking are just some of this office's achievements.

Emphasis has been placed on helping to strengthen and develop national EAs, especially those founded in recent decades. Along with published resources, regional meetings of the EEA have proven to be of special value for some of the smaller and struggling EAs, such as those in the Balkans.

57 Job description for the EEA Brussels representative, May 1996.

A strategy for networking within the EEA has been developed, with the result that all the Hope for Europe networks merged with the EEA; they continue to reflect both names, being called EEA's Hope for Europe networks. A Hope for Europe event took place in fall 2018 in Tallinn, Estonia, where networks and national EAs considered how they can complement each other's work for the sake of the kingdom of God. Today, 17 EEA networks are in place.

In recent years, a central database was established, and an up-to-date webpage and regular communications have strengthened connections with the membership. Further stability was achieved with the relocation of the EEA's administrative headquarters to Bonn, Germany in spring 2019.

Concluding remarks

A 2020 paper by Thomas Bucher provides insight into the EEA's current direction. He wrote that the EEA is uniquely positioned:

- to discern what is happening throughout Europe through prayer, listening and working with its members and networks and thus take spiritual responsibility on the European level;
- to facilitate collaboration and make available resources with, through and for its members and networks;
- to represent Europe's evangelicals at the pan-European level;
- to especially support the national Evangelical Alliances to do their job of leadership and serving in their nation—
 - to discern what is happening and thus take spiritual responsibility,
 - to facilitate collaboration and make available resources,
 - to represent evangelicals at the national level, and especially
 - to support the local church to do their job in their community.

This needs well integrated affiliates and well-functioning EEA Hope for Europe networks supporting the EEA and the national EAs in their task. A special emphasis needs to be put on (a) generations, each group (including youth and children) adding their share; (b) women being able to contribute with their God-given gifts; (c) BAME [Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic groups] being an integral part of the European church; and (d) the disabled being 'normal' members of the church.⁵⁸

From its small beginnings nearly 70 years ago as a counter-movement to what is now the WEA, the EEA has grown into a representative voice for European evangelicals today. European politics, culture and societies have changed greatly during these years. So has the situation for the Christian church, with many societies becoming increasingly hostile towards evangelical Christianity. At the same time, some of the challenges that have accompanied the EEA's existence remain today—most notably the financial ones. Bucher, who like many of his predecessors has raised his own financial support, plans to retire at the end of 2022. Financial limitations may well be the primary factor that determines the EEA's future and the scope of its activity.

58 Thomas Bucher, 'EEA History 2012–2020 and Future', unpublished paper (2020), 2.

Promoting Quality Worship Experience in Contemporary Nigeria

Benjamin Isola Akano

Many churches around the world struggle to recognize diversity in ways that overcome racial and ethnic barriers and unify the body of Christ. This article draws on concepts from communication studies to develop ways to intentionally improve intercultural relationships, with illustrations from Nigeria where the presence of hundreds of distinct ethnic groups makes virtually every congregation intercultural.

Introduction and theoretical framework

Multiculturalism is a reality of contemporary society. As a result of globalization, a large percentage of the world's population participates in intercultural activities as part of their daily events.¹ The church is also affected by this global trend. Accordingly, in many locations, a quality corporate worship experience requires a liturgy that considers the multicultural nature of the congregation.

In March 2019, I interviewed twenty Nigerian pastors for my research. Only two stated that their congregation was mono-cultural. Unfortunately, just five of the other 18 pastors indicated that they consciously design their church activities in response to their multicultural reality.² This problem calls for urgent attention, especially in Africa, since most Africans consider their religious worship experience a major source of comfort and emotional assurance amidst their socio-cultural challenges and life tensions. In addition, worship gathers people from different backgrounds to share in a relationship with God. Thus, the church cannot afford to compound an already tense atmosphere through its liturgies when it is seeking to produce holistic transformation in its members.

In this paper, I identify three interrelated challenges associated with corporate worship in most contemporary churches in Nigeria, given the multicultural nature of their membership, and I discuss how to promote quality worship experiences in such contexts. For contemporary churches in most Nigerian communities to experience quality worship, efforts must be made to recognize and address the challenges of ethnocentrism, nepotism and identity gaps, amongst others, and to

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1 Larry A. Samovar, Richard E. Porter, Edwin R. McDaniel and Carolyn S. Roy, *Communication between Cultures* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2013), 1.

2 I randomly selected pastors from the Nigerian cities of Ogbomoso, Kaduna, Makurdi, Lagos and Calabar, including Baptists, ECWA and Pentecostal congregations, for my interviews. (ECWA initially stood for Evangelical Churches of West Africa; the name has since been changed to Evangelical Churches Winning All. Its headquarters is in Jos, Nigeria.)

appeal to specific principles of intercultural relationships so as to ensure satisfying communication and spiritual outcomes. To this end, I first discuss the biblical basis for Christian worship, emphasizing its relational importance. I also point out certain intercultural realities that may pose challenges to corporate worship experience in contemporary churches, and I propose specific actions to foster a quality worship experience.

Given the importance of communication and identity in any multicultural context, I draw on the communication theory of identity (CTI), developed by Michael L. Hecht and his colleagues, for theoretical insights. CTI emerged in the 1980s and holds that, since we are social beings, human 'lives revolve around communication, relationships and communities and ... operate from multiple and shifting identities.'³ The importance of this theory relates to its focus on the relationship between communication and identity, which is often reflected across cultural lines. Relationships exist both between God and people and among a group of people.

Eura Jung and Hecht submit that the relationship between communication and identity has both individual and social components. They discuss identity in four inseparable frames that affect people's communication, especially across cultures. First, the *personal* identity frame deals with an individual's self-awareness and self-image. Second, *enacted* identity, also called communication identity, focuses on how individuals express themselves. The third frame, *relational* identity, is determined by the relationship an individual has with others. Fourth, *communal* identity is a reflection of the society, group or organization to which an individual belongs.⁴ These differing and shifting identities affect how the members of a multicultural church interpret their communicative actions and symbols during corporate worship.

Therefore, it is critical to engage participants' identities during worship 'to be able to communicate, educate effectively and effect change and renewal of peoples'.⁵ Assuredly, the multicultural church is filled with worshippers of different identities, formed from individual expressions of the four identity frames discussed above. Their interaction can lead to the challenge of identity gaps—situations where people are seen in a different light from how they see themselves—in a corporate worship experience. To avoid this problem, a meaningful worship experience will involve appropriate engagement of participants' varying identities.

The multicultural context of contemporary Nigeria

Nigeria is an extremely multicultural country, with more than 420 people groups and cultural identities, including Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri and about 40 smaller groups in the North; over 230 languages with no particular dominant group in the Middle Belt; and Yoruba, Ibo, Urhobo, Edo, Isoko, Efik, Ijaw, Ibibio and Anang as dominant

3 Michael L. Hecht, 'Communication Theory of Identity', in Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 139.

4 Eura Jung and Michael L. Hecht, 'Elaborating the Communication Theory of Identity: Identity Gaps and Communication Outcomes', *Communication Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (Summer 2004): 265–67.

5 John S. Pobee, 'Identity, Religion, Nation', *Journal of African Christian Thought* 14, no. 1 (June 2011): 28.

groups along with about 50 other indigenous peoples in the South.⁶ This is one reason why J. F. Ade Ajayi describes Nigeria as ‘a land great in variety’, resulting from the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by the colonial leaders.⁷ Beyond this, the realities of globalization, notably advances in transport technology amongst others, have made intercultural encounters a daily phenomenon in contemporary society, including rural, urban and metropolitan centres alike.⁸

Almost every community in Nigeria is a multicultural setting. For instance, although the southwest is home to the Yoruba people, its major towns and suburbs include other ethnic groups from Nigeria as well as immigrants from other countries, especially nearby West African nations. Consequently, in southwestern cities such as Ogbomoso, Oyo, Ibadan and Abeokuta, there are Hausa, Fulani, Igbo, Tiv and Igala people working in businesses or as civil servants. Immigrants, many from Niger, Benin and Togo, engage in farming and other casual labour in villages and suburbs. Others of various ethnic groups have relocated because of marriage to a Yoruba spouse. Therefore, churches located in these places cannot afford to function in a mono-cultural manner.

A biblical basis for quality corporate worship

The word ‘worship’ is translated from the Greek *proskuneo*, meaning ‘give reverence to’. Thus, Christian worship means reverence to the triune God. R. P. Martins sees the church community in worship as continuing the Jewish worship traditions of the Old Testament, in which most members of the early church were steeped. Martins notes that various Old Testament forms are reflected in the New Testament. For example, the *berakah*, by which the Jews bless God as Creator who also sustains the universe, is also found in the New Testament (2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3).⁹ Isaiah 43:7 affirms that man was created to bring glory to God. Both God’s communion with Adam and his instruction for the Israelites to build a temple for his name reflect this priority (Gen 3:8–24; Ex 25:8). Jesus’ message to the Samaritan woman in John 4 indicates that God wants people to worship him in spirit and truth.

When it comes to personal worship, people respond to God in different ways because they have different encounters with God.¹⁰ The experience of Moses was different from Isaiah’s. Each responded according to the revelation of God to him. In corporate worship, such as temple or synagogue worship, specific guidelines are followed.¹¹ Examples include the specifications for diverse offerings in Leviticus 1–7

6 Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World: The Day-by-Day Guide to Praying for the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 424–26.

7 J. F. Ade Ajayi, ‘Nigeria’, *World Book Encyclopedia* (Chicago: World Book, 1986), 326.

8 John Stott addressed this matter extensively in *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 4th ed., updated by Roy McCloughry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

9 R. P. Martin, ‘Worship, Early Church’, in J. D. Douglas (ed.), *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 1062.

10 Paul O. Davidson, *Come, Let Us Worship: Biblical Foundations for Corporate Christian Worship* (Ibadan: Publications Department, Nigerian Baptist Convention, 2002), 9–10.

11 D. P. Nelson, ‘Worship’, in C. Brand, C. Draper and A. England, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1687.

and the worship activities listed in Acts 2:42–47. Both personal and corporate worship involve various cultic activities, such as prayers, specific rituals and singing, to achieve a sustained relationship between man and God as well as social concord in the community of faith.¹² The activities performed may be individual (openly or privately), in a group where only members participate (corporate exclusive) or in a group where non-members are also welcomed (corporate inclusive—public worship at a church normally falls into this category).

A church's public worship experience should have the capacity to attract non-members to salvation, just as the unplanned worship session of Paul and Silas in Acts 16:25–26 communicated grace to an observer who did not previously believe.¹³ One implication of this openness is the possibility of attracting more worshippers from diverse ethnic and socio-cultural backgrounds to a particular worship service.

Furthermore, although Christian worship may refer to a general way of life (Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 10:31), it can also be considered as an act that brings together the people of God.¹⁴ Such a gathering must be doxological (1 Cor 10:31), theocentric (Rev 19:10; 22:9), dialogical (Ps 96:4), saturated with the Word (Ps 150:2), participatory (Ps 79:13), Christ-led (Heb 2:12), Spirit-empowered (Phil 3:3), encompassing one's whole life (Rom 12:1), hearty (Hos 6:6), edifying (Rom 15:5–6), trans-generational (Ps 148:12–13; cf. Tit 2:2–8), and intentionally instructed (1 Thes 4:1).¹⁵ These twelve principles are critical for achieving the desired goals of any corporate worship.

The two ultimate goals of all activities of any corporate worship are the glory of God and the transformation of believers.¹⁶ Thus, the quality of any church worship is determined by how God is glorified and how worshippers' lives are transformed. In this light, worship is revealed as a 'dramatic, dynamic, dialogical encounter between the triune God of the Bible and his people in which God speaks and/or acts to reveal himself and his will and God's people respond to him in appropriate biblical ways'.¹⁷ This definition aligns with Tokunboh Adeyemo's observation that biblical worship is rooted in redemption, relationship and representation.¹⁸ The revelation of God to his people leads to interaction and communication between God and the worshippers, and amongst the worshippers. Therefore, for God to be glorified and lives to be transformed, there must be satisfying communication outcomes in both the vertical and horizontal relationships. Worshippers coming from various, often difficult or pressure-filled life situations should leave worship refreshed and encouraged to relate with and be blessings to others, irrespective of their backgrounds. Thus, our contemporary churches face the challenge of achieving

12 W. Harrelson, 'Worship', in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed. (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1983), 1014.

13 E. O. Fasipe, 'Music: An Effective Communicative Vehicle for Mission and Evangelism', *Ogbomoso Journal of Theology* 15, no 1 (2010): 173–82.

14 Nelson, 'Worship', 1687.

15 Ron Man, 'The Bridge: Balancing Biblical Faithfulness and Cultural Sensitivity', *Ethnodoxology* (September–October 2014): 11–12, available at <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert451akano1>.

16 Davidson, *Come, Let Us Worship*, 45.

17 Davidson, *Come, Let Us Worship*, 2.

18 Tokunboh Adeyemo, 'Worship and Praise', in *African Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: Word Alive, 2006), 251.

satisfying communication relationships amongst people from different cultural backgrounds through both verbal and non-verbal means.

The challenging realities of intercultural corporate worship

In Christian worship, the church gathers as a community of God's people and engages in communication with God and with one another. Communication may be defined as 'a dynamic process in which people attempt to share their thoughts with other people through the use of symbols in a particular setting'.¹⁹ Thoughts or ideas may be expressed through prayer, sermons, music, Scripture reading, testimonies, ordinances and other activities that constitute the vertical divine-human and horizontal human-human relationships.²⁰ For the worship experience to be meaningful, the intention of a worship leader must be clearly understood by the other worshippers.²¹ In other words, for a proper response to be appropriated, worshippers' behaviour must be such that they can assign intended meanings to every symbol used without prejudice or inadequate understanding.

Since corporate worship in most Nigerian churches is multicultural in nature, by necessity intercultural communication takes place. Consequently, quality worship must overcome the various challenges inherent in intercultural communication. I will next discuss three types of these challenges.

Ethnocentrism and stereotyping in corporate worship

Ethnocentrism refers to a sense of cultural superiority relative to other cultures. It is a form of prejudice that could lead to discrimination and makes genuine relationships difficult.²² Samovar et al. describe ethnocentrism on three levels: the universal positive level, a mild negative level, and the extreme negative level. At the extreme negative level, emotionalism may overshadow rationality and cause hostility in attitude or action.²³ When people participate in worship with such discriminatory attitudes, they lose the opportunity for a genuinely *koinonic* experience of worship. Further, 1 John 4:20 suggests that the horizontal relationship is critical in determining whether Christians can have an authentic vertical experience of God. This is also true of corporate worship.

A discriminatory experience may not necessarily be due to historical enmity between two groups. Instead, it could be a result of stereotyping, which has to do with gathering and organizing one's perceptions about a group in such a way that one can easily remember the group. Such a perceptual representation may be partially or totally inaccurate.²⁴ Nick Lacey asserts that 'stereotypes are not true or false, but reflect a particular set of ideological values. They are ... mythic ... figures, representing social values in a concise fashion. The degree to which a stereotype is

19 Samovar et al., *Communication between Cultures*, 29.

20 Davidson, *Come, Let Us Worship*, 17.

21 Davidson, *Come, Let Us Worship*, 42.

22 Enoch Wan, 'Ethnocentrism', in A. Scott Moreau, *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 324.

23 Samovar et al., *Communication between Cultures*, 240.

24 Samovar et al., *Communication between Cultures*, 232.

accepted as being “true” or not is dependent upon an individual’s knowledge of the group in question.²⁵

Lacey’s idea reflects individuals’ natural tendency to identify otherness based on specific characteristics known by those classifying them. This idea is consistent with Stuart Hall’s observation that stereotyping emphasizes differences rather than similarities. According to Hall, stereotyping is a representational practice that works through essentializing (describing or representing a group by what one considers their main characteristic), reductionism, naturalization and binary opposition. He identifies a construction of otherness and exclusion—in-group versus out-group, or an ‘us-versus them’ dichotomy—and an emergence of violent hierarchy, resulting in hegemony, as serious consequences of the process.²⁶

Stereotyping can affect corporate worship through the over-generalization that is often present in a negative evaluation. As an extreme example, I witnessed an altercation between two delegates to the 2014 Nigerian Baptist convention-in-session at Ibadan. One of them belonged to a tribal group from the northern part of the country, while the other was from the south. At some point, the latter angrily referred to the former as ‘Boko Haram’. In doing so, he was associating the supposed Christian brother, with whom he should be in unity, with a notorious terrorist group because both Boko Haram and the brother are from northern Nigeria. Thus, to this person, at least in a moment of frustration, all northerners belong in some way to the dreaded group. Entering a corporate worship session with such a mindset will create an atmosphere of fear and suspicion in other groups.

The relationship between the Jukun and Kuteb groups of Taraba state in the northeast demonstrates another extreme case of ethnocentrism within the ranks of the church. It started with worship disruption and culminated in a permanent breakaway of the Reformed Church of Christ in Nigeria (RCCN) from the Christian Reformed Church–Nigeria (CRCN) in 1974.²⁷ The root of this crisis dates back to 1914, when the colonial masters subjected the Kuteb people to the Jukun. It was like bringing two enemies together within the same district.²⁸

Similar conflicts have occurred between the Ife and Modakeke people in Osun state and between the Aguleri and Umuleri communities in Anambra state.²⁹ Nwachukwu J. Uzoma and Osadola O. Samuel reported that the Ife–Modakeke problem resulted in the destruction of facilities, such as schools and hospitals, that were owned by churches in areas where the two groups were represented. They also stated that intermarriages and interethnic friendships, which had been a norm, were

25 Nick Lacey, *Image and Representation: Key Concepts in Media Studies* (London: MacMillan, 1998), 139.

26 Stuart Hall, ‘The Spectacle of the Other’, in Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 2003), 249–66.

27 TEKAN Churches, ‘New Member Denominations’ (n.d.), worlddea.org/yourls/ert451akano2.

28 ‘Kuteb’ (n.d.), <https://worlddea.org/yourls/ert451akano3>.

29 Eric Sottas, *Hope Betrayed? A Report of Impunity and State-Sponsored Violence in Nigeria* (Geneva: World Organisation Against Torture; Ikeja, Nigeria: Centre for Law Enforcement Education, 2002), 35–67.

forced to a halt.³⁰ These social implications of the conflict have direct effects on the interpersonal relationships of church members who belong to these groups. Ultimately, the worship environment is likely to become poisoned.

Although these examples are extreme cases, mild stereotypes can create a degree of suspicion amongst conflicting groups, such that their presence in the same church worship service may lead to unsatisfying experiences. Rather than being transformed, the parties may end up being deformed, at least emotionally. This is because fear and tension pervade worship events where an unaddressed history of conflict exists between two ethno-cultural groups.

Nepotism in corporate worship

Nepotism, or ‘the practice of unfairly giving the best jobs to members of your family when you are in position of power’,³¹ can often create tensions in corporate worship. Nepotism is a reflection of ethnocentrism in the exercise of power. As noted earlier, a critical aspect of stereotyping is that it creates a sense of hegemony. This results from the fact that individuals create a hierarchy where they favour their own group, giving them priority over others.³²

There is evidence of both real and perceived nepotism in Nigerian churches. My interactions with some Nigerian Christians of different denominational backgrounds have indicated that although churches and denominations have constitutions and by-laws that give people equal leadership opportunities irrespective of their ethnicity, some also have ‘unwritten constitutions’ that reserve certain offices for people of specific cultural backgrounds based on ethno-cultural hierarchy. If these arrangements are not balanced across participating groups, they constitute nepotism. Sometimes, certain groups in the church may be stereotyped as unsuitable for particular leadership roles; for instance, members of an ethnic group stereotyped as unfaithful in handling money may be excluded from the church’s financial team, without being considered on their individual merits. In such a situation, members of the minority group within the worshipping community may have the same sense of marginalization that was experienced in the early church (Acts 6:1). This could create barriers in their *koinonic* experience because of negative attitudes of prejudice.

Ethnocentrism and associated stereotypes result in the denigrating of a category of people based on prejudices against them. People may unfairly ascribe an identity to a group that is contrary to the group’s avowed identity. As a result, members of the mistreated group experience identity crises. This discomfort affects the whole worship experience in general, but especially the *koinonic* aspect of worship in which the worshipping community is expected to view itself as one body (Jn 13:34–35; Ac 2:44). In such situations, people are not assigned duties based on their faithfulness, availability and gifts. When others from the same cultural group observe this

30 Nwachukwu John Uzoma and Osadola Oluwaseun Samuel, ‘Socio-Economic Implications of the Ife/Modakeke Conflicts on Intergroup Relations in Nigeria: A Re-Assessment’, *Global Scientific Journal* 7, no. 4 (April 2019): 713–15.

31 *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 5th ed., DVD-ROM (Pearson Education, 2009).

32 Hall, ‘The Spectacle of the Other’, 258–59.

scenario, they tend to withdraw or react in other ways that counteract the intended benefits of Christian worship.

Identity gaps in corporate worship

Challenges in communication are inevitable, especially in a multicultural context, because people have different patterns of interpretation. Thus, their identities affect their modes of communication in worship. Since corporate worship brings together individuals who have different identities informed by their cultural backgrounds, their interactions will be subject to identity gap challenges.³³ Identity gaps are a common intercultural communication phenomenon that affects the assignment of meaning to symbols due to dissonant beliefs and practices.³⁴ They entail conflict between at least two of the four frames of identity. For example, in a gap between personal and relational frames of identity, an individual's self-perception conflicts with what others who relate to them assert about them; in a gap between personal and enacted frames of identity, one's own perception may be inconsistent with what one communicates or expresses to their counterparts in worship.³⁵ Such conflicts may be due to limited knowledge, differences in the use of words and symbols, stereotypes or prejudices. Identity gaps distort the message and/or the response, inhibiting conversational appropriateness and effectiveness.³⁶ Such distortions reduce the quality of worship and hinder the desired results of recognizing God's glory and the holistic transformation of humanity.

