

The Mediator

A Journal of Holiness Theology for Asia-Pacific Contexts



ASIA-PACIFIC NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Bridging Cultures for Christ
1 Timothy 2:5

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PREFACE

This issue of *The Mediator* explores the theme of communicating the gospel of *hope* in ways that are relevant to our world. We are confronted with this question: What hope can the gospel communicate to a world that is increasingly secular and pluralistic? The emptiness of post-modernism confronts not only North America and Europe, but also many countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

The creedal answers from the Church's great confessions of faith are not always sufficient to convince skeptical people that there is an almighty God who cares for them. To many, God is increasingly becoming irrelevant and old-fashioned; God (capital "G") has become a god (lower case "g"). For some, God is either so transcendent as to be unapproachable or so immanent as to be ineffective. For others, the idea of a personal "God" is naive and even offensive. Hope has become like truth, an illusive abstract that no one can grasp. The daily news does little to help grow hope but instead creates fear and uncertainty.

How does the gospel answer an atmosphere of hopelessness? The 2001-05 quadrennial theme for the Church of the Nazarene is "Jesus the Hope." As theologians of the church, what message of hope can we offer that will make a difference in a dying world?

Hope cannot be found in anything in this world. Our hope as believers is anchored beyond this world—in Jesus Christ. Our hope is not placed in dogmatic claims of the church or theological suppositions about a transcendent God, but our hope is placed in a person who lived among us. Our hope is in a person who lived in this fallen world but who also proclaimed freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, and release to the oppressed (Luke 4:18).

Our optimism in grace is tempered by a genuine concern for the world. Yet we find hope difficult because hope has a degree of uncertainty about it. Hope involves being dependent upon another, and we want to be independent. We want the source of our hope to be within our control.

Hope must be expressed in tangible ways. Our hope is not simply for a blessed afterlife but leads us to live a certain way in the present. It gives us joy in the midst of sorrow. It gives us victory in seeming defeat. It gives us peace in the heat of battle.

What does the world look like when it is seen through the shadow of the cross? What does it mean to say while looking into the faces of hungry street children, “For God so loved the world that He gave . . .” (John 3:16)?

Hope is within our grasp because Christians are resurrection people. After the cross comes new life. As Paul writes, “If Christ has not be raised, our faith is futile and we are still in our sins . . . we are to be pitied more than all men” (1 Cor 15:17, 19). As people raised to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4), the source of our hope moves from the earthly and temporal to the heavenly and eternal.

Christians are incarnational people who must be prepared to offer the world an alternative. We become the catalysts for change because of the transformation within us by the movement of divine love.

This issue of *The Mediator* is divided into three sections. The first group of articles flows from the Nazarene Global Theology Conference in Guatemala City, Guatemala, in April 2002. This conference focused on four subjects: memory (see Cunningham), mission (see Bennett), holiness, and hope (see Nielson). Several papers from this conference have been reprinted in this issue. In addition, APNTS had a colloquium in August 2002 in follow-up to the Global Conference which gave the campus community opportunity to reflect on some of the issues raised at the conference (see Donahue).

The second section of this issue deals generally with communicating the gospel to contemporary contexts. This goes beyond simply communication theory (see Behr’s article) but involves practical application (see Dyrness and Donahue). Contextualization is an issue that confronts not only pre-modern societies but also modern and post-modern ones (see Flemming). Creative approaches to doing theology need to be explored in reaching our cultures (see Fukue). This issue also celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Church of the Nazarene in New Zealand (see Bennett). The third section offers recent thesis abstracts of two APNTS alumni. We trust that our readers will be challenged in this issue in their hope for our world.

David A. Ackerman, *Editor*

TELLING THE STORY OF THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE: A WESLEYAN REFLECTION ON CHURCH HISTORY

Floyd T. Cunningham

History clarifies our identity and reason for existence as a people. Since our early days, we have spread geographically and culturally, and, today, the social contexts in which the Church of the Nazarene exists vary tremendously. What unites us? Does our reason-to-be still unite us, or are our ties to each other merely structural? Are there any transcending marks so rooted in our calling and identity that remembering them would revitalize the church today?

Various important implications for doing church history in the Church of the Nazarene emerged from the papers, responses, and cohort discussions of the Global Nazarene Theological Conference that met in Guatemala City, April 4-7, 2002. The conference drew together Nazarene scholars from throughout the world.

Philosophy of History

Within the Hebrew-Christian tradition, history is crucial. Salvation comes within, not apart from historical existence. The Bible magnifies God's grace and great acts of liberating salvation on behalf of weak and vacillating people. God admonishes his people to remember the past. In his farewell, Moses advised the Israelites when they faced enemies in the land God was giving them "not to be afraid of them; remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt" (Deuteronomy 7: 18). They were to remember not only God's faithfulness, but that they were once "slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you" (Deuteronomy 15: 15). Furthermore, Moses tells the people to remember their own

This article is an elaboration of the author's "Endnote" to the "Memory" component of the conference, presented orally at the close of the conference, as well as his "Response" to Clair MacMillan, "Characteristics of the Early Church of the Nazarene" at the same conference.

disobedience: “Never forget how you provoked the Lord your God to anger in the desert” (Deuteronomy 9: 7). Remembering the past, as the Old Testament prophets did, offers both judgment and hope.

The Hebrew-Christian tradition set aside days for remembering the past. But these days were not supposed to glorify the people. On the contrary, they were to be days for the people to humble themselves and repent, and thus to magnify the redeeming God.

Historians can only speak of the human response to God, not directly about God’s doing. This is because historians are not privy to knowledge of God’s specific acts in the same way that the inspired prophets and apostles were. The canon is closed. We are not inspired to say with the same certainty as the biblical writers, “this is how God acted,” when it comes to, for instance, the Councils or the Reformation, or Pilot Point. Not by the historian speaking for God, but by the historian allowing others to witness—to tell their stories—God will be glorified.

This way of writing history is congenial to the Wesleyan understanding that God works dynamically, by the gentle promptings of grace, and with human response—rather than by manipulation. The Wesleyan theological framework puts emphasis on the human response to God. There is a dynamic interrelationship between the graciously given human freedom to respond to God’s luring. The voluntary cooperation of human beings to God’s intentions is the way in which God interacts with creation. Wesleyans possess a philosophy of history that sees God as the great Persuader. Wesleyan historians will note the many human variables and contingent factors that go into the making of history, and not ascribe all that has been solely to God. With freedom, Wesleyans understand, God has granted open-endedness to all but the final events of history. God has not determined in detail what will happen in each historical moment.

The Wesleyan historian does not dichotomize the sacred and profane spheres of culture. The Wesleyan concepts of the prevenient and universality of grace obliterate the difference. God wills all to be saved, and works among all to lead them to salvation. Just as the Wesleyan historian sees everywhere evidences of original sin, the Wesleyan historian also sees everywhere the movements of God’s guiding grace through the Holy Spirit, who does not confine his activity to the church or to Christians. Every-

where, at all times, the Holy Spirit is facilitating, though not coercing, movements toward the will of God.¹

Historical Interpretation

History corrects our notions of who we think we are and what we think we are about, and appropriates it with particular purposes in mind. Timothy Smith used history to correct misperceptions about the church common in the late 1950s. He showed that holiness, in its mid-nineteenth century context, had little to do with either mysticism or moralism. He corrected the misperception that the Church of the Nazarene was primarily a rural movement of the economically disadvantaged and described, instead, the urban orientation of the Church. Though early Nazarenes protested the “worldliness” of the churches, they were indebted to the broad streams and not the small eddies of Christianity. They aimed in “organizing” holiness to build a church. The first generation of Nazarenes committed themselves to the essentials and had charity for those who disagreed on theological non-essentials such as practices of baptism or theories about the millennium.

Smith showed that at the beginning we were more “churchly” than sectarian. *Called Unto Holiness* refuted H. Richard Niebhu’s thesis that all “churches” begin as “sects,” and questioned the usefulness of the categories of “church” and “sect” as they pertained to denominations.²

There was an irony, Smith showed, about the first generation’s church building or denominationalizing leading to the second generation’s sectarianism. When members “came out” of the old churches, the holiness message lost the best means it had of “Christianizing Christianity” (Bresee’s phrase) and had to concentrate on making sure that it itself remained

¹See Albert C. Outler, “Theodosius’ Horse: Reflections on the Predicament of the Church Historian,” *Church History* 34 (1965), 260. See also Paul Bassett, “The Significance of Historical Study,” *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 2: *The Historical Development* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1985), 15-22; Cunningham, “Christ, the Word, the Light, and the Message,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 16 (January 1992), 10-27; and Cunningham, “Interreligious Dialogue: A Wesleyan Holiness Perspective,” in *Grounds for Understanding: Ecumenical Resources for Responses to Religious Pluralism*, ed. S. Mark Heim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 188-207.

²This was noted in the book reviews of Carl Bangs, *The Christian Century*, November 7, 1962, 1356, and C. Norman Kraus, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 37 (January 1963), 63-64

revived. Revivals served this purpose. (The implicit question in this day of declining revivalism is: are there other ways to save the church from ecclesiocentricity?)