As in general communication, worship leaders often communicate through both verbal and non-verbal means.³⁷ In a multicultural congregation, the risk is that the multiple forms of communication may unintentionally contradict rather than complementing each other. The participants' different frames of identity can affect how they assign meaning to words, symbols or actions. Consequently, some worshippers may perceive messages other than those intended by the worship leader. This miscommunication can occur across cultural, sub-cultural or generational boundaries.

I witnessed one situation in a Nigerian church where mild confusion occurred because someone who used Hausa as a second language prayed the words, '*Ka watse mu da alherinka, ya Allah.*' He was trying to say 'Send us out with your grace, O God', but those with Hausa as their mother tongue heard the more ominous meaning, 'Scatter us by your grace, O God.' This is because of differences in assigning positive or negative connotations to the Hausa word *watse*. Notably, regardless of the pattern of meaning assignment, this episode also contained an

33 Yeside Odiase, 'Biblical Injunctions on True Worship in John 4:19–24 and Its Implications for Contemporary Church Music Leaders', in Gabriel O. Olaniyan and Samuel O. Akintola (eds.), *Raising Kingdom Ministers for Christ through Theological Educators* (Ogbomosho: Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, 2017), 109, 111.

34 Youngju Shin and Michael L. Hecht, 'Communication Theory of Identity', in Young Yun Kim and Kelly L. McKay-Semmler (eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication* (John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 4, doi: 10.1002/9781118783665.ieicc0008.

35 Jung and Hecht, 'Elaborating the Communication Theory', 268–69.

36 Jung and Hecht, 'Elaborating the Communication Theory', 271.

37 A. Scott Moreau, Evvy Hay Campbell and Susan Greener, *Effective Intercultural Communication* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 15.

element of ethnocentrism, since the rendering of the word *watse* would not have created any tension if the individual praying had been perceived as a ‘bona fide’ Hausa man. Even such small manifestations of identity gaps can destabilize the flow of worship and thereby affect worshippers’ experience.

Fostering quality corporate worship experience

Corporate worship in any multicultural context can be God-glorifying and enriching for all worshippers, irrespective of their identity differences. Worship is a suitable environment for displaying the diversity of God’s creation in harmonious ways by recognizing the varieties of cultural milieus represented in the church. We can deduce from the preceding discussion that enjoying quality worship experience in any multicultural congregation requires intercultural communication competence, amongst other things. This includes the ability to adjust, assimilate and adapt to the cultures of others without any form of prejudice.³⁸ To this end, leaders must understand basic principles of communication and be able to impart them to the members, so that they can relate to one another satisfactorily across ethnic lines. I will propose five basic principles of intercultural relationship that can enhance quality worship experience.

First, fostering quality corporate worship in an intercultural setting requires an intercultural positioning system (IPS), or the cross-cultural equivalent of global positioning systems. IPS has to do with understanding others’ cultural pattern by first understanding one’s own cultural pattern. It begins with self-location—that is, with worshippers developing their own cultural self-awareness.³⁹ They must then treat their own cultural pattern as a reference point, not as a standard for judging others. Understanding oneself and one’s cultural standpoint precedes understanding others and their cultural orientations. This helps people to become mindful of other worshippers and their cultures, maintaining an appropriate speech rate with them and monitoring one’s vocabulary to avoid conversing with them above their level of understanding.⁴⁰ It also reminds them to engage constantly in checking verbal and non-verbal responses to ensure mutual understanding.⁴¹

Second, addressing the potentially divisive aspects of multicultural corporate worship requires creating awareness of unity in diversity. One essential quality in the African communal system is that, in spite of the presence of ethnic diversity, groups often recognize a reification factor by which their unity is strengthened. For instance, although the Yoruba people of Nigeria have different ethnic subgroups (such as Oyo, Ijesa, Ekiti, Egba and Igbomina), Yoruba people of southwest Nigeria take advantage of their collective identity and unite under shared Ile-Ife and

38 Brian H. Spitzberg and Gabrielle Changnon, ‘Conceptualizing Intercultural Competence’, in Darla K. Deardorff, (ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (London: Sage, 2009), 6, 7.

39 Janet M. Bennett, ‘Cultivating Intercultural Competence: A Process Perspective’, in Darla K. Deardorff (ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (London: Sage Publications, 2009), 127.

40 Samovar et al., *Communication between Cultures*, 261.

41 Samovar et al., *Communication between Cultures*, 262.

Oduduwa myths.⁴² ('Uniting under a myth' refers here to identifying a common history of ancestry by which a people can trace and establish common heritage and identity. The Oduduwa story has served this purpose for the Yoruba, reinforcing their common identity.)

Although the church already has a reification factor par excellence, namely Jesus Christ, there is a need to constantly emphasize this role in a multicultural church, as the unifying factor above all ethnic phenomena, so as to effect a change of orientation from the inside out. In this way, church members can develop their primary, shared identity as believers without losing their cultural identity, which becomes secondary though still valued. This may require a transformative learning procedure by which the embedded ethno-cultural worldview is replaced in part with a biblical conception that brings Christ to the fore.⁴³ Such a transformation is often easily effected in African settings through biblical theology that uses chronological themes, which appeal to the cognition of the average Nigerian worshipper (who is more prone to learning through oral devices than through Western philosophy or systematic theology, which seems abstract to them). This approach helps them to understand the chronological development of God's work in history.

As an example of this strategy, King's Court Fellowship (Bowen University Teaching Hospital Chapel) in Ogbomoso has specific evening programmes that present cultures from different geo-political zones in Nigeria. Such programmes, conducted in a relaxed environment, discuss relationships, foods, festivals and events in a particular culture. The sessions create an avenue for questions and answers that clear up people's doubts and wrong perceptions.

Third, to foster a quality worship experience in a community of cultural plurality, structural and administrative pro-activeness is essential. In Acts 6, the apostles averted what could have been a serious breakdown in fellowship due to perceived discrimination by deploying the first set of seven deacons. Acts 6:7 confirms the positive impact: 'So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.' The contemporary church in Nigeria needs to learn from this example by creating platforms for different cultural groups to be represented.

Furthermore, the contemporary multicultural church can also learn from the early church's *oikos* (house) church network, built according to the pattern of extended family structures in the Graeco-Roman setting. Traditionally, an *oikos* extended beyond a simple family of biologically related persons to include friends, neighbours, employees, clients and customers of the family business. These networks of *oikos* churches became the primary platform for the fulfilment of worship, teaching, ministry, fellowship and proclamation.⁴⁴

42 Toyin Falola, 'Atlantic Yoruba and the Expanding Frontiers of Yoruba Culture and Politics', *J. F. Odujo Lecture* (Ibadan: University of Ibadan, 2012), 17; Toyin Falola, *Violence in Nigeria: The Crisis of Religious Politics and Secular Ideologies* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1998), 6.

43 Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 17, 18.

44 David S. Lim, 'God's Kingdom as *Oikos* Church Networks: A Biblical Theology', *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 34, no. 1-4 (2017): 25-35.

In a multicultural church context, an *oikos* church may comprise families of different ethno-cultural identities living in the same geographic region. The advantage of this small-group approach is that, since every member is not far from the leadership and because of the closeness of members as a family, they can easily identify and deal with any brewing misunderstandings or identity gap challenges. Moreover, a potentially threatened group can more easily find acceptance at a small-group level than in a large group. Consequently, it is easier to handle any potential ethnic-related challenges. For example, though New Heritage Baptist Church, Somolu in Lagos consists mainly of Yoruba people from the southwest, their house groups are often mixed based on the members' geographic location. This has helped them to relate well across ethno-cultural boundaries.

Some independent Pentecostal churches and those of the Nigerian Baptist Convention that are located in urban settings with people of different cultural backgrounds have also been observed to benefit from this strategy, in two ways. First, the co-cultural group members have a sense of belonging in the church. Second, they use the small-group setting to identify, discuss and find ways to address constructively their concerns about happenings in the larger church.

My fourth principle is that a satisfying corporate worship experience can be promoted through historical reconstruction. Storytelling is critical in African settings due to the presence of many people who prefer oral forms of communication, often including some who are illiterate. Historical reconstruction helps to preserve cultural identity. According to Silk U. Ogbu, stories are oral tools that provide a solid foundation for enculturation and for fostering values and norms as they communicate meanings, principles and standards.⁴⁵ Olakunle M. Folami and Taiwo A. Olaiya agree with Ogbu that stories are participatory tools geared towards transmission of meaning. They state further that stories have the potential to deliver therapeutic healing, spiritual guidance, entertainment and leadership development, amongst other things. According to their research, storytelling served to bring a lasting solution to the prolonged Ife–Modakeke crisis referenced above.⁴⁶

In historical reconstruction, the realities of historical facts are not denied but are dealt with in the light of biblical truth. In some cases, such reconstruction will include deconstruction, to remove political distortions that have set one group against another. This factor was, unfortunately, not considered early enough in the aforementioned Jukun-Kuteb conflicts of 1974. Sources indicate that the political strategy of the colonial masters fuelled the conflict when they put two groups with silent misunderstanding in the same emirate, subjecting one to the other. This awkward relationship and the resulting hard feelings were never effectively addressed.

Finally, an overall mechanism for achieving quality worship experience in an intercultural setting should help worshippers to develop intercultural communication competence to the extent that they can worship without being

45 Silk Ugwu Ogbu, 'Deconstructing the Role of Storytelling in the Preservation of Indigenous Nigerian Traditions', *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 5, no. 1 (January 2018): 148–56, doi: 10.14738/assrj.51.4080.

46 Olakunle Michael Folami and Taiwo Akanbi Olaiya, 'Gender, Storytelling and Peace Construction in a Divided Society: A Case Study of the Ife/Modakeke Conflict', *Cogent Social Sciences* 2, no. 1 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2016.1159015>.

hindered by potential barriers, such as ethnocentrism, stereotype, nepotism and identity gaps as discussed above. According to Myron Lustic and Jolene Koester, the eight areas of Brent Reuben's BASIC (Behavioural Assessment Scale for Intercultural Competence) tool for improving intercultural competence may be useful. The eight items include (1) displaying respect for people of other cultures; (2) having a proper orientation to the peoples of other cultural groups; (3) empathizing with people of other cultures in a phenomenological way; (4) appropriate management of interactions; (5) task role behaviour, which concerns the ability to initiate ideas and gain information without becoming alienated from the group; (6) relational role behaviour, to promote harmony and mediation; (7) tolerance for ambiguity and the ability to react to strange situations with minimal discomfort; and (8) an interaction posture that focuses on relating to other worshippers in a non-judgemental way.⁴⁷ An interculturally competent assembly that applies these principles will become more knitted in relationships, making their worship more glorifying to God and transformational for fellow humans, irrespective of cultural differences.

Conclusion

Corporate worship sessions in many contemporary Nigerian communities are inherently intercultural because the worshippers come from different identity backgrounds, including age groups, social statuses, and ethnic and cultural orientations. In such settings, challenges related to intercultural communication arise, including ethnocentrism, nepotism and identity gaps, amongst others. Thus, to experience quality worship, components such as the liturgical order, range of participants, worship styles, languages and music should reflect a clear recognition of the multicultural reality, so that no participant will be left out of the transforming experience that is desired in worship. This may require extra efforts by leaders to guide other worshippers towards developing their own IPS, creating ways to reinforce unity in spite of cultural differences, prompt and pro-active structural and administrative measures to give every culture a voice, engaging existing intercultural strife through historical reconstruction, and helping worshippers to achieve a high level of intercultural competence through appropriate means of education.

The following practical recommendations may be helpful. First, since effective leadership is crucial to achieving the desired goals of worship, church leaders should be exposed to cross-cultural training to minimize ethnocentrism. Second, including songs from different ethnic groups should be a regular part of intercultural churches' worship practices. This helps the concerned group to feel included. Third, leaders of departments and units within a church should be representative of the church's ethnic composition. Fourth, decision making should take the church's geographic and linguistic spread consciously into account. Finally, churches should have trained interpreters. These steps will help to create connectedness among worshippers, especially minority cultural groups. All these steps can facilitate satisfying communication outcomes, glorifying God and advancing the holistic transformation of humanity.

⁴⁷ Myron W. Lustic and Jolene Koester, *Intercultural Competence: Interpersonal Communication across Cultures*, 6th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2010), 72–78.

A Baptist Quadrilateral? A Filipino Outsider's Perspective on Baptist Identity

Francis Jr. S. Samdao

Baptists are a particularly diverse stream of Christians, partly because their theological convictions empower individual decision making. This article discusses colourfully how the diversity of Baptists is reflected in the Philippines today. It seeks to articulate the core features of the Baptist identity and encourages Baptists both to enrich and to be open to learning from other parts of the body of Christ rather than isolating themselves.

Introduction

The convoluted aspects of Baptist identity have produced many works of literature on that topic. Nonetheless, confusion about what Baptists stand for persists not only in the Baptist world but also amongst evangelicals more broadly. I approach the issue as a Filipino outsider, having been raised in an Anglican church and having served as an assistant pastor in an independent local church.

My interaction with Baptist groups has helped me understand their passion for evangelism and church planting and their separatist tendencies, all of which are less common in my Anglican experience. Along the way, I have come to appreciate the complexity of the Baptist people. Nathan Finn surmises, 'For as long as there have been Baptists, there have been writings about Baptist identity. Baptists have been debating and refining their identity ever since the founding of the earliest Baptist churches in the seventeenth century.'¹

By joining in this conversation, I hope to encourage Baptists in the Philippines and elsewhere to continue to reflect on their identity. I also hope that my observations may assist Baptists and other denominations in their collegial interactions with each other. I find that the Baptists' distinct characteristics have important similarities with the views of other evangelicals in my country, even when practised in various ways and interpreted with different hermeneutical grids.

Many young evangelicals are ignorant of their history and tradition. They are individualistic and disconnected from the theological issues, events and people who

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1 Nathan A. Finn, 'Baptist Identity as Reformational Identity', *Southeastern Theological Review* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 29.

have shaped evangelical history.² Timothy George, theologian and founding dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University, USA, avers that there is a two-part crisis in Baptist life, consisting of spiritual amnesia and ecclesiastical myopia. The former signifies the danger of forgetting who Baptists are as people of God; the latter points to a narrow understanding of what the church is ('whoever we are, we are glad we are not like "them"').³ Such an observation is also applicable to many Baptist churches in the Philippines. Knowing the roots of one's tradition and identity is beneficial for the body of Christ.

I contend, then, that Baptists must appreciate their past and identity so as to navigate the future. They need to have a solid grasp of their denominational tradition and distinctives, because these represent some of their gifts to the church universal. Although it is crucial to acknowledge the catholicity and universality of the church, our diversity provides a platform from which we can discuss and learn. This argument for interaction between diverse Christian groups is important since many Baptists in the Philippines tend to separate themselves from other denominations—not to mention that some fundamental and independent Baptists in the country refuse to fellowship even with other Baptist traditions.

The quest to understand the Baptist identity is a huge and tricky challenge. In this article, I describe Baptist commonalities based on a quadrilateral of key affirmations: Christ as the head of the church, loyalty to Scripture, regenerate membership, and soul competency or individual soul liberty. In identifying these four points, I do not mean to overlook other important characteristics or to reduce the rich Baptist identity to a set of four items. Considerable variety and complexity exist across Baptists just in the Philippines. Even the esteemed British emeritus professor David Bebbington, in his chapter on 'Baptist Identity' within his book *Baptists through the Centuries*,⁴ does not provide a specific list of distinctives but instead presents the complex spectrum of Baptist life.

Bebbington's lack of specificity here is ironic because he is known for defining the essence of evangelical Christians in his four-part 'Bebbington quadrilateral'.⁵ Similarly, Methodist scholar Albert Outler captured John Wesley's approach to the theological reflection in terms of a 'Wesleyan quadrilateral' of four sources of wisdom: Scripture, tradition, reason and experience. I have borrowed this approach in my effort to meaningfully delineate Baptist distinctives in terms of four aspects of their theological identity. Before presenting these aspects, I will discuss the history of Filipino Baptists and will use the Philippines to illustrate the wide variations of Baptists.

2 Dean C. Curry, 'Evangelical Amnesia', *First Things*, October 2007, <https://worldia.org/yourls/ert451samdao1>.

3 Timothy George, 'The Future of Baptist Theology', in Timothy George and David S. Dockery (eds.), *Theologians of the Baptist Tradition*, rev. ed. (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 1.

4 David Bebbington, *Baptists through the Centuries: A History of a Global People* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010).

5 See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), 2–17.

Baptist Christianity in the Philippines

On 1 May 1898, US Commodore George Dewey defeated Admiral Patricio Montojo by sinking the Spanish vessels in Manila Bay, marking the end of Spain's control over the Philippines.⁶ That victory generated a call to spread the Protestant faith to the predominantly Catholic country.⁷ The American Protestants perceived it as good news when 800 friars immediately left the Philippines.⁸ Furthermore, they assumed that the Filipino people were tired of the abuses of the friars.⁹

The Philippines is an archipelago that consists of about 7,100 islands, most of them in three major groups. The biggest of these is Luzon, followed by Mindanao (in the south) and Visayas.¹⁰ The central Philippines, an important region for the growth of the early Baptists, is usually referred to as 'Visayas' and includes the islands of Negros, Panay, Cebu, Leyte, Bohol and Samar.¹¹

When Protestants first arrived in the country, unity was not elusive. Interdenominational agencies worked with each other cooperatively. The different Protestant denominations decided to divide the archipelago strategically into territories so that missionary work could flourish in unity and without competition. The Methodists propagated the gospel to many parts of Luzon, while the Presbyterians ministered in other parts.¹² Moreover, the Baptists and Presbyterians agreed that the latter would focus on Eastern Visayas while the former would work in Western Visayas.¹³ The early missionary work of Baptists, then, occurred on the islands of Panay and Negros, extending later to Bacolod, the capital of Negros Occidental.¹⁴

Around the same time, Braulio Manikan (b. 1870), a native of the central Philippines who studied for the Catholic priesthood, travelled to Barcelona, Spain to study engineering.¹⁵ He was converted at a Baptist mission in Spain supervised by the Rev. Eric Lund (1855–1933).¹⁶ There is a possibility that Lund was in America during the Spanish-American War, and that Manikan's first Baptist contact in Spain was with an anthropologist named Armstrong who taught him the Bible comprehensively. When Lund returned to Barcelona from America, he worked with

6 Daniel Trowbridge Mallett, *What Dewey Did: A Brief History of the Hero of Manila* (New York: D. T. Mallett, 1899), 36.

7 Arthur Judson Brown, *The New Era in the Philippines* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1903), 173.

8 American Baptist Missionary Union, *The Philippines* (Boston, MA: American Baptist Missionary Union, n.d.), 2, <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert451samdao2>.

9 American Baptist Missionary Union, *A Story of Beginnings of Our Mission Fields* (Boston, MA: American Baptist Missionary Union, 1904), 9, <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert451samdao3>.

10 Jose S. Arcilla, *An Introduction to Philippine History*, 4th ed. (Quezon City, Philippines: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1994), 11.

11 Artemio R. Guillermo and May Kyi Win, *Historical Dictionary of the Philippines*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 433.

12 Brown, *The New Era in the Philippines*, 186, 190–91.

13 Catalino P. Pamplona, *Baptist History for Church Leaders* (Manila: Church Strengthening Ministry, 1992), 298.

14 Brown, *The New Era in the Philippines*, 184.

15 Leslie Hill, *Faithful and Free: Baptist Beliefs Through the Years* (Makati City, Philippines: Church Strengthening Ministry, 2011), 317.

16 American Baptist Missionary Union, *The Philippines*, 1.

Manikan to translate the Gospel of Mark into the Visayan language.¹⁷ The American Baptist Missionary Union provided US \$150 to print this translation—the first American Baptist money given for the evangelization of the Philippines.¹⁸

By 1900, the Missionary Union had sent Lund and Manikan to Panay Island. Despite many challenges from the remaining Roman Catholic priests, the two ministered to almost 13,000, including native warriors called the Bolo Battalion—a group of fighters who resisted the Spaniards and Americans with the use of *bolos* (knives). Lund and Manikan successfully reached out to Gregorio Lampino, the leader of the Bolo Battalion, who encouraged his followers to embrace the Baptist faith.¹⁹ Therefore, the genesis of Baptists in the Philippines was in the Visayas.

On 18 October 1900, at a meeting of Baptist missionary leaders in California, the Rev. C. M. Hill of Oakland revealed that the people in the Visayas had welcomed the Gospel with joy. He stated that the mission work in the Philippines had a bright future and that therefore the people were worth missionary investment.²⁰ Seconding his words, R. C. Thomas (one of the earliest Baptist missionaries) observed that the Filipino people were very receptive to the Gospel and encouraged young men from the United States to go there.²¹

After World War II, other Baptist groups joined the Northern Baptists and the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism (ABWE) in the Philippines. In 1948, two Baptist groups arrived: the Southern Baptists came via China and the Conservative Baptists from America. A year later, the Baptist General Conference entered, and in 1950, the Baptist Bible Fellowship reached the country.²² Such various groups make the quest for Baptist identity convoluted. The products of the ministries of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, with the help of Lund and Manikan, include the Central Philippine University (CPU), formerly known as the Jaro Industrial School, established in 1905; also, the oldest Baptist church in the Philippines is the Jaro Evangelical Church in Iloilo.²³ According to Eric Ortega, formerly CEO of the Luzon Convention of Southern Baptists, the Southern Baptists have planted more than 3,000 local churches in the Philippines.²⁴ Some of their institutional ministries are Church Strengthening Ministries (CSM Publishing) in Manila; Mt. Carmel, a training centre at Bansalan, Davao del Sur; Southern Baptist College in Mlang, Cotabato; Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Baguio City; Southern Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Davao; Southern Baptist

17 American Baptist Missionary Union, *Missions in the Philippines* (Boston, MA: American Baptist Missionary Union, between 1906–1911), 12, <https://worldea.org/yourls/ert451samdao4>.