Furthermore, first generation Nazarenes were not, Smith showed, Fundamentalists. His historical work complemented H. Orton Wiley's *Christian Theology* in this respect. Later, Smith showed, there was a Fundamentalist "leavening" (as Paul Bassett was to put it) through the rise of pre-millennialist Southerners, and through the coming in of people such as J. G. Morrison, who left Methodism almost as much because of its Modernism as because of the Church of the Nazarene's holiness emphasis.

Smith also rebutted, implicitly, the idea of dissenters such as Glenn Griffith, that Bresee and other founders were legalists. Smith described, instead, the roots of our legalism in the Holiness Church of Christ, and the second generation's attempt to prove itself loyal to the pioneers by out-doing them in both "tempo" and rules. Through history, Smith was justifying the third generation's moderate position on rules and was calling it back to the first's concern for marginalized people, cities, and society.

Timothy Smith's earlier *Revivalism and Social Reform* refuted the commonly held thesis that the social gospel in America was rooted in the "new theology" of late-nineteenth century liberal Protestantism. Smith demonstrated, instead, the unexpected connections between holiness and women's rights, abolition and urban reform. The social gospel, he demonstrated, had roots in revivalism. What Nazarenes heard, when they read Smith, was that our heritage bent us close to some of the leading social and political reforms of history.

Christian historians such as Timothy Smith are sensitive to remain true, faithful servants of historical events. Historians have optimism that knowledge and truth are intrinsically liberating.

At the same time, pure objectivity remains a noble goal rather than a reality. Contemporary historians influenced by post-modernism emphasize that any telling of a story is based upon knowing what significant part of the story needs to be told for this generation and on the historians' own subjective and unique perspective. They emphasize that while each historian attempts to be objective, and to base narratives on reliable sources, there are always biases. That is to say, there is always a story behind the historian that determines what questions are asked, and what, and whose, stories to tell. Every historian stands at a particular place in

time and space, they emphasize, and this influences which events are told and how they are interpreted.³

Wesleyan historians are “modernists” in the sense that they have faith in the possibility of objective knowledge. To put it in holiness language, Wesleyan historians attempt to be “self-emptying,” freed from self-centeredness and selfish ambition.

As the business of historians is “the recollection and representation of selected segments of the human past in an intelligible narration based on public data verified by scientific observation,”⁴ historical writing by its nature necessitates discrimination. Historians are forced to make choices as to what to find out and write. Not every record will be uncovered; not everyone’s story will be or can be told. Furthermore, the historical narrative must hang together, must be coherent. It must tell a story. History by its nature provides interpretation as well as records of dates and events. Current interpretative paradigms pertaining to Nazarene history, such as the urban/rural paradigm, the church/sect paradigm, the Christ and culture paradigm, the Wesley versus the holiness movement paradigm, the accomodationist versus Free Methodist paradigm, the generation paradigm and the Bresee/Reynolds paradigm are analytically useful, and new paradigms will be developed to interpret our history.⁵

³A historical approach to this issue is Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1988). See also M. Howard Rienstra, “History, Objectivity, and the Christian Scholar,” in *History and Historical Understanding*, ed. C. T. McIntire and Ronald Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 69-82; James E. Bradley and Richard A. Muller, *Church History: An Introduction to Research, Reference Works, and Methods* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 48-62; and Shirley A. Mullen, “Between ‘Romance’ and ‘True History’: Historical Narrative and Truth Telling in a Postmodern Age,” in *History and the Christian Historian*, ed. Ronald A. Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 23-40.

⁴Outler, “Theodosius’ Horse,” 253.

⁵Among the recent helpful paradigms is one contrasting Phoebe Palmer’s “accomodationist” holiness to B. T. Robert’s struggle against the *embourgeoisement* of holiness within Methodism. See Kathryn Long, “Consecrated Respectability: Phoebe Palmer and the Refinement of American Methodism,” in *Methodism and the Shaping of American Culture*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Johutt Wigger (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 281-307.

Global History

One implication is that though there still is room for history written from a missions perspective, the Church of the Nazarene's story must be global. Our church's history needs to be rewritten based on the global expansion of the church and the questions this brings.⁶

This is no reflection on past histories. Church history is constantly being revised and rewritten based on contemporary questions. In the late twentieth century, with the growing importance of Christianity in South America, Africa, and Asia, historians expanded the Euro-centric interpretation of the church's history and, more than they had before, told the story of the church beyond the West, and recorded the affect of the expansion of Christianity upon the home churches. At the same time, there was more focus on women in the church's history and religious movements among ethnic groups. Influenced by *The Annales* and similar approaches to social history, and learning from anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz and Anthony F. C. Wallace, church historians began trying to understand the beliefs and devotion of common people across the centuries.⁷ They became interested not only in the thoughts or acts of a few, but in what the laity was thinking, and how they were behaving. Among Wesleyans accustomed to talking about the universality of grace something reverberates with this egalitarian approach to history.