18 Edmund F. Merriam, *A History of American Baptist Missions* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1900), 180.

19 Pamplona, *Baptist History for Church Leaders*, 299–300.

20 California Baptist State Convention, 'Woman's Missionary Society', *Minutes of South Central Baptist Association of California: Eighth Annual Session, October 16, 17, 18, 1900* (San Francisco, CA: Bacon and Company, 1900), 73, <https://worldea.org/yourls/ert451samdao5>.

21 American Baptist Missionary Union, 'From the World Wide Field: Opportunity Great—Future Glorious', *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 85 (February 1905): 64, <https://worldea.org/yourls/ert451samdao6>.

22 Pamplona, *Baptist History for Church Leaders*, 321.

23 Central Philippine University, 'Brief History', <https://worldea.org/yourls/ert451samdao7>.

24 Rev Ortega indicated this in a personal conversation on 3 November 2020.

School of Theology in Makati; the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU); and additional Bible schools.

The complexities of defining Baptists

What makes a church Baptist? At the outset, this seems to be a simple enough question, answered by providing a set of Baptist characteristics. But if that is the case, what about an independent church or non-Baptist church that embraces these distinct marks; can that local church be viewed as 'Baptist'? Or when a Baptist church rejects a traditional Baptist polity due to its right to make its own independent decisions, based on 'soul competency' (which, as we will see, is itself an important Baptist mark), should that local church still be considered Baptist? James A. Patterson stresses, 'The immense scope and thorny intricacies of the Baptist heritage constitute daunting challenges for any who would attempt to provide a worthy synopsis of it in an essay of modest length.'²⁵

Baptist writers have given different answers regarding the primary Baptist distinctions. Some highlight their commitment to the authority of Scripture; some propose the features of church membership only for regenerate people and the authority of the congregation. Francis Jalandon, a Baptist professor and director for communications at Central Philippine University, argues for believer's baptism (i.e. baptism by immersion), the authority of Scripture, the religious freedom of each individual, autonomy of the local church, individual soul liberty, separation of church and state, and two ordinances²⁶ (baptism and communion, in comparison to Roman Catholic's seven sacraments). J. D. Freeman posits that the lordship of Christ is central, and E. Y. Mullins (1860–1928) asserts soul competency.²⁷

The differences within Baptists are extensive even with regard to such issues as church governance, worship practices, understanding of baptism, their relationship with other churches, and church discipline. In the Philippines alone, extensive variations of Baptist denominations exist. There is the Convention of the Philippine Baptist Churches, formed by the American Baptist Missionary Union in the early 1900s. There is also the Southern Baptist denomination that started in the northern part of the country, where I was born. And there are Bible Baptists, Fundamental Baptists, Seventh Day Baptists, and Independent Baptists. Some are liturgical in their worship; others are more contemporary. Some embrace the 'seeker-sensitive' movement's philosophy, while others subscribe to the G12 Vision, a movement that is charismatic by nature and emphasizes the authority of pastors (as opposed to congregationalism²⁸) and the formation of groups of twelve disciples. Some Baptist

25 James A. Patterson, 'Reflection on 400 Years of the Baptist Movement: Who We Are, What We Believe', in David S. Dockery (ed.), *Southern Baptists, Evangelicals, and the Future of Denominationalism* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 191.

26 Francis Neil G. Jalandon, 'What Makes a Baptist, a Baptist II', 2020, <https://worldlea.org/yourls/ert451samdao8>.

27 James Leo Garrett, *Baptist Theology: A Four-Century Study* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2014), 532.

28 For more on this aspect of congregational authority, see Michael A. G. Haykin, 'Some Historical Roots of Congregationalism', in Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman (eds.), *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2015), 27–45.

churches in the country use only the King James Version whereas others are open to other translations.

During the early years of Baptists in the Philippines, a difference in evangelism understandings and strategies created a split. The fundamentalist Baptists complained to the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS) that their Board of Managers was neglecting the importance of personal evangelism. They also disagreed with the conviction held by the evangelical Baptists of accepting Presbyterians in worship services even if they did not undergo baptism first.²⁹

As for their historical basis, some Filipino Baptists still believe that they are the true church since they can trace their roots to Jesus Christ or John the Baptist. They refuse to acknowledge their heritage from the Reformation. This belief is known as Landmarkism or Secessionism.³⁰ However, most Baptists believe that their primogenitors are John Smyth (1570–1612) and Thomas Helwys (1550–1616).³¹ They accept the historical account that the Baptist movement started in Holland and England in the early seventeenth century, born out of the English Puritans and Separatists' desire for a reform movement. These Puritans who departed from the Anglican Church and did not immigrate to America became Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists.³²

Baptist theology is also not monolithic. Even in its early infancy, differences were crystal clear. For instance, the early Baptists in the seventeenth century were divided into two major groups: General Baptists (who believed in a general atonement) and Particular Baptists (who adhered to a limited atonement).³³ These two have additional differences on such issues as eternal security, ecclesiology and the church's relationship to the government.³⁴ Such historical differences persist amongst Baptists in the Philippines: some are Arminians, some are Calvinists and many refuse to be labelled.

In quest of identity: a Baptist quadrilateral

Given all this diversity and complexity, sorting out the Baptist identity presents an enormous challenge. Leslie Hill, a long-time Southern Baptist missionary in the Philippines and president of the Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary from 1991 to 1998, claims simply that Baptists adhere to orthodox beliefs rooted in the Scripture and to Christ as the foundation of all.³⁵ The forerunners of the Baptist movement in seventeenth-century England did not prioritize formulating Baptist

29 Pamplona, *Baptist History for Church Leaders*, 303.

30 See J. M. Carroll, *The Trail of Blood: Following the Christians Down through the Centuries, or the History of Baptist Churches from the Time of Christ Their Founder, to the Present Day* (Lexington, KY: American Baptist Publishing Co., 1931); George Herbert Orchard, *A Concise History of Baptists from the Time of Christ Their Founder to the 18th Century* (Lexington, KY: Ashland Avenue Baptist Church, 1956).

31 Hill, *Faithful and Free*, 53.

32 Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 497.

33 Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 16–22.

34 H. Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987), 39, 42–43.

35 Hill, *Faithful and Free*, 28.

distinctives, rather calling people to be faithful to Scripture and obedient followers of Christ.³⁶

Some people are Baptists by conditioning, some by convenience and some by conviction.³⁷ Jeff Robinson urges all Baptists to pursue the third of these courses:

Being Baptist because it is part of our family lineage is not a valid reason to be a Baptist. Studying Baptist history enables us to become Baptists by theological conviction. It teaches us that there are many good biblical and theological reasons to hold a firm grip upon Baptist ecclesiology as a necessary biblical complement to a robust confessional, evangelical orthodoxy.³⁸

In accordance with Robinson's message, I propose four vital convictions with which Baptist distinctives can be associated.

Christ (not bishops) as the head of the church

Just as a person's understanding of Jesus Christ influences that person's fellowship with God, so how a local church perceives Jesus Christ affects its ecclesial lens. The Pioneer English Separatist-Baptist *True Confession* of 1596 stipulated that only Christ is head of the community of God. Thus, Scripture must guide their worship.³⁹ Radical congregationalism was born out of the Baptists' theological conviction that popes, bishops or kings cannot mediate Christ to the people.⁴⁰ This congregational authority emanated not from the people themselves but from the lordship of Jesus Christ as the head of the church.

Allegiance to the lordship of Christ is not unique to Baptists only, of course. But for Baptists, it serves as a parameter concerning the relationship of each Baptist congregation.⁴¹ Nevertheless, Baptists in the Philippines seem to have various perspectives on the ecclesial repercussions of the lordship of Christ. For example, some Baptist churches refuse to fellowship with other Baptist strains. Also, since congregations are autonomous, they are free to decide whether to retain or dismiss their pastor. Some Baptist congregations operate in a more presbyterian way, where a group of pastors is responsible for major decisions.

In the Philippines, no association or convention can dictate direction to individual Baptist churches, because the autonomy of the local church is seen as vital. As a result, different convictions are present on various issues.⁴² For example, most Southern Baptists, Bible Baptists, and Fundamental Baptists in the Philippines do not ordain women as pastors, though they have female professors in their seminaries. In their churches, they are commonly called 'Bible women'. However, the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches is egalitarian. In 1980, it ordained the first Filipino Baptist female in the Visayas, the Rev. Angelina Belluga

36 Winthrop Hudson, *Baptist Convictions* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1963), 6.

37 Anthony L. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2015), 325–26.

38 Jeff Robinson, '8 Reasons Baptist History Should Matter to You', *Equip* (Southern Seminary), <https://worldia.org/yourls/ert451samdao9>.

39 W. L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 92.

40 Bill J. Leonard, *Baptist Ways: A History* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003), 6.

41 Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 3rd ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1982), 31.

42 Chute et al., *The Baptist Story*, 330.

Buenuceso. She has been a pastor in five Baptist churches and a professor at Central Philippine University in Iloilo.⁴³

The Baptist commitment to the separation of church and state has resulted from this aspect of the quadrilateral. This feature does not show up as much in contemporary observations because church and state are now separate in the Philippines and most democracies. In general, Filipino Baptist churches believe that church and government are separate communities. Most of them would not join a *welga* (mass strike) against the government; however, their approach to social issues varies. On one hand, some Baptists belong to the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (alongside mainline Protestants) and are vocal on issues of justice, peace and human rights. On the other hand, Baptists from an ultra-conservative tradition tend to withdraw from social issues. Some express their concerns through prayer rallies. Philippine Baptists also varied in their response to quarantine requirements during COVID-19, with some invoking the principle of church-state separation while others cited Romans 13 to support submitting to necessary government action.

Interestingly, the president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, was the keynote speaker during the Baptists' celebration of their 120 years of presence in the country.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the guest of honour and one of the speakers when the Luzon Convention of Southern Baptist Churches celebrated their 62nd anniversary virtually on 18 November 2020 was Senator Joel Villanueva.

Recognizing Jesus Christ as head of the church has a personal as well as an ecclesial side. Baptist churches in the Philippines emphasize personal testimonies or salvation stories because of the centrality of surrendering one's life to Christ's rule through repentance. In the local Baptist church where I serve as a pulpit minister, if a Christian from another Baptist church wishes to transfer, he or she must meet with the pastor and deacons and present a personal story of how he or she submitted to the lordship of Christ.

The vital nature of regenerate membership

Regenerate church membership is an essential part of the Baptist identity. Here, Baptist ecclesiology is similar to the Anabaptist understanding of church membership as comprising those who are regenerate and baptized. These Christians are bound in a filial covenant with one another and with the Lord.⁴⁵ The early Baptists fought for this principle over against the Church of England, where membership in the church was based on paedobaptism (infant baptism).

In the Philippines, two things are important for Baptist church membership. First, as indicated above, a membership class or doctrinal session, at which church leaders can inquire about the candidates' 'spiritual birthday', typically occurs.

43 Michael E. Williams, Sr. and Walter B. Shurden (eds.), *Turning Points in Baptist History: A Festschrift in Honor of Harry Leon McBeth* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2008), 282.

44 Republic of the Philippines, Presidential Broadcast Staff and Radio Television Malacañang, 'Annual Celebration of the 120-Year Presence of the Baptist Churches in the Philippines', 16 January 2020.

45 George, 'The Future of Baptist Theology', 9.

Second, one must have been baptized by immersion. Candidates for baptism usually present their conversion story to the whole congregation.⁴⁶

This distinctive is rooted in Baptists' history. For them, the church is composed of believers who are in agreement to love one another under the lordship of Christ. It is a covenantal fellowship amongst those who have given their allegiance to Christ and been made saints by the blood of Christ. Within that fellowship, they have the authority to assign church officers such as teachers, pastors, elders, deacons and widows. Under the lordship of Christ, the congregation gives this authority to the church leaders.⁴⁷

Baptists' belief in regenerate membership causes them to insist that the ordinance of baptism must come after one has been saved and can publicly confess his or her faith in Christ. Baptism is a public response to Christ that serves as a testimony before the world.⁴⁸ Frank Rees contends, 'Theology of baptism of believers by immersion is the fundamental basis of our identity as Baptist communities. It gives the essential Trinitarian and missionary character to all our worship and our lives as faith communities.'⁴⁹

Although Baptists do not practise paedobaptism, like many other evangelicals they do have child dedications. Their refusal to baptize infants lies in their individualistic, somewhat radicalized understanding of the first two points of the quadrilateral (the lordship of Christ and regenerate membership) as well as the one to which we turn next.

Loyalty to Scripture: a radicalized Sola Scriptura tendency

The Baptist people are called *people of the book*. That is because they endeavour to establish their local churches firmly on Scripture. This conviction may seem self-explanatory, but various perspectives make it a little complicated. As Jalandon notes, Baptist people are 'loyal' but not to creeds, confessions of faith, or the authority of bishops or the Pope.⁵⁰

Like most evangelical churches in the Philippines, Baptists affirm Scripture as the final authority in matters of faith and practice. However, their hermeneutic differs somewhat from that of the Reformers and early Baptist pioneers. Modern Filipino Baptists tend to be allergic to creeds and Christian traditions. A Bible Baptist, in a conversation on Facebook, made a typical comment: 'Creeds and church history are not reliable since humans wrote them.' This sentiment echoes the words of Baptist historian and theologian Steven R. Harmon:

Tradition is a new horizon for Baptist theology in the sense that much Baptist thought has proceeded on the basis of a radicalized *Sola Scriptura* hermeneutic that dichotomizes Scripture and tradition, with the result that many Baptists reflexively regard any post-biblical theological development as superfluous,

46 See Leonard, *Baptist Ways*, 45.

47 Hill, *Faithful and Free*, 51–52.

48 Grenz, *The Baptist Congregation*, 33.

49 Frank D. Rees, 'Baptist Identity: Immersed through Worship', *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 5, no. 1 (September 2004): 5.

50 Jalandon, 'What Makes a Baptist'.

theologically suspect, and possessing no authority for Christian faith and practice.⁵¹

Some Baptist pastors in the Philippines go further in their definition of the authority of Scripture, stating that the King James Version is the only valid and authoritative version. It is also common to hear the question ‘is that biblical?’ asked in discussions between Baptists. Interestingly, however, many Baptist churches in the Philippines have adopted pragmatic philosophies in their church activities, worship, evangelism and discipleship—for example, reading Rick Warren’s books and following some templates from Bill Hybels and Willow Creek Church. In short, some Baptist churches tend to look at things through a pragmatic lens, according to which whatever works well in their ecclesial life is worth emulating.

With regard to their deep convictions about individual liberty, the Baptists have been influenced not only by their history of facing persecution but also by their passion for Scripture.⁵² Walter Shurden writes, ‘Bible freedom is the historic Baptist affirmation that the Bible, under the Lordship of Christ, must be central in the life of the individual and church and that Christians, with the best and most scholarly tools of inquiry, are both free and obligated to study and obey the Scripture.’⁵³

Today, even if some Baptists are embracing seeker-sensitive philosophy, many still accentuate the authority of Scripture, as reflected for example in their frequent preference for expository preaching. Similarly, their understanding of believer’s baptism by immersion is not just a product of rebellion against the Church of England. The Particular Baptists, as H. Leon McBeth notes in *The Baptist Heritage*, felt that their ‘arguments for immersion were both biblical and theological. They cited Scripture, which they felt specified immersion and suggested that their theology of baptism required immersion to symbolize a burial and rising again.’⁵⁴ McBeth clarifies, interestingly, that although John Smyth recovered the idea of believer’s baptism in 1609, he never promoted baptism by immersion. Even the Anabaptists’ mode of baptism was sprinkling. Nonetheless, in 1619, a group of Mennonites, called Waterlanders, had made immersion their form of baptism. For the Particular Baptists, baptism by immersion began only in 1640–1641.⁵⁵ That is because the Baptists at that time were more concerned with the *subject* than the *mode* of baptism.⁵⁶

Baptists’ loyalty to Scripture is their main reason for being non-creedal people, in the sense that no creeds are as important as or equal to Scripture. Therefore, their confessions are subject to change based on revelation from the Holy Scripture.⁵⁷ Baptists historically have acknowledged the importance of confessions of faith; their early confessions served as apologetics, defending their beliefs against criticisms by

51 Steven R. Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision* (UK: Paternoster, 2006), 2.

52 Walter B. Shurden, *The Baptist Identity: Four Fragile Freedoms* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2013), 12.

53 Shurden, *The Baptist Identity*, 4.

54 McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 46.

55 McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 44–45.

56 Williams and Shurden, *Turning Points in Baptist History*, 34.

57 George, ‘The Future of Baptist Theology’, 9–10.

other state churches and church groups.⁵⁸ One can observe, however, how their non-creedal tendency has led many Baptists to adopt a mindset of isolation from other local churches. Also, their radical discontinuity from tradition, as especially reflected in Landmarkism and Secessionism, is an extreme conviction. As such, they would do well to listen to Albert Mohler's argument that 'Baptist "distinctives" must be interpreted in terms of a larger and more comprehensive continuity with the larger Christian tradition ... [including] Nicaea, Chalcedon, Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and the Protestant confessions.'⁵⁹

In general, the Baptists endeavour to conform their local expressions to what the New Testament teaches about ecclesiology. For them, that does not mean imitating the ancient customs of the New Testament, but seeking the normative practices of the New Testament era. The ground of a believer's faith is Scripture; henceforth, all doctrines and practices are to be examined by the Scripture.⁶⁰ Evangelicals also adhere to this principle, but Baptists tend to adhere to a more radicalized version of *Sola Scriptura*.

Soul competency, or the individual soul's liberty

The Baptist progenitors endeavoured to achieve the freedom to decide on biblical truth.⁶¹ Hill stipulates, 'Historically, state and church officials often have not trusted individuals to make personal spiritual decisions. But Baptists find evidence that God enables each one to understand and make personal decisions. Baptist theologian E. Y. Mullins (1860–1928) and others have titled this ability "soul competency".'⁶² Mullins was the main person to popularize this term. He was aware that previous works on Baptist distinctives focused heavily on church membership, baptism and the Lord's Supper. To those axioms he added soul competency, which refers to the believer's right or ability to relate to God directly.⁶³ John Hammett states that for Mullins, soul competency is the "sufficient statement of the historical significance of the Baptists," "the distinctive contribution of Baptists," and "a comprehensive truth" from which almost all the principles of Baptist ecclesiology may be derived.⁶⁴ It specifies that God enables his people to make personal decisions, contrary to the historic position of the Church of England.⁶⁵

One ramification of this conviction is apparent in Baptists' fight to be governed not by political powers, but under the authority of Christ and led by the Spirit of

58 William Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Chicago, IL: Judson Press, 1959), 16.

59 Albert Mohler, Jr., 'Has Theology a Future in the SBC?' in Robison B. James and David S. Dockery (eds.), *Beyond the Impasse? Scripture, Interpretation, and Theology in Baptist Life* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992), 99.

60 L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, rev. and expanded ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H, 1999), 11, 14.

61 Leonard, *Baptist Ways*, 47.

62 Hill, *Faithful and Free*, 24.

63 Garrett, *Baptist Theology*, 418–19.

64 John Hammett, 'From Church Competence to Soul Competence: The Devolution of Baptist Ecclesiology', *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 155. Hammett was quoting from Mullins' *Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith*.

65 Hill, *Faithful and Free*, 24.

God.⁶⁶ However, the concept of soul competency also opens Pandora's box to contrasting convictions, all claiming to be derived from the Bible and the Christian experience.

The idea of soul competency can be interpreted in two different ways. Some argue that it elevates personal experience and thus promotes subjectivism and relativism within the community of believers. On the other hand, some emphasize that this principle does not extend to the right to adhere to any beliefs based on one's personal taste and remain a Baptist. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit guides individuals in their interpretation of the Bible in the context of the congregation of believers. Freedom of conscience may perhaps combat the tendency to reduce biblical authority into a mere static literalism.⁶⁷ Some Baptists refer to the 'believer's liberty', meaning that all believers have the sacred freedom to follow God based on their conscience as the Holy Spirit guides them.⁶⁸

In the Philippines, not all Baptists know the term 'soul competency'; many tend to use 'priesthood of all believers' or 'individual soul liberty'. The idea of the priesthood of all believers is not original to the Baptists, but it is consistent with their belief that each person has the right to interpret the Scripture in light of the illumination of the Holy Spirit. This emphasis is in contrast to other traditions for which the Catholic magisterium or leaders of a denomination or congregation are responsible for properly interpreting the Bible.

Individual soul liberty is implicit in various aspects of Filipino Baptist piety. For example, many Filipino Baptist pastors emphasize that members should read the Bible privately in their daily 'quiet time'. This emphasis on individual study can, albeit unintentionally, reinforce the sense that Christianity is about 'me and Jesus' only, not a communal practice. It is common to hear the locutions, 'This is where Jesus is leading *me*' or 'This is what God is saying to *me*.' The high value placed on each believer's right to decide based on the leading of the Holy Spirit and conscience can also contribute, in conjunction with Baptist ecclesiology, to divisiveness. If a conflict arises, it is easy to start another Baptist church.

Mullins asserted that soul competency is more than just individualism. He recognized that humans are social beings who should be connected to others in the Church as well as to God. Notably, however, he used the terms 'individualism' and 'soul competency' interchangeably.⁶⁹ Hammett's interpretation of Mullins also emphasizes his individualistic side: 'In terms of congregational polity, his beginning point is the sole competence of the individual. As regenerate and indwelt by Christ, the individual is competent to act in church decisions.'⁷⁰ This principle, which finds its expression in the priesthood of believers, also distinguishes Baptists from those denominations that require ordained pastors to administer the Lord's Supper.

66 Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 30.

67 Leonard, *Baptist Ways*, 6.

68 Weaver, 'E. Y. Mullins', 446.

69 E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith*, ed. with an introduction by C. Douglas Weaver (1908; rpt. Macon, GA: Mercer University, 2010), 9.

70 Hammett, 'From Church Competence', 155.

Conclusion

I have attempted to address in this paper what those people believe who seek to be Baptists by conviction, not merely through convenience and conditioning. I have noted that the Baptist tradition contains multiple streams, making description of the Baptist identity complex. Nonetheless, Baptist beliefs include a discernible juxtaposition of affirmations and denials. For example, they affirm the principle of receiving grace by one's decision, not sacramentally. They insist on believer's baptism by immersion, as opposed to infant baptism. Their only priest is Jesus Christ; their only supreme authority is the Bible.⁷¹

Baptists in the Philippines (and globally) have many different traditions, but the quadrilateral I have presented here may help to classify their various beliefs. It also illuminates how they interpret in distinctive ways even those convictions, such as Christ's lordship and the authority of Scripture, that they share with evangelicals generally. As Stanley Grenz states:

Theological differences have emerged, just as there were theological differences at the beginning. Yet, these various churches and peoples find themselves bound together by a common desire to be the people of God according to Scripture and conscience, a desire which produces in them loyalty to certain convictions. Some of these are shared with other Christians. ... But when taken together these convictions, combined with a unique heritage and a unique history, mark these people as Baptists.⁷²

There is great value in understanding one's own denominational tradition (and others too). As such, Baptists would do well to note that while embracing their unique identity, they should be open to learning and benefitting from the various emphases exhibited by other Christian traditions. While seeking to recover their distinctives, neither Baptists nor other Christians should fall into the temptation of becoming a secluded people. Instead, we should all savour the richness of being part of the catholicity of the body of Christ, which has been called to be an alternative *polis*. Despite the different traditions of the Baptists in the Philippines and elsewhere, it is hoped that their commonalities may help them to communicate well with each other and contribute to the universal church.

71 Nettles and Moore, *Why I Am a Baptist*, 3–4.

72 Stanley J. Grenz, *The Baptist Congregation: A Guide to Baptist Belief and Practice* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2002), 79.

J. B. Phillips: From Paraphrase to Translation

Wayne Detzler

Eighty years ago, there were few modern Bible translations. In the 1940s, J. B. Phillips initiated a modern translation of the New Testament. But his work gets little notice today. This article tells the story of Phillips and his project, offering important insights on the value and limitations of attempts to modernize the Bible message.

J. B. (John Bertram) Phillips was very much a man of his age. Born in 1906, he was too young to fight in World War I. When England was thrust into World War II, Phillips was too old to be conscripted. Yet he became a courageous citizen participant in the British resistance to the German Blitz of 1941–1942 as well as the ensuing invasion of Europe. The Normandy invasion of 1945 marked forever the psyche of the British nation, because it harnessed the total dedication of a great people.

In the midst of this chaotic context, Phillips developed the idea for an innovative project: *The New Testament in Modern English*.

As a classicist, Phillips was well aware of the difference between a paraphrase and a translation. He first produced a paraphrase to help young people understand the Scriptures. Later he would revisit the New Testament and produce a translation, while maintaining his readable style. During the war years, he shaped and reshaped the idea of a New Testament translation for the modern reader. Phillips said this project was born during the Blitz, as he scribbled his ideas bit by bit while huddled in underground London train stations that had hastily been turned into bomb shelters.¹

Phillips' motivation for translation

Although Phillips never subscribed to a plenary verbal view of biblical inerrancy, he did discern the power of Scripture. He famously claimed that translating the New Testament was 'like trying to rewire the electrical wiring of a house without pulling the main switch'.²

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1 J. B. Phillips, 'Introduction to This New Edition', *The New Testament in Modern English*, rev. ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), vii.

2 'Translating the Gospels: A Discussion between Dr. E. V. Rieu and the Rev. J. B. Phillips', *The Bible Translator* 6, no. 4 (October 1955): 150–59.

Phillips' interest in this undertaking had been piqued by the work of the United Bible Societies,³ and that organization's high standards guided the quality of his own work, the integrity of which is reflected in his introductory essay. Phillips claimed to have used only the Greek text in producing this new translation. During the spartan years of World War II, he had virtually no library resources available to him, so he was shut up completely with only the original text.

This approach hints not only at Phillips' textual integrity, but also at his considerable skill in dealing with classical literature, which had been a primary focus during his undergraduate studies at Cambridge. Phillips explained his situation in this way: 'I had almost no tools to work with apart from my own Greek Testament and no friends who could help me in this particular field.'⁴

However, Phillips would find some friends who were well equipped to support him, including most notably C. S. Lewis. After the war ended, Phillips moved to a more peaceful parish in Surrey, and Lewis encouraged him to continue his work on *Letters to Young Churches: A Translation of the New Testament Epistles*. In fact, Lewis encouraged many such younger writers during the post-war years. He had begun in the 1930s to meet regularly in his rooms at Oxford with a group of like-minded thinkers who named themselves the Inklings. Among them were such literary luminaries as H. R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson, along with Warren Lewis (brother to C. S.), Robert 'Humphrey' Harvard, Owen Barfield, Nevill Coghill, Charles Williams, Lord David Cecil and Adam Fox.⁵

Within the circle of the Inklings, Phillips began 'contextualizing' the Scriptures by thinking in a broader perspective—'outside the box', so to speak. He understood the need to frame the words of Scripture in words and idioms familiar to young readers. After all, many of his young parishioners had suffered a significant interruption in their education. So Phillips determined to employ a vocabulary suitable to their skills. He grasped the essence of contextualizing, reminding his readers that 'a translator does his work with the least possible obtrusion of his own personality.'⁶ In other words, the translator should always work within the contemporary cultural context.

Additionally, Phillips always thought cross-generationally. He sensed the stress under which young people were living, as they had watched their fathers go off to war and many had never returned. Phillips adopted the task of translating not only the words but the very spirit of the New Testament. As he put it, 'I attempted, as far as I could, to think myself into the heart and mind of Paul, for example, or of Mark or of John the Divine.'⁷

The corpus of Phillips' writing gives us clues to his developmental process. He began with *Letters to Young Churches* (1947), in which he enabled his readers to identify with the similar stresses faced by first-century believers. Then he moved on to produce *The Gospels* (1952) as background for the life of Christ. He finished his

3 Phillips, 'Introduction', vii.

4 Phillips, 'Introduction', vii.

5 Marilyn Stewart, 'The Inklings: A Fellowship of Imagination', CBN, n.d., <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert451detzler1>.

6 Phillips, 'Introduction', x.

7 Phillips, 'Introduction', xii.

first wave of translations with *Acts: The Young Church in Action* (1955) as well as *Revelation* (1957).

Within ten years, Phillips had produced translations of the constituent writings of the New Testament, which he then collected into his landmark work, *The New Testament in Modern English* (1958). In a sense, this marked the completion of his life work, as he turned largely to autobiographical writing, often reflecting on his translation activity, from 1965 until his death in 1982. In 1965, he wrote an extended autobiographical article called 'The Problems of Making a Contemporary Translation', which appeared in the Anglican journal *The Churchman* and was later reprinted in *The Bible Translator*.⁸ In 1967, he published *The Ring of Truth: A Translator's Testimony*. He subsequently created a daily devotional based on his translation under the title *Through the Year with J. B. Phillips*, later known as *365 Meditations by J. B. Phillips for This Day* (1975).

Phillips' process of translation

Phillips' work demonstrates the man's complexity. He had the heart of a pastor or priest, combined with the meticulous mind of a biblical scholar. His Cambridge education gave him an abiding scepticism about the Scriptures and prevented him from ever embracing a plenary verbal view of inspiration. So how did he proceed with the work of translation?

Phillips studied the King James (or Authorized) Version carefully, but he decidedly rejected the archaic language of that version. Only a few English translations existed in wide circulation when he started his translation work.⁹ He realized that young people in a rapidly secularizing society could not comprehend the Elizabethan syntax and spelling of the Authorized Version. So he turned to the original manuscripts in pursuit of a new translation.

For instance, the King James Bible presents John 3:16 in this way: 'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Phillips eliminated the archaic words in favour of more modern ones: 'For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that every one who believes in him shall not be lost, but should have eternal life.' He contextualized to a modern reader such archaic words as 'only begotten', 'whosoever', 'believeth', and 'perish'. Phillips' translation sought to suit the Scripture to colloquial speech and literature.

In Phillips' view, the evolution of the English language demanded the creation of a new translation. Language by its very nature is dynamic. Phillips affirmed this 25 years after the first appearance of *Letters to Young Churches*, recognizing that idiomatic terms used in his 1947 translation work already required updating. For instance, he had used the phrase 'little tin gods' in 1 Peter 5:3, but in his revision this

8 'The Problems of Making a Contemporary Translation,' *The Churchman* (June 1961), reprinted in *The Bible Translator*, 16, no. 1 (1965): 25-32.

9 The main translations available as of the 1940s were the Protestant King James Version (1611), Roman Catholic Douay-Rheims (1610) and Roman Catholic Confraternity Bible (1941).

phrase was changed to a more current word, 'dictators'.¹⁰ However, his revised edition made mainly cosmetic changes to the original.

As an indication of his pastoral approach, Phillips field-tested the draft of *Letters to Young Churches*, giving copies of his translation to young people and asking them to read, discuss and comment on it. As a parish priest, Phillips had a ready-made sounding board for his work. This process enriched the end product, enabling him to adapt the text to contemporary church life.

When commenting on his work, Phillips described five ground rules to guide his new version of Scripture:¹¹

1. As far as possible the language used must be such as is commonly spoken, written and understood at the present time.
2. When necessary the translator should feel free to expand or explain, while preserving the original meaning as nearly as can be ascertained.
3. The Letters should read like letters, not theological treatises. Where the Greek is informal and colloquial, the English should be the same.
4. The translation (or in some cases, the paraphrase) should 'flow' and be easy to read. Artificial 'verses' should be discarded, though cross-headings can be introduced to divide the letters into what seem to be their natural sections.
5. Though every care must be taken to make the version accurate, the projected value of this version should lie in its 'easy-to-read' quality. For close meticulous study, existing modern versions should be consulted.

In addition, Phillips said that there should be no intrusion of the author's personality into the biblical text, and that readers should feel as if they are reading the original manuscripts.¹²

The limited acceptance of Phillips' translation

C. S. Lewis, in his introduction to *Letters to Young Churches*, explained three reasons for his support of Phillips' translation project: (1) the Authorized Version was no longer comprehensible to a young generation, (2) it no longer suited the mindset of a new generation, and (3) its flowery beauty actually detracted from serious study of the text.¹³

Given Phillips' intentions and the apparent need for a fresh version of Scripture, why did his work find relatively limited acceptance among Christians in England and the United States? I would suggest four reasons.

First, Phillips had produced a paraphrase rather than a translation. American evangelicals in particular were committed to deep and serious study of the Scriptures. This passion for particular study arose, among other reasons, because of the popularity of the *Scofield Reference Bible* developed by C. I. Scofield, a popular pastor in Dallas, Texas. Scofield's Bible footnotes and comments embraced the

10 Phillips, 'Introduction', ix.

11 J. B. Phillips, *Letters to Young Churches* (London: Collins, 1947), translator's preface.

12 Phillips, 'Introduction', ix, x.

13 C. S. Lewis, Introduction to *Letters to Young Churches*.

dispensational view of Scripture, a view also endorsed by Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary.

Second, the use of British colloquialisms made this translation less attractive to American readers. Writing from his own cultural context, Phillips tried to make his version more suitable to his readers. A quotation from the translator's introduction provides a good example of his sensitivity to the importance of using popular language in his project: 'If we are to translate literally, Jesus said, "Blessed are the beggars in spirit". ... But it is to my mind extremely doubtful whether the word "beggar" in our Welfare State, or indeed in most English-speaking countries, conjures up the image which Jesus intended to convey to his hearers.'¹⁴ But the words he chose—in this case, he replaced 'beggars in spirit' with 'humble-minded'—tended to be more familiar to Brits than to Americans.

Third, rising competition from emerging new versions that did not exist when Phillips began his work played a role. Christians from an ecumenical background turned to the Revised Standard Version, created in cooperation with the National Council of Churches; its New Testament first appeared in 1946, followed by the Old Testament in 1952. On the other hand, evangelical Christians gravitated to the New American Standard Bible (1963), which had deep roots in dispensationalist theology.

Fourth, he regarded inerrancy as too simplistic. In fact, in the white-hot conflict between liberalism and fundamentalism during the 1930s and 1940s, Phillips freely admitted his leaning towards the liberal side. Phillips justified his rejection of traditional theological categories with these words: 'At some stage in my life as a Christian I must have heard the total depravity of man heavily emphasized. I do not think I ever personally accepted this, because ordinary observation showed a good deal of kindness and generosity produced by people whether they had religious faith or not.'¹⁵ Phillips distanced himself from evangelicalism, and in doing so he engendered some scepticism or even rejection amongst the most Bible-reading portion of the Christian public.

The value of contextual Bible translation

What can we learn from the relatively brief life of Phillips' translation? The following comments derive from my personal experience over six decades of pastoral and professorial activity and my devotional reading of Scripture.

Contextualization is a double-edged sword. On one hand, contextualization suits a translation to the generation in which it is produced. One can see this pattern in such disparate works as Kenneth Taylor's *Living Bible*, written for the post-war twentieth century, and the King James Version for the Elizabethan age in England. I had the privilege of being a neighbour and personal friend to Taylor. His original motivation to produce his version was his own large family. Each morning he would translate a bit of Scripture on the train ride to work, and that evening he would read it to his children.

¹⁴ Phillips, 'Introduction', xii.

¹⁵ J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English* (n.d.), <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert451detzler2>.

By contrast, the King James Bible remained a standard for Anglican Christians for centuries. As the British Empire spread to circle the globe, the King James Bible likewise spread its influence. American fundamentalists embraced it as the sole, acceptable version of Scripture. Theirs was almost a mystical and doctrinal loyalty to the old translation.

However, over the centuries the King James became increasingly separated from its original context. To a modern generation, it was confusing at best and incomprehensible at worst. During the middle of the twentieth century, schools in America and England largely stopped teaching Elizabethan literature with its strange vernacular.

Simplification of Scripture suited young readers and new believers. One recalls how Kenneth Taylor's *The Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes* (1956) caught children's attention. In fact, it served three generations of children in our family, until the book fell apart.

As people came from a secular society into the Christian church, they often found Taylor's work very helpful. The author's spouse tells of her early life of faith, when she found the most readable Bible to be contemporary language versions.

At one point, I worked with Taylor to help him introduce his translation in German and also to a new generation in the United Kingdom. Despite the obvious limitations of contemporary versions, they have proved to be a good starting point for Bible study among young people.

More recently, Presbyterian pastor Eugene Peterson translated the Bible into modern English as *The Message*, released in 2000 and 2002. As a rather free translation, it is often rejected by scholars; however, it has achieved considerable success and circulation among Baby Boomers.

In short, simplification is not necessarily a fatal flaw. Modern translations such as those of Phillips may have a relatively short shelf life, but they do fill a need. Nevertheless, solid translations such as the English Standard Version, New International Version and Revised Standard Version will always outlast more contemporary efforts.

Inevitably, the paucity of sales eroded J. B. Phillips' popularity. In an informal poll of Baby Boomers (the generation born between 1946 and 1964), I found that none of them had ever heard of the Phillips translation. Moreover, Generation X and Y Christians (i.e. those born between 1965 and 1996) tend to use digital translations of the Bible. Many are blissfully unaware that various translations ever existed if they are not on the list of digital selections.

I believe that J. B. Phillips produced one of the most beautiful translations of modern times. Of course, a single-translator version is always less academically rigorous than a committee project such as the New International Version or English Standard Version. However, Phillips' translation remains essential reading for any serious student of the history of the English Bible.

God and Humanity Brought Together: The Incarnation as Gospel

Mary Douglas

The Incarnation is celebrated at Christmas but do we really grasp its full import? This essay draws on the fourth-century church father Athanasius—one of the greatest defenders of the orthodox Christian conviction that Jesus Christ was truly God and truly man—to support its claim that evangelicals today impoverish their gospel witness by highlighting Jesus’ death and resurrection and overlooking the essential contribution of the Incarnation to our redemption.

Introduction

The search for identity and meaning in modern society is powerfully addressed by the gospel as the early church communicated it. Yet this life-giving message has been largely missed by contemporary Protestantism. The present essay is my attempt to set that problem right.

After Jesus of Nazareth, calling God His Father and speaking of Him with intimacy and deep affection, had performed miracles, healed people, brought a dead man back to life, cast out demons, died on a cross and then risen from the dead, the early church was left trying to make sense of what had just happened. Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 296–373 AD), a bishop and theologian, played a key role in that process, establishing doctrine which is still accepted as foundational by all denominations of the church.¹

The key debate in Athanasius’ time was how Christ could be both God and man without compromising the integrity of either. If God’s nature is understood as unchangeable and impassible, divine integrity is compromised by the participation therein of changeable and passible humanity.² If human free will is understood as autonomy, human integrity is compromised by participation in the Godhead.³ God

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1 Thomas G. Weinandy and Daniel A. Keating, *Athanasius and His Legacy: Trinitarian-Incarnational Soteriology and Its Reception* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 105.

2 Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1: *The Triune God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 97–101, 207–12, 216; Colin E. Gunton, *Act and Being: Towards a Theology of the Divine Attributes* (London: SCM, 2002), 17–18, 23; Richard Rice, *God’s Foreknowledge and Man’s Free Will* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1985), 22–24.

3 John Behr, *The Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 2: *The Nicene Faith, Part 1: True God of True God* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 2004), 16–17; Jenson, *The Triune God*, 94–95, 125,

and humanity, *so understood*, are inherently incompatible. Athanasius argues that, on the contrary, God and humanity are not only compatible but fundamentally complementary.

Athanasius' crucial contribution was his insistence that Jesus Christ must be both fully God and fully human to save humanity.⁴ If He was not fully God, He could not *save* us; but if He was not fully human, He could not save *us*. The fact of the Incarnation, in which God became human, is essential to the salvation of humanity. In contrast, the evangelical wing of the church today tends to locate salvation exclusively in Jesus' death and resurrection, leading to a distorted understanding of both God and humanity, and therefore of the gospel.

While not wishing to undervalue the contribution of many other theologians, in this essay I turn to Athanasius to appropriate his understanding of the gospel as a renewal of the relation between God and humanity through the Incarnation. I orient this exploration around three axes: the relational nature of the Trinitarian God, humanity's dual nature as creature and image, and the inherent complementarity of God's will and the human will.

The three axes

God: relational Father

Creation reveals God as relational. Effected through the Word, communicator of meaning, creation is a communication from God (Jn 1:3).⁵ The Incarnation reveals this Word to be the Son of God, sent by the Father and made incarnate through the Holy Spirit; thus God Himself is relational: three persons in One.⁶ Though Father, Son and Spirit are equally God, the relationship between Father and Son and that between Father and Spirit are relationships of derivation: the Son is begotten of, and the Spirit proceeds from, the Father.⁷ It is the Father who initiates: the identity of God, as God, is Father (see Gal 4:6–7).⁸

216; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 6–9. Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 6–25; Richard S. J. Clifford and Khaled Anatolios, 'Christian Salvation: Biblical and Theological Perspectives', *Theological Studies* 66 (2005): 752–53, 759; John Anthony McGuckin, 'Introduction' to St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, ed. John Behr, trans. J. A. McGuckin (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary, 1995), 33.

4 Weinandy and Keating, *Athanasius and His Legacy*, 105.

5 Mary J. Douglas, 'A Critical Evaluation of Athanasius' Theology of Participation through the Incarnation with an Assessment of the Usefulness of This Theology for the Contemporary Understanding of the Gospel' (MA thesis, Westminster Theological Centre, 2020), 9, 16; Athanasius, *Contra Gentes (Against the Pagans; hereafter CG)* 35.2; Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 1:179–81; Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 47–48; Jenson, *The Triune God*, 79, 117.

6 See Jn 1:14; 5:23, 36; 15:26; 1 Jn 1:1–3; Mt 1:18, 20; 12:28; Heb 9:14.

7 Athanasius, *Orations contra Arianos (Orations Against the Arians; hereafter OCA)* 1.16; 3.6; Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 1:236–37, 242–44; Jenson, *The Triune God*, 103; Weinandy and Keating, *Athanasius and His Legacy*, 13.

8 Athanasius, *De Incarnatione (On the Incarnation; hereafter Inc.)* 3.3; CG 40.4, 47.4; OCA 1.45, 2.31, 3.12–13, 3.25; *Epistulae ad Serapionem (Letters to Serapionem concerning the Holy Spirit)* 1.6.10, 9, 12, 14, 20, 24, 28, 30, 33; 3.5, in *Works on the Spirit: Athanasius and Didymus. Athanasius's Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit and Didymus's On the Holy Spirit*, ed. and trans. Mark DelCogliano,

Humanity's dual nature

Uniquely among all creation, humanity relates to God in two ways: as creature and as image. As creature, totally dependent upon God for life as a gift, humanity's relation to God is external: we are freely created by God, not part of God.⁹ As image of the relational God, our purpose or *telos* is to relate to God in freely given worship. Both gift and calling, resemblance and relation, our identity as image is a God-given potential that we realize in a freely chosen relationship with God (Gen 1:26–27).¹⁰ As image, humanity's potential relation to God is internal: we are the image of the Son who is internal to the Godhead, called to image the Son as the Son images the Father (Rom 8:29; Col 1:15).¹¹

God and humanity: complementary

The relationality of God and the dual identity of humanity mean that divine and human will are inherently complementary: God is good for us. This idea is made explicit in the seventh-century theologian Maximus the Confessor's understanding that the function of the will is to fulfil one's nature as defined by its *telos*.¹² Yet if one's will and one's nature are totally correlated, then freedom is an illusion.¹³ However, the *duality* of human nature, as both creature and image, means that our will is exercised and freedom expressed in the choice between two pathways. We must *choose* to relinquish legitimate creaturely desires in order to realize our deepest

Andrew Radde-Galwitz and Lewis Ayres (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2011); Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (London: SCM, 1981), 174–75; Jenson, *The Triune God*, 115–16, 122–23; Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 221, 251; John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985), 17–28.

⁹ OCA 1.58, 3.63; CG 41; Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 54–55, 115–16; Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 220–21.

¹⁰ CG 2; Inc. 4; Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 57; Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 1:174–76, 190; John Behr, 'Introduction', in *St. Athanasius the Great of Alexandria: On the Incarnation*, trans. John Behr (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2011), 26, 29.

¹¹ Gregg and Groh, *Early Arianism*, 176; Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 119.

¹² Maximus, *Ambiguum (Difficult Matter)*, 7, 1072A–73D, in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Christ: Selected Writings from St. Maximus the Confessor*, ed. John Behr, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilkin (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary, 2003); Maximus, *Opuscule 1*, 13A, 24D–25A, and *Opuscule 16*, 200B, in *Opuscula theologica et polemica (Small Theological and Polemical Works)*, trans. Larchet-Ponsoye; (1998a), cited in Ian A. McFarland, 'The Theology of the Will', in Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 519, 520, 523; *Opuscule 26*, PG 91: 277C, in *Opuscula theologica et polemica (Small Theological and Polemical Works)*, trans. Larchet-Ponsoye, cited in Ivor J. Davidson, "'Not My Will but Yours be Done': The Ontological Dynamics of Incarnational Intention", *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 2 (2005): 192; Maximus, *Opuscule 3*, 56A, in *Maximus the Confessor: Early Church Fathers*, ed. and trans. Andrew Louth (London: Routledge, 1996); Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 2, 77–78; Khaled Anatolios, 'The Soteriological Significance of Christ's Humanity in St. Athanasius', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (1996): 267; OCA 1.45, 48; Lucy Peppiatt, 'The Two Wills of Christ, Part 1', *Theological Miscellany*, 19 November 2015, <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert451douglas1>.

¹³ Maximus, *Disputatio cum Pyrrho (Dispute with Pyrrhus)*, 293B, cited in McFarland, 'The Theology of the Will', 523.

desire as image and relate to God. Our creaturely desires, to eat and sleep and enjoy other physical experiences, are God-given and in no way sinful. However, our deepest desire as image is to know God and when this is in conflict with creaturely desires, our choice is crucial. A decisive act of the human will is required to fulfil God's will for us, our *telos* of communion with Him.¹⁴ In relation to the fulfilment of our potential as human beings, God's will and the human will are inherently complementary.

Separated

Tragically, humanity has turned away from God Who is life, so we are dying.¹⁵ Because we have been deceived as to the nature of God, our God-given desire to be like God through relating to Him was distorted into the idolatrous desire to be like God independently from Him—which is the essence of sin.¹⁶ Thus deceived, and no longer able to discern what is best for us, the human will cannot fulfil its proper function of realizing the human *telos* of communion with God. We are disabled.¹⁷

What the Incarnation does for us

Dying, deceived and disabled, we cannot rescue ourselves. We need re-connection to God who is life, re-creation in the image of God, a re-revelation of God and the re-enabling of our will.¹⁸ All this can happen only through the Incarnation of the Son of God in Whose Image we were, and must again be, created.¹⁹

Re-connection

Christ, fully God and fully human, reconnects humanity to God within His person, effecting an exchange: He applies human attributes to God and divine attributes to humanity (2 Cor 5:21; Phil 2:8).²⁰ Connected to the Father through the Son of God by nature, humans become sons of God by grace, adopted by the Father (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4, 8; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5).²¹ An adopted child does not and will never share the DNA of the adoptive parents, yet they *are* his or her parents. Similarly, though we

14 Lucy Peppiatt, 'The Two Wills of Christ, Part 3', *Theological Miscellany*, 8 December 2015, <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert451douglas2>.

15 *Inc.* 3–7.

16 *CG* 3.3.

17 *OCA* 2.14; Matthew C. Steenberg, *Of God and Man: Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2009), 174.

18 *CG* 2.8–18, 30–34; 3.2; *Inc.* 3, 5, 7; Alvyn Pettersen, *Athanasius and the Human Body* (Bristol: The Bristol, 1990), 4–14; Steenberg, *Of God and Man*, 175–76.

19 *Inc.* 13; Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 67.

20 Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 133–35; *OCA* 2.51–59, 61; 3.31–32; C. Baxter Kruger, *Jesus and the Undoing of Adam* (Jackson, MS: Perichoresis, 2003), 34.

21 Cyril of Alexandria, *In D. Joannis Evangelium (Commentary on the Gospel of St. John)*, ed. Philip Edward Pusey, trans. Philip Edward Pusey and Thomas Randall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), book 1, chap. 9 (Pusey 1.110–11, 1.135; LF 43.86, 43.106), cited in Donald Fairbairn, 'Patristic Soteriology: Three Trajectories', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50, no. 2 (2007): 305–6, n. 55 and 56.

are not God, we share in the fellowship which Father and Son enjoy because they are God (1 Jn 3:1).²²

Re-creation

The co-existence of human and divine in the person of Christ effects the re-creation of humanity. The Incarnation is not absorption or divine-human fusion but union of difference. It is not static co-existence but dynamic interaction between God and human within the person of the Incarnate Christ, such that humanity is transformed and re-created in the Image of God.²³ To relate to God *is* to be transformed.

The transformation of the one human Jesus transforms all humanity because Christ is the Creator.²⁴ Furthermore, Christ is raised as a human, the firstborn of a new humanity whose Head is not Adam but Christ (1 Cor 15; Rom 5:12–21, 8:29; 1 Cor 15:42–49; Col 1:18).²⁵ In Christ, all humanity has been adopted and a new humanity has been instituted. As individuals, we choose whether to receive this adoption and enter this new humanity.²⁶ The Incarnation enables us to make this choice.

Revelation

Christ also corrects our distorted view of God as untrustworthy by revealing the true character of God as a loving Father, giving us accurate information on the basis of which to choose to follow Him.

Re-enabling

Finally, Christ re-enables the human will. Christ has a human will, otherwise He could not heal it: ‘what is not assumed is not healed.’²⁷ Yet Christ’s human will was *His* human will, and therefore in harmony with His divine will, which in turn was in harmony with the Father’s will.²⁸ The integrity of the Godhead, Father and Son willing in perfect harmony, effects the integrity of the Incarnate Christ: God and human willing in perfect harmony.²⁹

22 OCA 1.38–39; 2.51–59; 3.19–25; Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 135; Kruger, *Jesus and the Undoing*, 54–55, 65; Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 178, 180, 191–96.

23 Athanasius, *De Decretis (Defence of the Nicene Definition)*, 14; Athanasius of Alexandria, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series 2, vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (1886–1889; rpt. New York: Cosimo, 2007); Athanasius, *De Incarnatione Contra Apollinarium (On the Incarnation against Apollinaris)*, book 1: 1, 15, 19, in *Later Treatises of Saint Athanasius* (Oxford: Aeterna, 2015); OCA 3.55.2–3; Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 22, 149, 155; Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 1:227; Anatolios, ‘Soteriological Significance’, 270.

24 Athanasius, *Epistula ad Adelphium (Letter to Adelphius)*, 8; *Inc.* 1.4; Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, 172.

25 This is not a change in but a deeper revelation of God; cf. Eph 1:4; Rev 13:8; Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 1:214.

26 OCA 3.19, 24, 33; Pettersen, *Athanasius and the Human Body*, 37, 40, 42, 53–57.

27 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 101. 5.

28 Davidson, ‘Not My Will but Yours Be Done’, 190–91; Maximus, *Questione ad Thalassium (Questions Addressed to Thalassius)*, in *On the Cosmic Mystery of Christ*, 60; McFarland, ‘Theology of the Will’, 526.

29 *Inc.* 7–10, 34; Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 228–29; Davidson, ‘Not My Will but Yours Be Done’, 182–83.

Furthermore, this harmony is not mere determinism, or subjugation of the human will to the divine, but the proper functioning of the human will. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ's struggle was between His legitimate human desire, as creature, not to die and His deeper human desire, as image, to fulfil the Father's will and redeem humanity.³⁰ Thus, although Christ did indeed become human as we are, He did not remain that way. Through His faithful human choice throughout His life to relate to God in trust and obedience, He is progressively 'made perfect' on our behalf, increasingly transformed into the image of God.³¹ Jesus 'entered into fallen human existence and steadfastly refused to be "fallen" in it', and thus 'fundamentally reordered' it.³²

In addition, Christ receives on our behalf the Holy Spirit, through Whom the Son lives eternally in harmony with the Father, Who empowers us in Christ to choose the very best: communion with God.³³

Salvation

Thus, the incarnate Christ has re-connected us to God who is life, re-created us in His image, revealed God as Father and re-enabled our will, enabling us to choose that which fulfils our deepest desire, our *telos*: eternal communion with God.³⁴ He has instituted a new humanity, the church, His body, of which He is the Head, the revelation in our world of Christ incarnate (Jn 14:12–20; 17:6–11, 20–26). This new humanity is re-created from within both humanity and the Godhead. Effected by both divine and human will, rooted in the Father-Son relationship within the Godhead, our relation to God is now internal.³⁵

Above all, Christ has made us sons of God: adopted *by* the Father, *in* the Son, *through* the Holy Spirit. All humanity has been adopted. As individuals, we choose to receive this adoption and so, since we have been re-created and adopted, the dynamic interaction between God and human within the incarnate Christ is mirrored within us. Then, in relationship with God, we begin the process of enculturation, learning what it is to be sons of the living God.

Thus, we are drawn ever deeper into the communion within the Godhead which is the fulfilment of our very being, our deepest desires (1 Cor 2:9; 2 Cor 3:18).³⁶ Adopted as sons of God, incorporated into the Body of Christ, we are being transformed into His Bride, enjoying eternal communion within God.

30 See Mt 26:36–44; Lk 22:42–44; Jn 5:30, 6:38; Rom 8:18; Phil 3:8; Heb 12:2; Maximus, *Opusc.* 3, 48C (Louth); *Opusc.* 1, 13A (Larchet-Ponsoye); *Opusc.* 16, 197A (Larchet-Ponsoye); McFarland, 'Theology of the Will', 523, 527, 529–30.

31 Heb 2:10–11; Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 2:52; OCA 1.48; 2.59; 3.33–34, 38, 40–41, 53; Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 228–31.

32 Kruger, *Jesus and the Undoing*, 34.

33 Rom 8:11, 14–16, 26–27; 1 Cor 2:12; Gal 4:6; Eph 2:18; Jn 5:18–21; 8:28; 9:3; 10:25, 34–38; 12:3–7, 44–45; 14:9–14, 16; CG 3.25; OCA 1.16, 50; 2.59; 3.19, 24–25, 38; *Ep. ad Serap.* 1.15, 19, 21, 23–4; Ian A. McFarland, 'Spirit and Incarnation: Toward a Pneumatic Chalcedonianism', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 16, no. 2 (2014): 147; Bruce Collins, *Jesus' Gospel, Jesus' Way*, book 1: *Kingdom*, 41–45, 65–90.

34 OCA 2.68; 3.33; Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 132, 142–43.

35 Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 130.

36 Kruger, *Jesus and the Undoing*, 17.

Why the Incarnation is central to the gospel

The contemporary evangelical church understands sin as disobedience and death as divine punishment, from which Christ earns forgiveness for us, somehow resulting in an unspecified 'personal relationship' with God.³⁷ In contrast, the Athanasian life-giving gospel understands sin as the distortion of God-given desires because of deception, and it views death as a consequence of our separation from God Who is life. When Christ, the Son of God, becomes human to rescue us from this predicament, the result is a relationship of sonship with God the Father.

The gospel is a revelation of what it means to be human. We are created for, and fulfilled in, our relationship to God Who alone gives us identity and meaning. For those of us who tend to define ourselves by a particular characteristic such as political belief, sexuality or ethnicity, yet find those components of the self to be inadequate for such a task, the gospel offers us something far better, assuring us that our true identity and the fulfilment of our deepest desires can be found in Christ.³⁸

For those who see God as a threat to our freedom yet long for meaning, the gospel offers the promise that God's heart is one of self-giving love, that God and humanity are not incompatible but inherently complementary, and that we enjoy both freedom and meaning when our will is in harmony with His.³⁹ Young people contemplating suicide desperately need to know that their existence has a purpose, that true freedom is to live in relationship with the Creator of the cosmos.⁴⁰

For those who see God as distant and remote, even hostile, the gospel tells us that God is astonishingly and wonderfully close, not just *with* us but *in* us, and us in Him;⁴¹ that God is not against us but *for* us, to such an extent that He has become

37 Paul R. Hinlicky, 'Theological Anthropology: Toward Integrating *Theosis* and Justification by Faith', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34, no. 1 (1997): 47–48; Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, vol. 1: *Human Nature* (Louisville: John Knox, 1996), 164–66; Fairbairn, 'Patristic Soteriology', 308–9.

38 *Inc.* 4, 11–12, 15–16, 45; Sam Allberry, 'Where to Find Hope and Help amid the Sexual Revolution', Gospel Coalition, 5 November 2018, <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert451douglas3>; Mark A. Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015), 46–60; Ellen T. Charry, 'The Case for Concern: Athanasian Christology in Pastoral Perspective', *Modern Theology* 9, no. 3 (1993): 270, 278; A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God: The Human Thirst for the Divine* (Milton Keynes, UK: Authentic, 2009), 67–68.

39 *Inc.* 3; CG 30; McFarland, 'Theology of the Will', 516–17, 523–31; Davidson, 'Not My Will but Yours Be Done', 180, 194–95, 201–4; Kruger, *Jesus and the Undoing*, 34, 40; Collins, *Jesus' Gospel*, 1:66–90; Anatolios, 'Soteriological Significance', 267; Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 22–23; Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny*, 14–17; Aaron Riches, *Ecce Homo: On the Divine Unity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 6–7.

40 Taken to its logical conclusion, such freedom to which God is a threat can be realized only through suicide; see Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 42–43. This may be a factor in the increasing suicide rates today; see Mary O'Hara, 'Young People's Mental Health Is a "Worsening Crisis"; Action Is Needed', *The Guardian*, 31 July 2018, <https://worldidea.org/yourls/ert451douglas4>. Iliia Delio, 'Artificial Intelligence and Christian Salvation: Compatibility or Competition?' *New Theology Review* (November 2003): 47–50, notes that the Latin *per-sonare* means 'to sound through', and therefore, to be human is 'to be in relationship with another by which the other sounds through in one's life'. Delio asserts, 'Only God is truly free and the contingent human person is free only in relationship to God.' Human fulfilment is thus 'mutual indwelling in the dance of the Trinity'.

41 *OCA* 2.68; 3.33; Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 132, 142–43.

one of us. God's glory and majesty are not compromised but revealed by His relationship with us.⁴² In the person of Christ, God is in humanity and humanity is in God. This closest of relationships with Almighty God is available to us and is the fulfilment of our deepest longing.

For those who yearn for belonging, the gospel communicates that through the Incarnation we have been included in God's family. No longer orphans, in the Son we are sons of God, invited into the eternal communion of the Godhead.⁴³ Our craving for affirmation is satisfied; adopted by the Father, we are fully accepted in the heart of His family, and we can be who we truly are.

For those who have turned away in despair from a seemingly impotent and unattractive Christian message to instead pursue change through self-improvement, social works, cultural reformation or political activism, the true gospel offers transformation through life in the incarnate Son of God.⁴⁴ Any improvement we make to our unredeemed selves is insufficient to effect lasting change in this fallen world. Similarly, social, cultural or political activity may improve people's external circumstances but not their inner condition. It is, therefore, unsustainable: fallen human beings cannot live God's way, as the Old Testament repeatedly demonstrates. Furthermore, even if we could live God's way without reference to God (the fundamental deception of the Fall), such a life would miss the whole purpose of our very existence. It would fail to fulfil the *telos* of humanity, which is to live in relationship with God, our Creator, our Father and, ultimately, our Bridegroom. In contrast, in the incarnate Christ we are re-created in the Image by the Image, adopted as sons by the Father and transformed by the Holy Spirit into the beautiful Bride of Christ.

For Christians who struggle to see God as Father because they received a gospel message focused on God as judge, the Incarnation offers sonship as both the means and content of salvation; here, soteriology and spirituality cohere.⁴⁵ The relationship

42 Anatolios, *Coherence*, 13–14, 21–22, 43–45, 129; Nabeel Qureshi, *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus: A Devout Muslim Encounters Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 189; Anatolios, 'Soteriological Significance', 278. God's transcendence is His nearness. *Inc.* 1, 6; *CG* 1.

43 Bradley Jersak, *A More Christlike God: A More Beautiful Gospel* (Pasadena, CA: Plain Truth, 2015), 39.

44 Hinlicky, 'Theological Anthropology', 45–48; Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny*, 164–66; Roland Chia, 'Salvation as Justification and Deification', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64, no. 2 (2011): 134; Mark Oppenheimer, 'The Church of Oprah Winfrey and a Theology of Suffering', *New York Times*, 27 May 2011, <https://worldia.org/yourls/ert451douglas5>; Ian Morgan Cron and Suzanne Stabile, *The Road Back to You: An Enneagram Journey to Self-Discovery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 9–20; John Ellis, "'American Gospel: Christ Alone" Takes on Joel Osteen and the Prosperity Gospel', *A Day in His Court*, 25 October 2018, <https://worldia.org/yourls/ert451douglas6>; Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 271, 277–78, 282–83, 291; Gregory A. Boyd, *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power is Destroying the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 46–49, 51, 54–55, 73–75; Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), 231–32, 236, 310–17; contra Johnny Enlow, *The Seven Mountain Renaissance: Vision and Strategy through 2050* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2015), 78–99.

45 Jn 15:9; 17:20–21; Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22; Charry, 'The Case for Concern', 265–66; Lincoln Harvey, 'Introduction', in *Essays on the Trinity*, ed. Lincoln Harvey (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 2, 7; Fairbairn, 'Patristic Soteriology', 308–9; Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 1:8; Jenson, *The Triune God*, 171.

through which we are saved is the very same as the relationship *into* which we are saved: sonship.

For Christians who wrestle with failure and feelings of inadequacy, the Incarnation reveals the life of discipleship to be not earning but learning. We do not earn the right to become sons of God; rather, we learn how to live in the identity of sonship that we have already received by adoption (Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 2:52).⁴⁶ We *are* His children (1 Jn 3:1).

For those dismayed at the disunity of the church, this gospel offers us the opportunity to rebuild on a theological foundation that is accepted by all parts of the global church.⁴⁷

The church today needs to celebrate the identity of God as Father and of humanity as His adopted sons by grace, and to proclaim the realization of our potential as image, the fulfilment of our deepest desire to relate to God, through the wonder of the incarnate Christ. This is the life-giving gospel, the fully sufficient answer to the contemporary longing for identity and meaning.

46 OCA 3:53; Charles C. Twombly, 'The Nature of Christ's Humanity: A Study in Athanasius', *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 8, no. 3 (1989): 239.

47 Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, 1:xv; Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation*, 8–10, 14.

Clothing and Exchange of Garments in the Bible, as a Picture of God’s Dealings with His People

Benjamin Marx

This article investigates the imagery of clothing and exchange of garments through the entire Christian canon (in nine books from Genesis to Revelation) to identify the redemptive analogies drawn by the biblical writers. From the beginning, God takes the initiative to clothe his people and thus restore our dignity, worth and relationship to him.

Introduction

When I was a student at Moody Bible Institute in the USA, I fell in love with biblical theology.¹ Tracing entire themes from Genesis to Revelation particularly fascinates me. For example, following temple language and imagery through the entire Christian canon and how that theme is developed by the biblical authors (and the ultimate Author) has been intellectually engaging and spiritually stimulating.²

In my final course at Moody, I decided to trace the use of imagery involving clothing and the exchanging of garments through the Bible. Putting on clothes is an essential component of our daily routine, and clothing ‘is one of the most pervasive of human symbols through which a person’s position and role in society is [sic] signaled’.³ My professor thought that would be a boring topic. After I presented my final paper, he said, ‘Wow, this is fascinating.’ I hope that you too will find this summary of how God has dealt with his people via clothing exciting and transforming. Moreover, this kind of interpretive exercise strengthens our

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1 Brian S. Rosner, ‘Biblical Theology’, in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 10, defines biblical theology ‘as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyse and synthesize the Bible’s teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible’s overarching narrative and Christocentric focus.’

2 See e.g. G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004).

3 Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, WBC 1 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 84.

hermeneutical prowess as we see connections between themes developed and images used throughout the Scriptures.⁴

Throughout the biblical narratives, the usage of clothing language and its relation to salvation are intriguing. A focus on a few selected passages of Scripture (Gen 3; Ruth 3; Isa 61; Ezek 16; Zech 3; Gal 3; Eph 4; Col 3; Rev 19)⁵ will display God's dealings with his people and how the biblical authors use images of clothing and exchange of garments to depict his love and grace. Throughout both testaments, the putting on of garments (whether literally or symbolically) frequently has significant redemptive implications.⁶ The literal putting on of clothes foreshadows redemption and thus typifies this theme. We will see that figurative and literal usages are intertwined⁷ and that 'by an easy progression the literal investing and divesting of garments becomes [sic] overtly metaphoric of spiritual states.'⁸

Genesis

As one traces the imagery and motif of clothing through the Bible, one sees the path of salvation history.⁹ The first notable reference to this image actually involves the absence of clothing (Gen 2:25).¹⁰ In Genesis 3:21, God makes 'garments of skins' to clothe Adam and Eve. God is active in covering their shame after they disobeyed his commandment and ate 'of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' (Gen 2:17). They had already tried to cover their shame on their own ('and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths', 3:7), but their attempt was insufficient.¹¹ 'God does (3:21) for the couple what they cannot do for themselves (3:7). They cannot deal with their shame. But God can, will, and does. To be clothed is to be given life.'¹²

God does not leave humans in their shame and guilt. He himself takes care of the problem and provides the means by which fellowship with him can be re-established. Ever since the Fall, 'proper garments are required when coming into the presence of the holy God.'¹³

4 This consistency of themes across books of Scripture does not imply that there is no diversity within the canon, but it does mean that there is unity in that diversity. For a theology of the New Testament that argues in support of this point, see I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004).

5 A fully developed biblical theology of this topic would require an article of greater length. Scripture references are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) if not otherwise indicated.

6 Clothing carries other important functions in Scripture. It can denote one's identity in the community, signal social status, or play a role in the enactment of authorized and official agreements. See C. E. Palmer, 'Clothes', in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*.

7 'Garments', in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, ed. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000) 318.

8 'Garments', 319.

9 'Garments', 318.

10 'Garments', 320.

11 See also Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 95.

12 Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 50.

13 Palmer, 'Clothes'. He gives the following Scripture references: Ex 19:10, 14; Ezek 44:17; Mt 22:11-12; Rev 3:18; 7:9, 14.

For God to obtain ‘garments of skin’, the death of an animal¹⁴ had to take place. These garments verify that sin and shame have now entered human history and that Adam and Eve can no longer ‘walk before deity in innocence (2:25)’.¹⁵ God clothes the couple and shows his ‘tender care’,¹⁶ and this ‘positive and loving act’¹⁷ is identified as ‘salvific in character’.¹⁸

Genesis shows God taking the initiative to restore relationships. First, he initiated the dialogue with Adam, asking him, ‘Where are you?’ (Gen 3:9) and letting him admit to what he had done. God then also clothed the couple and so covered their shame. This is an act of grace. Gordon J. Wenham (following Calvin) asserts that this is not so much a token of grace but serves ‘as a reminder of their sinfulness’.¹⁹ But why can it not be both a reminder of their sin *and* a vivid symbol of God’s gracious dealing with his creation? Sin is discovered, yet grace is received. What a wonderful picture of his care even when we disobey.

The Genesis account is a pivotal point of entry into our discussion. From the beginning, the provision or exchange of clothing not only serves the physical needs of humans but also demonstrates God’s loving care. We could discover much more on this topic in the Pentateuch, but I will move on to what the book of Ruth has to say concerning clothing imagery—literally and symbolically.

Ruth

The story of Ruth, the Moabite, is a fascinating and illuminating part of the Bible’s larger story. We will focus on one particular scene—the one in which Ruth approaches Boaz on the threshing floor and lies down at his feet (Ruth 3:9). What does it mean that she ‘lay at his feet’?²⁰ Is this to be taken literally or is it a euphemism? What is truly happening here?²¹ We cannot go into all the details, but some clarifications are needed to facilitate my analysis.

Ruth’s mother-in-law, Naomi, tells her to go to the threshing floor, to wait and observe where Boaz is lying down, and then to ‘go and uncover his feet and lie down, and he will tell you what to do’ (3:4). Before that, Ruth is to wash and anoint herself and put on her cloak (3:3). Whatever the exact meanings of certain actions may be,

14 Is this already a symbol of the act of sacrifice? That is a common interpretation. See Andrew Bowling, ‘*lābēš* (dress, be clothed)’, in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris et al. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 469.

15 Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, NAC, 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 254.

16 Waltke, *Genesis*, 95.

17 Ora Horn Prouser, ‘SUITED TO THE THRONE: THE SYMBOLIC USE OF CLOTHING IN THE DAVID AND SAUL NARRATIVES’, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 71 (S 1996), 30.

18 Mathews, *Genesis*, 255. See also Ex 20:26; 28:42 for a lexical link here. So also Meredith G. Kline, ‘Investiture with the Image of God’, *Westminster Theological Journal* 40, no. 1 (Fall 1977): 39–62 (especially 46–51).

19 Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 85.

20 Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*, NAC 6 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 685: ‘Few texts in the book have generated as much discussion as this command.’

21 Leon Morris states, ‘We have very little knowledge of the customs prevalent in Israel in antiquity and the arrangements for marriage here outlined are not elsewhere attested.’ Arthur E. Cundall and Leon Morris, *Judges and Ruth: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1968), 275.

clearly Boaz understands Ruth's behaviour as expressing a desire to marry him (3:10). So there might be sexual tensions in the air, yet the text is quite ambiguous. It is best not to infer too much of a sensual connotation.²²

When Boaz awakes, wanting to know who is at his feet, Ruth states, 'I am your servant Ruth.' Then a remarkable statement follows: 'Spread the corner of your garment²³ over me, since you are a kinsman-redeemer' (3:9; NIV). Ruth does not wait for instructions (as advised by Naomi) but promptly proposes marriage.²⁴ This covering of a woman with one's own clothes was a figurative act, 'which according to Near Eastern custom signified "the establishment of a new relationship and the symbolic declaration of the husband to provide for the sustenance of the future wife"'²⁵ With that gesture, Boaz would indicate his protection of Ruth as her husband and her kinsman-redeemer. We will further investigate this theme of marriage and its relationship to clothing in Ezekiel 16 and in Revelation 19. For now, we can say that in Ruth, garments express wedding imagery and help to portray a redemptive picture.

Isaiah

Another well-known example of clothing imagery with redemptive implications appears in Isaiah 61:10: 'He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness.' This verse is followed via simile with a picture of wedding preparations and the clothing of the priest. Meredith G. Kline comments, 'Isaiah likens the salvation investiture to the adorning of a bridegroom-priest (Isa. 61:10e)' and we 'may now further note that this investiture is likened to the adorning of the bride (Isa. 61:10f.)' We can observe that the clothing language includes interwoven imagery of priestly garments, wedding garb and soteriological features. The statement in 61:10 is the culmination of Isaiah's treatise on 'the hope for an era characterized by righteousness'.²⁶ This era will be inaugurated by the Messiah (11:1–9) and will have no end (9:7).

Furthermore, the nation's righteous deeds (and those of the individual) are presented as 'polluted garments' (64:6), which God removes. But God does not stop there; he then clothes the people with 'the garments of salvation' and the 'robe of righteousness'. Earlier, God himself is described as one who puts 'on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head' (59:17). Again, it is God who clothes his people. In Isaiah he does so with his righteousness and salvation.

Isaiah has further developed the theme of Genesis 3 and tied it more closely to

22 See the discussion in Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 685–88.

23 'The word *kānāp* is gloriously ambiguous, referring not only to the wings of a bird but also to a skirt, the corners of one's flowing garments.' Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 691.

24 R. L. Hubbard, Jr., 'Kinsman-Redeemer and Levirate', in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry and Writings*, ed. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove, IL; IVP Academic; Nottingham, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 380.

25 Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 691. The latter part of the quotation is from P. A. Kruger, 'The Hem of the Garment in Marriage: The Meaning of the Symbolic Gesture in Ruth 3:9 and Ezek 16:8', *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 12 (1984): 86.

26 Willem A. VanGemeren, 'Righteousness', in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 1861.

the Messiah's rule and its redemptive characteristics. He also, like Ruth, has connected marriage imagery with covenantal language about God and his people.

Ezekiel

Just as Isaiah presents a picture of clothing and redemptive analogies amidst wedding language (61:10; 62), so does Ezekiel. In chapter 16, this prophet retells the exodus story in the allegory of a betrothal. In 16:8, the same imagery is employed as in Ruth 3:9. God says, 'I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness.' Betrothal language continues throughout the chapter. The prophet reports how God clothed Israel in luxurious wedding garments (16:10) and how he adorned his wife with precious materials (16:11–12). Lamar Eugen Cooper comments, 'All the figures used in the description were reminders of the providential care God gave Israel from the time of Abraham to nationhood and onward.'²⁷

God redeemed Israel out of Egypt. In Ezekiel's rendition, God redeemed the girl out of her own blood, and he called her to live (16:6). But after that girl had grown into a young and beautiful woman, God again passed by and saw her in her nakedness:

When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord God, and you became mine. (16:8)

God had compassion on the girl and entered into a covenant relationship with her. He spread the corner of his garment over her and covered her shame. Kline writes:

The Lord takes his bride-people into covenantal union by the promissory act of spreading his robe of Glory over her and by clothing her in garments fashioned after the pattern of his Glory-robe, so that she stands before him transformed into the image of his Glory.²⁸

Sadly, however, as we continue reading Ezekiel 16, we discover that Israel took the garments given by her husband and played the whore (16:16, 18). The redeeming love of him who called her out of her own blood was despised. Nevertheless, God will remember his covenant with Israel and will establish an everlasting one with her (16:60), 'when I atone for you for all that you have done' (16:63). God initiated the first covenant, and he will subsequently offer a new one, once atonement has been accomplished by divine action.

Zechariah

One more Old Testament prophet, Zechariah, speaks directly to the topic at hand. In his vision (Zech 3), the prophet sees the high priest, Joshua, standing before the angel of the Lord. Satan is also present and accuses Joshua. The specific accusations

²⁷ Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, NAC 17 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 170.

²⁸ Kline, 'Investiture', 58.

are not identified, but the sins of Joshua and the people of Judah (mentioned in 3:4) may be in view.

Joshua is described as one ‘clothed with filthy garments’ (3:3). The word translated as ‘filthy’ signifies being ‘stained with human excrement’.²⁹ These ‘filthy garments’ are symbolic of the sins of the people of Judah whom he represents (see also Isa 64:6). If this is so, the accusations of Satan are to be taken seriously and have validity.

What comes next might surprise some—although it follows the plot line of what we have observed thus far. The angel of the Lord does not respond with judgement but with grace: ‘Remove the filthy garments from him.’ He not only removes the filthy garments but also clothes Joshua ‘with pure vestments’ (3:4). Now Joshua is cleansed and can stand free of any charge before God. Andrew Bowling draws from this passage and Isa 61:10 the following, appropriate application: ‘The individual’s own good deeds are filthy rags (Isa 64:6; cf. Joshua in Zech 3:3) which God removes and then clothes his own in salvation and righteousness (Isa 61:10). Then, like Joshua in Zechariah’s vision, men clothed in God’s righteousness can stand before God.’³⁰

Once more, we see human inability to deal with sin (cf. Gen 3:7). So the Lord (in Zechariah, ‘the angel of the Lord’) takes the initiative to cleanse his people. The phrase ‘and the angel of the Lord was standing by’ (Zech 3:5) signifies that the angel is ‘approving and directing Joshua’s purging, clothing and crowning on the basis of the fact that God’s righteousness and mercy were being restored’.³¹ This is a picture of God’s final salvation through the Branch (3:8)—the Messiah.

Paul’s writings

Clothing imagery is also used in the New Testament, especially by Paul (e.g. Rom 13:14; 1 Cor 15:53; 2 Cor 5:3; Gal 3:27; Eph 4:22–24; Col 3:10) and in the book of Revelation (3:4–5, 17–18; 6:11; 7:9; 19:8; 21–22). We will look at Paul first.

The exchange of garments as a redemptive analogy concludes in God’s final salvation through Jesus, the Christ, and his work. Since I have insufficient space to consider all Pauline references, I will focus on a few passages.³² Paul reminds believers that they have ‘put on Christ’ (Gal 3:27). This statement has Old Testament passages like Isaiah 61:10; 64:6 and Zechariah 3:3 in mind.³³ Paul gives the same message to the Christians in Colossae (Col 3:9–10), stating that Christians ‘have put

29 David J. Clark and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Zechariah, UBS Handbook Series* (New York: United Bible Societies, 2002), 121. This word is found only here in the OT, but two other words are related to it: human excrement (see Deut 23:13; Ezek 4:12) and vomit (2 Kgs 18:27; Isa 28:8). See Andrew E. Hill, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 28 (Nottingham, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 149.

30 Bowling, ‘(lābēš) dress, be clothed’, 469.

31 Kenneth L. Barker, ‘Zechariah’, in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Ely Gaebelein et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 625.

32 For a broader investigation, see Jung Hoon Kim, *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus* (London: T&T Clark, 2004).

33 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 186.

off the old self ... [and] put on the new self'. In Colossians, this picture also has ethical implications, as is shown by Paul's reference to 'the old self *with its practices*' (emphasis mine; see also the immediate context of 3:5–8). However, the main thrust is soteriological (though the two aspects need not be separated). Douglas J. Moo comments:

For Paul, the 'old self', or 'old man', is first of all Adam and the 'new self', or 'new man', is Christ. Note, in this regard, that Paul can speak of 'putting on Christ' as apparently parallel to 'putting on the new self' (Gal 3:27; Rom 13:14). It is therefore our 'Adamic' identification, with its servitude to sin, that we have 'put off' in coming to Christ; and it is our 'Christic' identification, with its power over sin, that we have 'put on'.³⁴

This new self is 'created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness' (Eph 4:24). In all these passages, it may seem that the putting on or putting off is a matter of human effort, but Peter T. O'Brien observes that 'to put on' in Eph 4:24 'has an implied imperatival force, not in the sense that they were to continue putting on the new man, but that they should conduct their lives in the light of the mighty change God had effected'.³⁵ Yes, God has effected this change. Yet human effort is not excluded here. It is our participation in becoming what we already are. It is about our 'daily involvement ... in the process' of the renewal of our inner self (2 Cor 4:16).³⁶ How this divine-human interaction plays out in detail is mysterious (and we do not need to solve that problem here), but we should not conclude that we have no involvement in it. I would imagine that all of us can think of moments where the prompting of the Holy Spirit invited us to take certain actions. We, however, still had (and have) the liberty to participate or not—and yes, we would be better off participating.

Paul picks up the imagery of Isaiah 59:17 in Ephesians 6:14, 17. Whereas in Isaiah God is wearing the 'breastplate of righteousness' and the 'helmet of salvation', Paul, in Ephesians, portrays God as the one who 'gives his helmet to believers for their protection. This helmet is salvation itself (the genitive is one of apposition: "the helmet *which* is salvation"), and believers are urged to lay hold of it as they engage in the spiritual warfare.³⁷ So, in Paul's letters as elsewhere, God provides the garments of salvation. The believer is now clothed by God, yet he or she also has the ethical requirement to live accordingly.

Revelation

The theme of redemption culminates in the book of Revelation. As with the other books discussed above, many features could be pointed out, but I will limit myself to one passage. In Revelation 19, the clothing and garments of the saints are described as 'fine linen' which is the 'righteous deeds of the saints' (19:8). There seems to be a

34 Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 268.

35 Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 331.

36 David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 226.

37 O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 481.

theological tension between 19:7, where the ‘bride has made herself ready’, and 19:8 where ‘it was granted her to clothe herself’. This tension is resolved, however, if we consider the Old Testament background of Isaiah 61:10. G. K. Beale comments:

The objective genitive rendering of God’s ‘deeds putting right (or acquitting) the saints’ or God’s ‘righteous acts for the saints’ is also supported by the use of the allusion to Isaiah 61:10. The allusion emphasizes God’s sovereign provision: the bride is able to prepare and clothe herself because God has given her clothes to wear.³⁸

This picture is similar to that depicted in the Pauline writings (Eph 4:24). There Paul urged the believers to live their lives in accordance with their status as adopted children of God—the new creation (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). With regard to Revelation, Grant R. Osborne makes the crucial observation that ‘the imagery [in Rev 19:8] suggests both purity and victory These are the wedding garments of the bride, as in Isa. 61:10.’ This then ‘signals the arrival of the bride and *the completion of God’s plan of salvation*’.³⁹

Summary and additional thoughts

In this quick biblical journey, we have seen how God’s treatment of his people is illustrated by the analogy of clothing and the exchange of garments, so as to demonstrate various aspects of his redeeming character. God cares for his people and is ready to clothe us with his righteousness so that our shame of nakedness will be covered by his cloak of salvation.

In the account of Adam and Eve, we saw mainly the reconciling initiative of God, who was actively interested in restoring his people. Ruth’s encounter with Boaz provides an historical basis in Hebrew culture for linking one’s clothing to the figure of marriage as well as to redeeming aspects. In Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah, the redemptive nature of clothing imagery is further expanded. Paul uses Old Testament allusions to remind us that we are clothed with a new identity. Lastly, in the book of Revelation, garments bear witness to the victory and culmination of the divine saving plan. The overall import of these passages is that we can trust God to provide us with clothing that suits our status as his children.

As I noted along the way, there are additional important questions that I do not have space to cover in detail. I will introduce a few them here without developing the themes, leaving them for the reader (‘For those who have eyes to read, let them reflect further’).

If my above observations are correct, I wonder (and marvel) as to how the passion of Jesus fits into all this. We have seen that God clothes us with his righteousness. But there is another aspect. For example, we read that Herod and the soldiers clothed Jesus mockingly ‘in splendid clothing’ (Lk 23:11). Moreover, Jesus was stripped and a scarlet robe was put on him (Mt 27:28–31; Mk 15:17–20). At his

38 G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 938 (emphasis mine).

39 Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 674 (emphasis mine).

crucifixion, the soldiers divided his garments (Mt 27:33–37; Mk 15:22–26; Lk 23:23–34). What might these passages imply for our understanding of the topic at hand? Is the picture of clothing and exchange of garments applicable to this scene as well? Did Jesus have to be stripped of his garments so that we could be appropriately dressed?

Concluding application

How can we apply these observations to our daily lives as followers of Jesus? Well, we are reminded that we all come to our Father empty-handed. We are naked before our Creator and he is graciously dressing us. I fear that we often bypass this profound truth. At our work or in school, we must prove our worth: the better your work, the more you are appreciated. There is constant pressure to perform and to succeed; failure is a naughty word. But not so with our triune God. The God whom we adore and worship is unlike the systems of this world. Even though we fall, he picks us up. Even though we stumble, he continues guiding us. Even though we have stains and dirt, he washes us and gives us new, clean garments.

Consider this conversation in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:21–24):

And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, '*Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.* And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.'

And they began to celebrate. (emphasis mine)

This is how God, our Creator and Care-giver, acts. He acts in this way because he is love.

One way to be reminded of this truth, as we have seen it exhibited in our panoramic trip through the Bible, in our daily devotions is to imagine us being helpless in our blood until our triune God speaks to us: 'Live! I put my cloak of righteousness on you. You are mine.'

Did the Gospel of Matthew Come First? An Historian's View

Jim Reiher

This essay takes us on an enlightening trip through numerous early church fathers to explain why the author believes Matthew was the first Gospel and why this issue is important. It provides a valuable introduction to and critical examination of what we know about the origin of the Gospels.

Most Bible scholars today have concluded that Mark was the first Gospel written. They solve the Synoptic problem—the question of how three similar Gospels came into existence—by saying that Matthew and Luke both used Mark along with other sources.

These scholars do not take seriously the testimony of the early church, except when it supports a thesis that the scholars can still accept (e.g. that Peter was Mark's main source). According to numerous early sources, Matthew came first. But modern interpreters ignore this evidence because they view it as all dependent on Papias, who is deemed unreliable.

Another possibility receives inadequate consideration—namely, that Matthew wrote his Gospel first, but in his own Semitic language (either Hebrew or Aramaic). No church fathers mention the timing of the translation of Matthew. Jerome wrote that no one knows who translated it from the original language into Greek.¹ Not until Augustine, in fact, do we see the first hint that Mark used a Greek version of Matthew as a source.²

Matthew initially preached to fellow Jews, but he then became a missionary to the Gentiles.³ It has been suggested that Matthew needed a Greek version of his own Gospel for that work.⁴ If Matthew did his own translation, then possibly Mark had access to it, using portions in his own Gospel as he saw fit. This possibility is unlikely, however, as no early church father indicates that Matthew created his own Greek version. It seems more plausible that Matthew wrote a Semitic Gospel that was then translated into Greek, perhaps in several stages. (Positing a multi-step process would

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1 Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 3.

2 Augustine, *The Harmony of the Gospels*, 1.2.3–4.

3 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* (hereafter *EH*), 3.24.6.

4 F. David Farnell, *How Reliable Are the Gospels? The Synoptic Gospels in the Ancient Church: The Testimony to the Priority of the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge, OH: Christian Publishing House, 2018), 21.

address the common criticism that Matthew's Greek does not easily translate back into Hebrew or Aramaic.)

It is hard to deny that two of the Synoptic writers copied from one or more of the others; the many identical passages clearly point to that. But just who came first and who then copied whom is much discussed. Luke is usually relegated to third place.⁵ Mark is almost universally assumed to have come first in modern discussions. However, if one treats historical sources with respect, the unavoidable conclusion is that Matthew's original Gospel was the first one written.

Supporters of Matthean priority have offered other arguments beyond the historical evidence. They note, for example, that Markan priority did not become a popular idea until the 1830s, and that those inclined to reject the virgin birth would prefer to see Mark, which lacks a birth story, as original. They also wonder why Matthew, who witnessed all that Jesus did and said as one of the twelve apostles, would rely on a second-hand account when writing his own Gospel.

This paper will not examine those arguments. Rather, I focus on the historical argument: what the primary sources actually say and how trustworthy they are. Any source used must be evaluated for its reliability and trustworthiness. That part of historical research is too often ignored by people who barely glance at what the early church fathers had to say on the subject.

Why it matters

Before embarking on this discussion, I will address the 'who cares' question. Why bother to defend Matthean priority? Does it really matter if Mark wrote first?

First, I would note that a clearer understanding of what has happened in the past can always be helpful in guiding us in the present. The tentacles of events creep out in many directions, and even something as seemingly theoretical as the Synoptic problem can have practical implications for Christian life.

For example, some traditions in the church down play the miraculous. Some go so far in their discomfort as to doubt the divinity of Christ and even the physical resurrection of Jesus. For those with such tendencies, it is helpful to their cause if Mark is accepted as the first Gospel. Mark has no virgin birth, no wise men following a star. At the other end of the story, there is very little discussion of his resurrection. Mark is a short and focused study of Christ's life. Placing it first allows people to contend that Matthew, Luke and John embellished the life of the 'historical Jesus' to make him more divine. According to this argument, the other three writers created stories or retold myths about Jesus and inserted them into Mark's purer, earliest version.

Of course, not everyone who argues for Mark's priority follows that complete reductionist path. After all, Mark's Gospel has plenty of miracles too. But for those who so desire, this can be seen as God doing great things through a wonderful man, thus undermining belief in the divinity of Jesus.

5 Farnell, *How Reliable Are the Gospels?* 33, argues that Luke was written second, based on Clement's writings recorded in Eusebius, *EH*, 6.14.5-7.

The testimony and credibility of the early church fathers

Papias

Papias (ca. 70–160 AD) is the source closest to the twelve apostles. He was a disciple of John of Zebedee, one of the twelve,⁶ and became the Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia.

Eusebius states that Papias wrote five volumes of material, most of which has been lost. Occasional passages from Eusebius indicate what Papias said about how Matthew and Mark wrote their Gospels. Papias is quoted as saying that Mark was ‘the interpreter of Peter’ who ‘wrote down accurately’ the things Peter shared with him.⁷ He also said that ‘Matthew wrote the oracles in the Hebrew language, and everyone interpreted them as he was able.’⁸

As our earliest, oldest source and the one closest to the apostles, Papias must be considered carefully. Even though Eusebius seems to have accepted that Matthew wrote in his own language first, he also had doubts about Papias’ intellect, calling him ‘of very limited understanding’ when expressing his disagreement with Papias’ belief in a literal thousand-year reign of Christ.⁹

Eusebius did not believe Papias actually knew the apostle John, despite Irenaeus’ testimony on this point. Here, interestingly, Eusebius is not doubting a comment by Papias himself but one made by Irenaeus (who was a disciple of Polycarp, who had, like Papias, been a disciple of John of Zebedee). Otherwise, Eusebius seems to admire Irenaeus. And why does he disagree with Irenaeus? Because Eusebius interprets *Papias’ own words* (wrongly, I think) as indicating that Papias did not know any of the original twelve apostles. In other words, Eusebius trusts the testimony of Papias enough to rely on him against Irenaeus!

Returning to Papias’ comment about Matthew—he is suggesting that Matthew wrote an earlier version of the Gospel we have today, and that the earlier version was in either Hebrew or Aramaic. Why might we doubt this idea? Some might suggest that Papias was confusing an early Gospel of Matthew with another early Semitic work about Jesus, such as the ‘Gospel of the Hebrews’.¹⁰ Others, as noted above, say that our Greek text of Matthew does not translate back to Hebrew or Aramaic easily, and so is not a likely translation from such languages.

But it seems unlikely that an early church bishop who had been a disciple of John of Zebedee would be so unaware of other circulating documents that were similar to but not necessarily the same as the Semitic Matthew. Furthermore, if Matthew did originally write a Gospel in Hebrew or Aramaic, is it not possible (indeed probable) that it would then have been used by others to write their own Gospels with their own theological emphases? Some might claim that the extant fragments of the Gospels to the Hebrews, the Nazoreans, and the Ebionites contain too many unique

6 Eusebius did not believe that Papias was a disciple of John, based on his interpretation of Papias’ own words (*EH*, 3.39.1, 2).

7 Eusebius, *EH*, 3.39.15.

8 Eusebius, *EH*, 3.39.16.

9 Eusebius, *EH*, 3.39.11–13.

10 Eusebius mentions this document in *EH*, 3.25.5.

features to have been based on Matthew, but that is a subjective conclusion.¹¹ We cannot know how much or how little people drawing from a previous work might alter it to suit their own agenda.

As for the argument that our Matthew does not translate easily back to a Semitic language, its proponents dismiss the Semitisms (i.e. passages that can be understood only by giving it a Semitic undergirding) and Semitic enhancements (constructions that are actually common in the Semitic languages).¹² This criticism also assumes that Matthew was translated from the Aramaic or Hebrew into Greek in just one step. If it occurred in two or three revisions, that would account for the 'difficult to translate backwards' Greek end product.

Papias is a trustworthy source. From him we learn that Matthew wrote some kind of Gospel in his original language, which was later used and interpreted by others. We also learn from him that Mark based his Gospel on the teachings of Peter. We don't know who took the Semitic Matthew and translated it into Greek.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus (ca. 120–202 AD) wrote:

Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own language while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the church. After their departure [i.e. the death of Peter and Paul during Nero's persecutions], Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, also transmitted to us in writing those things which Peter had preached. And Luke, the attendant of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel that Paul had declared. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also reclined on his bosom, published his gospel while staying at Ephesus in Asia.¹³

Irenaeus indicates that Matthew wrote first, in a Semitic language, followed by Mark, Luke and John. His language clearly intends to express a chronological order.¹⁴

Irenaeus seems to add credibility to Papias' comment about the composition of Matthew. It is usually dismissed on the basis that it is dependent on Papias. However, Irenaeus is not necessarily just repeating material from Papias. First, he is an early source himself; second, he was a student of Polycarp¹⁵ and had learned from him and

11 Philip Schaff and Henry Wace suggest this in their edition of the *Ecclesiastical History*, contained in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed., vol. 1: *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, rpt. 1997). They write regarding the Gospel to the Hebrews, 'It is certain that it cannot in its original form been a working over of our canonical Matthew (as many have thought); it contains too many little marks of originality over against our Greek Matthew to admit of such a supposition.' *EH* 3.25.5, p. 156 n. 24.

12 D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2005), 143.

13 Eusebius, *EH*, 5.8.2-4.

14 Farnell, *How Reliable Are the Gospels?* 29, is keen to downplay the order of composition as described by Irenaeus because he wants to see Luke as second.

15 Eusebius, *EH*, 4.14.3-4, quotes Irenaeus: 'Polycarp also was ... instructed by apostles, and acquainted with many that had seen Christ. ... We too saw him in our early youth, for he lived a long time, and died, when a very old man.' Eusebius adds later (5.20.1-7), 'Irenaeus wrote ... that he

many other early church figures.¹⁶ Third, he also offers information not noted by Papias (thus supporting the thought that he had other teachers). That extra material includes indications about the order of composition of all four Gospels; the note that Matthew wrote when Peter and Paul were in Rome; and the comment that Mark wrote after they were ‘departed’.

Therefore, Irenaeus is arguably a second independent source of material which likely came to him from Polycarp and others.

The fact that Irenaeus says that Peter and Paul founded the church in Rome makes some suspicious of his credentials as an accurate historian. There was already a church in Rome before either of them first travelled there. Residents of Rome witnessed the events of the first Pentecost (Acts 2:10). If they were converted that day, then they likely went back home and founded the Roman church. Peter and Paul would take decades to get there. So on that fact, some say, Irenaeus is clearly wrong. If he is sloppy on that point, where else might he lack historical accuracy?

On the other hand, it was a well-established early tradition that Peter and Paul helped to found the church at Rome. Perhaps those using that terminology meant that with such respected apostolic input the church truly grew, matured and spread. Perhaps ‘laying the foundations’ meant that they took what relatively small foundations were there and added to them, so that a larger and more dynamic church grew from their contribution. Perhaps some used such terminology because they believed that until one or more original apostles, called directly by the Lord Jesus himself, participated in a church, it was not truly ‘founded’.¹⁷

Eusebius treats Irenaeus as very reliable, as would Jerome later. However, I view Irenaeus as more a pastor than a careful historian or scholar. Justo Gonzalez writes, ‘Irenaeus was above all a pastor. He was not particularly interested in philosophical speculation ... but rather in leading his flock.’¹⁸ Philip Schaff observes, ‘He is neither very original nor brilliant but eminently sound and judicious.’¹⁹ These are not criticisms so much as recognitions that his strengths were not in an area that would maximize his absolute reliability in the eyes of history.

himself had been acquainted with the first successors of the apostles. ... Irenaeus mentions again his intimacy with Polycarp saying, ... “When I was a boy ... I remember the events of that time more clearly than those of recent years. ... I am able to describe the very place in which the blessed Polycarp sat as he discoursed, and his goings out and his comings in, and the manner of his life, and his physical appearance and his discourses to the people, and the accounts which he gave of his intercourse with John and with the others who had seen the Lord. ... I listened to them attentively, noting them down, not on paper, but in my heart. And ... I recall them faithfully.”

16 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.22.5; 4.27.1.

17 The sense of urgency to send the apostles Peter and John to Samaria in Acts 8:14 could reflect such a belief, because in that case the church in Samaria, though growing rapidly, would not be truly established until original apostles went there and blessed the work, thus laying an apostolic foundation.

18 Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, vol. 1: *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (San Francisco: Harper, 1984), 68.

19 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2: *Anti-Nicene Christianity AD 100–325* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910, rpt. 1989), 750. Admittedly, Schaff is referring more to Irenaeus’ doctrine and orthodoxy than to his historical research skills. The same author notes, regarding Irenaeus’ five volumes against Gnosticism, that they are ‘enveloped in polemical smoke which makes it a very difficult and tedious read’ (753).

Irenaeus' paragraph does seem to contain one inaccuracy. He says that Mark wrote after Peter and Paul had 'departed'. (I understand that to mean 'died' because the strongest traditions available indicate that Peter and Paul were killed in Rome.) Clement, whom we will soon consider, wrote that Peter approved of Mark's Gospel. Obviously, both can't be right. My personal view is that Irenaeus liked to generalize and simplify somewhat and is probably wrong in this instance.

Pantaneus

Pantaneus was a prominent teacher and, for a time, leader of the school of Alexandria (bolstering his credentials in the eyes of historians). A teacher of Clement, he lived during the second half of the second century. Eusebius says of Pantaneus:

Pantaneus ... is said to have gone to India [for a season of missionary work]. It is reported that among persons there who knew of Christ he found the Gospel according to Matthew. ... For Bartholomew, one of the apostles, had preached to them, and left with them the writing of Matthew in the Hebrew language, which they had preserved till that time.²⁰

Here another church father is reported as agreeing that Matthew originally wrote in his native language. It is very hard to know when Bartholomew might have been in India. Nothing is said about finding a Gospel of Matthew in Greek. If Matthew had made a translation for his missionary work, Pantaneus seems not to have known this. An argument from silence can never be the final word, but here the silence raises doubts that Matthew translated his own Gospel into Greek for mission work.

Clement of Alexandria

Clement (ca. 150–215 AD) was a disciple of Pantaneus who followed him as head of the school at Alexandria, making him too appear to have been a credible scholar. As recorded in Eusebius, Clement wrote:

With all sorts of entreaties they [believers in Rome] besought Mark, a follower of Peter ... that he would leave them a written monument of the doctrine which had been orally communicated to them. ... and thus became the occasion of the written Gospel which bears the name Mark. And they said that Peter, when he learned, through a revelation of the Spirit, of that which had been done, was pleased ... the work obtained the sanction of his authority for the purpose of being used in the churches. Clement in the eighth book of his *Hypotyposes* gives this account, and with him agrees ... Papias.²¹

And also:

The Gospels containing the genealogies, he [Clement] says, were written first. The Gospel according to Mark had this occasion. As Peter had preached the word publicly at Rome, and declared the Gospel by the Spirit, many who were present requested that Mark, who had followed him for a long time and remembered his sayings, should write them out. And having composed the

20 Eusebius, *EH*, 5.10.3.

21 Eusebius, *EH*, 2.15.1–2.

Gospel he gave it to those who had requested it. When Peter learned of this, he neither directly forbade nor encouraged it. But last of all, John, perceiving that the external facts had been made plain in the Gospel, being urged by his friends, and inspired by the Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel. This is the account of Clement.²²

The Clement quotations do not mention what language Matthew wrote his Gospel in. However, the second quotation does say that Matthew wrote before Mark. The complication here is that it says Luke (the other Gospel with a genealogy) was written before Mark as well. It also reinforces the view that Mark wrote from Peter's memoirs, while Peter was still alive. Even though Clement puts Mark after Matthew and Luke,²³ he does not say that Mark was dependent on either Matthew or Luke. Rather, the strong consensus is that Mark was dependent on Peter's teachings.

Clement is quoted again in Eusebius, this time about Matthew's Gospel.²⁴ There he says that Matthew and John were the only original apostles to write a Gospel, and that Matthew wrote in his original language as a gift to the Jews before going to the mission field. This reference does not support the view that he wrote the Semitic version first and then created a Greek version to aid his mission endeavours.²⁵ It is conceivable that once he reached the mission field, Matthew decided that he needed a Greek version, but no historical source actually reports this.

Tertullian

Tertullian (ca. 160–220 AD) came to faith as an adult lawyer around age 40. He brought a legal mind to his writings and study. He is seen as the father of Latin theology. Tertullian was a thorough, meticulous apologist who defended the church against persecutions from outside and against doctrinal distortions and heresies from within. He is considered one of the great teachers and theologians of his time, though his affiliation with the enthusiastic Montanists in his later years has caused some to view him as drifting from orthodoxy.

Tertullian's writings contain the following relevant comments: 'Of the apostles, therefore, John and Matthew first instil faith into us; while of apostolic men, Luke and Mark renew it afterwards. ... That [Gospel] which Mark published may be affirmed to be Peter's whose interpreter Mark was. For even Luke's form of the Gospel men usually ascribe to Paul.'²⁶

This affirms what others said previously: Mark wrote from the knowledge he gleaned from Peter. Tertullian provides a fresh description, referring to Mark as Peter's 'interpreter', as if Mark had some licence to arrange or mould the stories as he saw fit.

When Farnell says that "Tertullian makes no distinction between an Aramaic and Hebrew Matthew but considers the Greek Matthew has come from the apostle Matthew himself,"²⁷ he goes too far. Tertullian makes no such comment.

22 Eusebius, *EH*, 6.14.6–7.

23 No other church father says that, and a few state directly that Luke came after Mark.

24 Eusebius, *EH*, 3.24.6.

25 That view is suggested by Farnell, *How Reliable Are the Gospels?* 21.

26 Tertullian. *Adversus Marcionem* 2, 5.

27 Farnell, *How Reliable Are the Gospels?* 35.

Tertullian contributes to our information the statement that all four Gospels had apostolic roots: two from original apostles and two from men who were close disciples and companions of other apostles.

Origen

Origen was a prolific scholar and writer who wrote some 6,000 scrolls over his lifetime. He is one of the most respected intellects amongst the early church fathers. He would not be surpassed until Augustine.

Born in 165 AD, Origen became a student of Clement in the school of Alexandria. He would then lead that school himself, appointed at the incredibly young age of 18. More than one writer agrees that he was 'one of the most remarkable men in history for genius and learning, for the influence he exerted on his age, and for the controversies and discussion to which his opinions gave rise'.²⁸

Origen's words are quoted by Eusebius. He states that 'I have learned by tradition' that Matthew was the apostle and publican who wrote his Gospel for the Jews, in the Hebrew language first.²⁹ Origen then gives the order of composition the other three Gospels: Mark (dependent on Peter), Luke ('the Gospel commended by Paul and composed for Gentile converts'), and finally John.³⁰ His order differs from that of Clement, but all church fathers who mentioned the order of the Gospels placed Matthew first and John last.

Some scholars put no weight on Origen's opinion because of his statement that 'I have learned by tradition.' However, we should not dismiss Origen too quickly. He was the most intelligent and thorough scholar of the early church. His genius, his insights and his capacity for study and research have been acknowledged by all who have studied him. His admirers and his theological opponents all admitted he was extraordinary. He wrote commentaries on almost every book of both the Old and New Testaments, plus multiple volumes against heresies, and was a brilliant apologist (though, according to orthodox teaching, a bit of a heretic himself on some issues), all while living a humble and ascetic lifestyle. This does not make every one of his words true, but we should not dismiss him flippantly either.

Eusebius

Eusebius (ca. 260–339), along with his friend Pamphilus, wrote a five-book *Defence of Origen*. Eusebius was appointed Bishop of Caesarea and was in that role when Constantine became a Christian. Eusebius became a genuine supporter of Constantine. He was present at the Council of Nicea and recorded what happened there. Eusebius is recognized as a thorough and independent-thinking church historian, not brilliant like Origen but a meticulous and dedicated scholar. He was 'in all probability the most learned Christian of his time'.³¹

Besides quoting others, Eusebius offers his own views and recollections in many places. Regarding the origin of the Gospels, he agrees that of the original apostles, only Matthew and John 'left us written memorials and they, tradition says, were led

28 Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 2:786.

29 Eusebius, *EH*, 6.25.3–5.

30 Eusebius, *EH*, 6.25.6

31 Gonzalez, *Story of Christianity*, 129.

to write only under the pressure of necessity.³² He affirms that Matthew wrote his Gospel in his own Semitic language when he was about to leave to be a missionary to Gentiles.³³ He adds, ‘When Mark and Luke had already published their Gospels, they say that John ... finally proceeded to write ... the deeds done by Christ at the beginning of his ministry.’³⁴

Like Origen, Eusebius used the word ‘tradition’, and that is enough for some to dismiss what he says. But his use of that word refers only to the motivation for Gospel writing, *not* the writings themselves. Furthermore, Eusebius’ scholarship would not let him be easily duped. He often qualified the things he wrote when he seemed to doubt whether his sources are reliable. Even in this passage, he uses ‘they say’ when discussing the Gospel of John, but not about either the comment that Matthew wrote originally in his own language or the order of the Gospels. Again, there is no information on who translated Matthew into Greek.

Jerome

Jerome (ca. 340–419) was a great and well-educated scholar, as thorough and meticulous as Origen. He was a devoted monk (and strong advocate of the monastic life), and a ruthless enemy to those who disagreed with him. Jerome is especially remembered for translating the Bible into the Latin Vulgate. Jerome’s writings contain the explanation that ‘Matthew, also called Levi, apostle and aforesometimes publican, composed a gospel of Christ at first published in Judea in Hebrew for the sake of those of the circumcision who believed, but this was afterwards translated into Greek, though by what author is uncertain.’³⁵

Jerome says of Mark’s Gospel that it was based on Peter’s teaching, addressed to a Roman audience, and that Peter approved of it.³⁶

Jerome was not as kind-natured as Origen, but that fact does not undermine the validity of his scholarship. (Mean people can still be brilliant scholars.) If he felt that certain traditions and teachings from earlier times were accurate and worth retelling, he must have made an effort to confirm that they were more than just a shaky rumour or vague tradition.

Augustine

Finally, we turn to Augustine (ca. 354–430), who was active at the same time as Jerome. Another prolific scholar and writer, Augustine would become the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa.

Augustine’s *Harmony of the Gospels* provides important comments on the composition of the Gospels. He writes:

Now, those four evangelists ... are believed to have written in the order which follows: first Matthew, then Mark, thirdly Luke, lastly John. ... There were two, belonging to the number of those whom the Lord chose before the Passover, that obtained places—namely the first place and the last ... Matthew and ... John.

32 Eusebius, *EH*, 3.24.5.

33 Eusebius *EH*, 3.24.6.

34 Eusebius *EH*, 3.24.7.

35 Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 3.

36 Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 5.

And thus the remaining two, who did not belong to the number referred to, but who at the same time had become followers of the Christ who spoke in these others, were supported on either side by the same, like sons. ... Of these four, it is true, only Matthew is reckoned to have written in the Hebrew language; the others in Greek. ... [It should not be assumed that] each individual writer chose to write in ignorance of what his predecessor had done, or left out as matters about which there was no information things which another nevertheless is discovered to have recorded. ... Matthew is understood to have taken it in hand to construct the record of the incarnation of the Lord. ... Mark follows him closely, and looks like his attendant and epitomizer. ... Much too he narrates in words almost numerically and identically the same as those used in Matthew.³⁷

Augustine adds one new piece of information, as he is the only church father to suggest that Mark was dependent on Matthew. All the others who discussed the topic said that Peter's oral teachings were Mark's source. Augustine neither mentions nor refutes the claim that Mark relied on Peter.

Could it be that Mark did use Matthew as a source, but that when he recalled Peter's extra comments, he added them to the shorter Gospel he was creating? That would account for one strange feature of Mark, which often contains longer versions of stories also found in Matthew. If Mark did make additions to Matthew based on details from Peter's oral teaching, he may also have chosen to omit material that Peter did not emphasize. There could have been other editorial reasons for leaving out certain sections too. The perceived needs of his audience, his own priorities as a writer and even the length of his scroll could have impacted his editorial decisions as well.

Putting it all together

Let us now summarize what we have learned from the church fathers about which Gospel came first. If their testimony is true, Matthew, one of the twelve apostles, wrote the first Gospel, in his native tongue, initially for converts from Judaism. He may have written it as a gift to the Jewish community before departing as a missionary to Gentile lands. His work was later translated into Greek, but we do not know by whom.

After Matthew had completed his Gospel (at least in the original Semitic language), Mark compiled his Gospel, based primarily on what he heard from Peter. According to Augustine, Mark used Matthew as a source. Since many sections of Matthew and Mark are in verbatim agreement, if Augustine is correct, then a Greek version of Matthew must have preceded Mark.

What about the criticism that all this information begins with Papias, and thus all the other church fathers are repeating a traditional view that modern scholarship has demonstrated to be most unlikely? First, Irenaeus does not seem to be dependent on Papias, and his material comes from different sources. Likewise, the early fathers' considerable scholarship, travels and contacts would suggest that they had multiple sources to draw from, not just Papias.

37 Augustine, *Harmony of the Gospels*, 1.2.3-4.

But even if one insists that Papias was the sole source for all the other fathers, Papias' credibility is not so easily dismissed. Eusebius reproduces an important quotation from Papias that tells us what Papias considered to be a trustworthy source of information:

I shall not hesitate to also put down for you, along with my interpretations, whatsoever things I have at any time learned carefully from the elders and carefully remembered, guaranteeing their truth. For I did not, like the multitude, take pleasure in those that speak much, but in those that teach the truth; not in those that relate strange commandments, but in those who deliver the commandments given by the Lord to faith, and springing from the truth itself. If then anyone comes, who has been a follower of the elders, I questioned him in regard to the words of the elders—what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew or by any other of the disciples of the Lord, and what things Ariston and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I do not think that what was to be gotten from the books would profit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voice.³⁸

Although Eusebius uses this quotation to argue that Papias did not know John of Zebedee as Irenaeus claimed, it also highlights Papias' strong interest in obtaining *accurate stories* from trustworthy sources. He did not want to engage in speculation; he wanted certainty. To attain it, he wanted to hear from living people who had been taught by Jesus' original disciples.

The available information leads strongly to the conclusion that we should consider Papias reliable and not dismiss him.

Conclusion

We conclude this study with three options to choose from. First, the mainstream position of modern scholarship holds that Mark wrote first, based on Peter's teachings, and that the author of Matthew's Gospel used Mark as a primary source amongst others. This view rejects virtually all the historical records as inaccurate. From the established traditions, it retains only the recurring comment that Mark used Peter as his main source. But this item is kept only out of coincidence and convenience. No real weight is given to the historical material unless it confirms what has been decided by other means. To a careful historian who believes in weighing the historical reliability of ancient sources, that option is untenable.

Our second option is that a Semitic version of Matthew was written before Mark. Then, Mark wrote the memoirs of Peter in Greek, independently of Matthew's original version. After that, someone took Matthew's original material *and the Greek version of Mark* and used them to compose what we now call the Gospel of Matthew in Greek. This view does not dismiss the early church fathers' testimony regarding a Semitic Matthew, but it still treats our extant Greek version of Matthew as using Mark as a source. This view accepts most of the comments made by the church fathers, other than Augustine's comment that Mark was dependent on Matthew.

38 Eusebius, *EH*, 3.39.3–4.

The third option posits that Matthew wrote first, in his own language (Hebrew or Aramaic), and that the work was translated into Greek in one or more stages. When Mark wrote his Gospel, he used and reduced the Greek version of Matthew's work. Mark had been taught by Peter and used Peter's material to sift and add to Matthew's material. If Matthew agreed with Peter's oral teachings, it was kept word for word. If Peter had extra material that Matthew did not include, Mark added it (thus accounting for the longer stories in a number of places). Where Mark was not sure regarding some of Matthew's stories (or for other editorial reasons), he deleted material. This position accords with all the available information from the church fathers about Matthew and Mark.

For a serious historian, the written records of the past—duly weighed and evaluated for their historical trustworthiness, must be an important part of any conclusion reached. All other arguments (including literary considerations) should be considered as well, but the historical records cannot simply be ignored or dismissed lightly. To dismiss the views of great scholars including Tertullian, Origen, Jerome and Augustine as if they were naïve and readily accepted whatever they heard reflects a lack of appreciation for their intellectual prowess and scholarship.

There are non-historical arguments to support the possibility that our current version of Matthew is dependent on Mark. Some of them are stronger than others, and different people may evaluate them differently. Some will say they are compelling, in which case the second option should be embraced. For those who do not find these arguments compelling, the third option is most plausible. Either choice is acceptable to those who treat trustworthy historical records as significant in establishing what actually happened.

Book Reviews

Seblewengel Daniel, *Perception and Identity: A Study of the Relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia*

Robert Chao Romero, *Brown Church: Five Centuries of Latina/o Social Justice, Theology, and Identity*

Kent Eaton, *Protestant Missionaries in Spain, 1869–1936: 'Shall the Papists Prevail?'*

Duane Alexander Miller, *I Will Give Them an Everlasting Name: Pastoral Care for Christ's Converts from Islam*

Perception and Identity: A Study of the Relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia
Seblewengel Daniel

Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Monographs, 2019
Pb., 463 pp., appendix, glossary, bibliog., index

Reviewed by Yoseph Yisma Asrat, lecturer in church history and theology at Evangelical Theological College, Ethiopia

Seblewengel Daniel, professor of practical theology and head of academic affairs at the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology, explores the relationship between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) and evangelical churches in Ethiopia by digging into both historical and theological misconceptions and areas of conflict. After an opening chapter on the author's motivation, methodology, and background of the study, the book's five main chapters deal with the formation of Orthodox and Evangelical identity, Anglican and evangelical encounters with the EOC, areas of contention, and the current internal reformation within the EOC.

Chapter 2 begins by discussing different theories regarding the arrival of Christianity in Ethiopia. Special emphasis is given to the account of Frumentius and Edesius, since their coming relates to the royal court and its connection with the Alexandrian church. Then it covers the expansion of Christianity to Ethiopia's southern areas through the Nine Saints, a group of monks who came from different parts of the Roman Empire. Daniel chronicles the completion of Bible translation into Ge'ez and also the impact of military force and assimilation. The monarchs played a major role in expanding Christianity. The rise of Islam and its challenge to the Christian kingdom are mentioned briefly. The defeat of Ethiopia's Christian kingdom led eventually to the arrival of Western (particularly Catholic) Christianity,

which posed a challenge for the EOC. The chapter then discusses the coming of evangelical Christianity and the responses of the EOC, the state, and society.

Chapter 3 considers Protestant missions, particularly ‘the role of Lutheran missions, SIM, and the indigenous Pentecostal movement’ (p. 90). The evangelistic work of mission organizations was limited by a government policy decreed in 1944. According to this policy, areas that were dominated by the EOC are off-limits. The Lutheran mission was interested in reaching the Oromo people in western and southern Ethiopia. SIM evangelized the southern part of the country, and missionary pioneer Thomas Lambie played a great role in its success. In these efforts and the later work of Pentecostal missions, EOC resistance presented a massive challenge.

Chapter 4 presents the Church Missionary Society’s (CMS) attempt to revitalize the EOC. The CMS viewed the EOC as a sister church and sought to strengthen it spiritually, but the missionaries’ experiences were quite challenging. The reader gains appreciation for the pitfalls that threatened the missionaries’ evangelistic undertakings in relation to the traditions that the EOC had maintained for centuries. Samuel Gobat was successful in his interactions with the EOC since he was ‘more tactful in his approach’ (p. 165), whereas another missionary’s method caused offence to EOC adherents. Overall, the EOC did not look on the CMS’s work as revitalizing, but as a harmful plan to weaken the church.

Chapter 5 covers the antagonism between the EOC and the evangelicals, which has been largely based on mutual misunderstanding and confusion. The EOC believes that evangelical Christianity is foreign, heretical and *Tsere-Mariam* (anti-Mary), while frequently viewing itself as the only true church in Ethiopia. Evangelicals, on the other hand, think of EOC adherents as non-believers, portraying the church as discriminatory because of its support of the government and accusing it of turning a blind eye to injustice. Furthermore, the proper translation of the Bible and place of burial have been other areas of contention. The author suggests ways to build a brotherly relationship between the two churches.

After briefly mentioning reformation attempts by different individuals in the past, chapter 6 discusses contemporary reform impulses within the EOC. The story of the 15th-century monk Abba Estifanos, who rejected the veneration of Mary, the wooden cross, and the king (*Zer’a Ya’iqob*), is covered. Though the king banned and persecuted the *Estifanosites* (followers of Abba Estifanos), there are still remnants of believers who trace their roots to the movement.

Reformers within the EOC have varied in their approach and convictions. The author briefly discusses the In-Between Reformers, the Silent Reformers who have a similar set of convictions to ‘that of the Evangelicals in England’ (p. 364), and popular singers and preachers who base their songs and sermons primarily on Scripture. The chapter also mentions the role of *Mahbere Kidusan* (Fellowship of Saints), an institution that seeks to sustain church tradition and protect the youth from the impact of reformers within the church.

Seblewengel Daniel amply fulfils the goal of her exhaustive research, effectively fleshing out the identity of both the EOC and Ethiopian evangelicals and explaining their misunderstandings. Despite source limitations and some difficulty in securing interviews, she has discovered the root of the animosities between the two churches and proposed a solution that could foster harmonious ecumenical relationships.

Accordingly, the book is valuable not just for teaching Ethiopian church history or for courses on the history of missions or ecumenical relations, but for anyone who cares about building unity amongst believers in Ethiopia or globally.

***Brown Church: Five Centuries of Latina/o Social Justice,
Theology, and Identity***
Robert Chao Romero

Downers Grove, IL, USA: InterVarsity, 2020
Pb., ix + 235 pp., bibliography, index

Reviewed by Abeneazer G. Urga, Columbia International University, USA

This book's thesis is that contrary to the common assumption in Chicano/Latino studies, the Christian faith has been instrumental in challenging every kind of injustice faced by the Latino community. Romero attempts to demonstrate the contributions of the 'Brown Church' in resisting social ills for several centuries in Latin America and the United States. Romero introduces his narrative with three 'counterstories' of faithful Latina/o Christians who are prodded to choose between their faith and social justice activism.

Chapter 1 presents the 'manifesto' of Jesus, who lived in a context where the Jewish people were subjects of injustice and ostracization. Romero finds a parallel between the Latinas/os in the United States and the Jewish people of Jesus' time, since both were victims of land grabs and colonization. Back then, Rome—like the present-day United States—considered itself God's emissary to conquer the world and bring peace and prosperity. Galilee was disenfranchised on two fronts: Roman oppression and second-class citizenship amongst the Jewish people.

The Jewish people's responses to Roman oppression fell into three groups: the Sadducees compromised for the sake of religious and political access, the Essenes withdrew from social engagement to maintain religious purity, and the Zealots engaged in physical resistance. Romero observes a similar approach among Latina/o Christians, with the secular Chicana/o activists paralleling the Zealots. Romero insists that none of these three approaches can produce meaningful change. Jesus, he argues, provided a fourth alternative: 'El Plan Espiritual de Galilee', which aimed to restore wholeness and renew the cosmos. And we are called to be agents in Jesus' redemptive mission by following in his footsteps.

In chapter 2, Romero traces the Brown Church's birth to a sermon delivered in the Dominican Republic and Haiti in 1511 by the Dominican friar Antonio de Montesinos, who decried the Spanish colonists' unjust treatment and enslavement of the Indians. However, Romero identifies Bartolomé de Las Casas, a former soldier and slaveholder who protested against Spanish treatment of the native, as the primary founder of the Brown Church. La Virgen de Guadalupe—the Virgin Mary appearing in the form of an indigenous Mexican woman— became an instrumental factor in many Mexican people's embrace of Christianity.

Chapter 3 delineates the Sistema de Castas in Latin America and discusses major figures who resisted the system in the seventeenth century. Garcilaso de la Vega el Inca, a mestizo from Peru, chronicled the devastation that Spanish imperialism wreaked on Inca culture; his *Royal Commentaries on the Incas* was banned for

inciting rebellion. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a self-taught theologian from Mexico, challenged the Catholic Church's view of women, studying theology and other 'secular' disciplines and composing numerous works. Later, however, the Catholic Church made her sell her library and recant her writings.

Chapter 4 details the US–Mexico War, in which the US, driven by a theology of manifest destiny, took half of Mexico's territory. This war would lead to the birth of the Brown Church in the US. Chapter 5 turns to Christian Latino activist César Chávez, who was influenced by 'Abuelita Theology'—i.e., Christian teachings conveyed by older women (his grandmother in the case of Chávez). Later, Father Donald McDonnell instructed Chávez in theology and social justice. In his struggles for farmers' rights, Chávez relied on non-violent strategies, drawing mainly from his Catholic spiritual faith and practices. Nonetheless, after five years of successful activism, Chávez's influence dwindled because he 'took his focus away from Christ and became increasingly self-focused' (p. 139).

Chapter 6 discusses liberation theology and Integral Mission. Roman Catholic bishops gathered in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968 to speak on behalf of the poor, declaring, '¡Ya basta! (Enough already!). God takes the side of the poor, and so do we' (p. 160). Similarly, radical evangelicals under the leadership of René Padilla and Samuel Escobar promoted Integral Mission, which denotes the inseparability of the church's dual responsibility to proclaim the gospel verbally and to demonstrate its faith through action.

Chapter 7 chronicles the life of Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador. Initially, the Archbishop was suspicious of liberation theology, but his view would change after a fellow priest and close friend, Rutillio Grande, who spoke out against the US-backed Salvadoran government and its violent massacres, was gunned down in 1977. Romero became a leading voice on behalf of the poor and the disenfranchised, boldly denouncing the atrocities committed by the government's death squads, until his own assassination in 1980.

Chapter 8 examines recent Latina/o theologies in the US. Romero argues that both Protestant and Roman Catholic Latina/o theologies began at the grassroots level before they became popular in the academy. Their major characteristic is contextual relevance, expressed through communal, ecumenical and practical approaches. The concluding chapter narrates the pains and difficulties Latinos are currently facing in the US, along with the Brown Church's resistance to disenfranchisement and oppression.

In *Brown Church*, Romero provides 500 years of historical overview and theological analysis of the Latina/o communities in Latin America and the US. Romero ably demonstrates that these believers, especially those at the grassroots level, have done theology in such a way as to address both spiritual and physical or social needs. In so doing, they have resisted various social ills and forms of oppression that posed existential threats. Romero bridges the chasm between activism and the Brown Church's rich theological heritage by a clear narration of the church's persistent and faithful resistance through emulating the Man from Galilee. His book counters a tendency to overlook the significant theological and missiological contributions of Latinas/os.

***Protestant Missionaries in Spain, 1869–1936:
‘Shall the Papists Prevail?’***

Kent Eaton Keener

Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015

Hb., 330 pp., bibliography, index

*Reviewed by Andrew Messmer, Academic Dean, Seville Theological Seminary and
Associate Professor, Facultad Internacional de Teología IBSTE (both Spain);
Affiliated Researcher, Evangelical Theological Faculty (Belgium)*

Until now, there has never been an academic book dedicated to ‘a broad historical analysis of missionary extension into Spain’. Although Eaton’s work falls a bit short of this goal, it deserves high praise for all the new ground it has broken. He has read large amounts of primary material—including British missionary correspondence and Spanish Protestant publications—and ‘wad[ed] through tens of thousands of pages’ of contemporaneous Catholic material, and his bibliography shows that his primary sources are more than double his secondary ones. Eaton’s work will likely remain the best of its kind for many years to come.

The work is divided into four parts, of which the first discusses the Protestant (primarily Brethren) interest in missions in Spain. He summarizes distinctive Brethren beliefs and practices, which were essentially related to ecclesiology (restorationists), eschatology (premillennialists) and hermeneutics (dispensationalists). Coming out of the Church of England, they felt especially burdened for traditionally Catholic countries, such as Spain, France and Italy.

The second part discusses the initial stage of missions from 1868 to 1875, during Spain’s brief period of religious toleration between the Glorious Revolution and the end of the Carlist wars. Eaton argues that the three primary ministries conducted—mainly in Madrid and Barcelona—were Bible and literature distribution, grammar schools and social ministry, and he helpfully provides concrete data on Bible distribution and school enrolment.

The third part discusses the years 1875–1933, the period from the Carlist wars until the beginning of the Spanish civil war. Eaton explains the great difficulty of missionary work during this time: with the nationalist and pro-Catholic side in power, the previous religious toleration was overturned and Protestants were effectively eliminated from public life. For a variety of reasons, Brethren focus shifted away from the city centres and towards the rural areas in Galicia. Nevertheless, Brethren commitment to Spain peaked during this time. For example, 40 percent of all Brethren funds in 1886 went to Spain, Italy and France while only 3 percent went to Hudson Taylor’s work in China.

The fourth part discusses Spanish Protestant missions during the Second Republic period (1931–1936) and briefly continues the narrative into Franco’s Spain. Eaton argues that the Second Republic was a time of growth, the beginning of Spanish leadership, and the reduction of anti-Catholic rhetoric. However, most of these encouraging developments either stalled or were undone by the Franco era. Whereas other Spanish-speaking countries experienced growth in missionary activity during this period, Spain essentially stagnated.

An important conclusion from Eaton's research is that although the Brethren sent more missionaries to and invested more money in Spain than almost any other region, 'it is likely that the Brethren work in Spain has been the least successful in terms of converts.' Mid-twentieth-century estimates usually place the total number of Protestant Christians in Spain between 10,000 and 30,000, with the Brethren figure around 2,000. Eaton's explanation of this failure is multifaceted, but the primary component seems to be their failure to make Protestantism truly Spanish: they didn't train national leadership, plant churches or adapt their message and methods in culturally appropriate ways. In short, they never overcame the maxim that 'to be Spanish is to be Catholic.'

Three critiques can be mentioned. First, although Eaton's criticism of Brethren methodology is very helpful, perhaps his evaluation is a bit too one-sided and overly negative. Second, he provides no summary sections at the end of each chapter, which would have been appropriate in a work which uses so many names, dates and figures. Third, the title implies that the work focuses broadly on Protestant missionaries in Spain, but it is primarily a study of Brethren missions, with occasional references to non-Brethren missions. Thus, despite Eaton's stated intent, it is not 'a broad historical analysis of missionary extension into Spain'. Nevertheless, since the Brethren were the largest and most influential Protestant group working in Spain during this period, he has done much of the research that such a work would require, and future researchers on the topic will be heavily indebted to him.

Researchers in Victorian and Brethren missionary history, missiologists and Spanish missionaries will be most interested in this work. The book, or a summary of it, should be translated into Spanish, which would help correct the historical 'amnesia' amongst Spanish Protestants that Eaton so rightfully laments.

***I Will Give Them an Everlasting Name: Pastoral Care for
Christ's Converts from Islam***
Duane Alexander Miller

Oxford: Regnum, 2020

Pb., 80 pp., foreword, bibliography

Reviewed by Andrew Messmer (see previous review for description)

Duane Miller has written a kind of follow-up work to his 2017 book, *Two Stories of Everything*. There, he compared and contrasted the metanarratives of Islam and Christianity; here, he addresses how to disciple Christians of Muslim background (CMBs). His work is very practical and accessible, the fruit of many years of personal experience, extensive travel and ministry in Muslim countries, and academic research.

The book contains 15 short chapters, which the author admits are not in any particular order. Chapter 1 states that the primary challenge for CMBs is not persecution, but rather the formation of a new Christian identity. Miller spends the rest of the book helping his readers to address this challenge. He encourages teaching church history to CMBs to give them a sense of historical and social identity, thereby equipping them to respond to the inevitable accusation of having abandoned their family and people.

Two chapters focus on Bible reading and prayer, respectively, and on the differences between these Christian practices, on one hand, and reading the Qur'an and praying to Allah on the other. In a later chapter, Miller stresses the importance of teaching CMBs what God is like: he is similar to their understanding of Allah in some ways but not in others, most fundamentally that he is a God of love.

Miller urges having CMBs memorize early Christian creeds and learn more about the particular Christian tradition of the one who is discipling them. Creeds give CMBs a quick yet comprehensive response to the questions they are sure to receive about the differences between Islam and Christianity, and learning the discipler's Christian tradition enables them to see a concrete manifestation of Christianity, with all its benefits and limitations.

Baptism and 'coming out' as a Christian are the most complex and important issues in the book, and Miller provides wise and practical advice on these topics, such as security matters, baptismal liturgies, group baptisms and evangelistic opportunities.

Miller discusses introducing CMBs to the Christian liturgical calendar, so as to give them a replacement for the Muslim liturgical calendar they have left behind. He highlights the importance of getting to know the families of CMBs, for both security and apologetic purposes. With regard to apologetics, Miller points out that most Muslims come to Christ through affective experiences, not intellectual argument.

Miller suggests that CMBs recite a prayer of renunciation of Islam and offers a template. He covers the sticky issue of patronage—namely, that in Muslim cultures CMBs may look to Christian leaders as patrons who will provide for their needs, including economic ones—and provides practical advice on how to handle the situation.

Chapter 14 really forms the heart of the work, recapitulating the message of the book's title (which comes from Isaiah 56:3–5): CMBs will look to the church as their new home, and the church must know how to be hospitable in the full sense of the word.

This book is significant for at least three reasons. First, it covers a topic rarely treated in Christian literature (how to disciple CMBs) with a carefully considered approach (giving them a new social identity in the church). Second, the author's personal experience, extensive travel and interviews in multiple Muslim countries, and academic research enable him to offer best practices on the topic from all over the world. Third, although written by an academic, the book is accessible to those who will need it most—pastors and missionaries. Anyone engaged in ministry to Muslims would benefit from reading it.

Considering the nature and aims of this short work, it has no significant limitations. However, perhaps more primary material from the Bible and Qur'an could have been included, along with a historical review of how the church has disciplined CMBs in previous centuries. I was surprised that the Lord's Prayer did not receive more attention in Miller's discussion of prayer. Finally, the book could have been structured better, perhaps organized by topic or suggesting a chronological progression of CMB discipleship from beginning to end.