A global perspective to Nazarene history will help us to overcome a headquarters-centeredness to the story that we tell of ourselves. Our story unfolds from North American holiness groups that were world-minded. We did not aim to establish national churches. Rather, we aimed to be an association of districts governed by one *Manual*, led not by national but by

⁶See Wilbert Shrenk, "Toward a Global Church History," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20 (April 1996), 50-54; Paul Spickard, "It's the World's History: Decolonizing Historiography and the History of Christianity," *Fides et Historia* 31 (Summer/Fall 1999), 13-29. One of the reasons Kenneth Latourette's *A History of Christianity* (first published in 1953) has remained useful is its global perspective. Latourette maintained an interest in the progress of the church in Asia and around the world. The first volume of what promises to replace Latourette is Dale Irvin and Scott Sundquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*, vol. 1: *Earliest Christianity to 1453* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001).

⁷For examples, see Adrian Hastings, ed., *A World History of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Paul R. Spickard and Kevin M. Cragg, *God's Peoples: A Social History of Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 9-11.

General Superintendents, and proportionately electing delegates to an international General Assembly.

The global perspective reminds us that with God's people and among Nazarenes there are no "foreigners." All of us are "aliens" and "strangers" in the world. To shift the metaphor, we are a temple in the process of being "built together." We are one whole church. We must have a history that is inclusive geographically, a history that represents our diversity. As we grow, the history of our church outside North America becomes increasingly important to all of us.

In our new history, we need not only to see the presence and the importance of Nazarenes outside of North America, but also to recover the voices of women, youth and laypersons, and to understand what was taking place week after week in local congregations. One way of historians' reporting the gospel in our midst is to be a voice for the thousands of common people who were transformed by the message we have proclaimed and lived. We can tell their stories, and, in so doing, amplify muted voices.

Our church's history needs to be re-written because we are asking new questions of it, such as how we came to our globalization ideals, and how we have proclaimed and contextualized our message around the world over time. Today, we ask questions that would not have occurred to earlier historians: Did an individual-centered understanding of holiness resonate in Africa and other places? Has the church in any part of the world expressed holiness in non-Western, communal ways?⁸

When we talk about Nazarene history and identity we are too quick to ground it in a corporate culture, rather than in a common movement of the Holy Spirit around the world—a movement that was and is far older, far broader, and far deeper, than the Church of the Nazarene. We can show ourselves to be part of an on-going revival movement in the church's history and remain good, objective historians. In various countries we built upon old, deep holiness roots. In India, for instance, the holiness movement in Wasim began in 1877.⁹

⁸See J. Ayodeji Adewuya, *Holiness and Community in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1: Paul's View of Communal Holiness in the Corinthian Correspondence* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), a Manchester University dissertation finished in 1999 under the direction of Kent Brower.

⁹W. H. Daniels, ed., *Dr. Cullis and His Work: Twenty Years of Blessing in Answer to Prayer* (Boston: Willard Tract Repository, 1885; reprint, New York: Garland, 1985), 300-318; Lucy Drake Osborn, *Heavenly Pearls Set in a Life: A Record of*

Nazarenes have supposed that they have more in common with each other than with people in their own local societies. Is the commonality built upon loyalty to the denomination, or upon the doctrine and experience of entire sanctification to which the denomination points?

The single-minded commitment of the church to holiness reflected the National Holiness Association's instructions to its registered evangelists not to major on millennialism, healing or other "side issues." We were not focused on holiness and unity, as was the Church of God (Anderson), or on "Four-Square" principles, as was the Christian and Missionary Alliance and various Pentecostal groups.¹⁰ We tried to be what we felt we were peculiarly raised up by God to be, a movement built upon one theme. One church leader boasted that "if you enter a thatched roof in the jungles of Africa, or an open tent in the steaming forest of Central America, or an iced-domed igloo in Alaska, or a store-front church in one part of America, wherever you see the sign 'Church of the Nazarene' you will hear the same message of full salvation."¹¹

This may still be true, but one will need to know how to listen to hear "the same message." When a revival came to China in the 1920s missionaries rejoiced only when Chinese converts began to pray, shout hallelujah and amen, and confess their sins in ways that missionaries, laboring under their own worldviews, could identify as a genuine movement of the sanctifying Spirit.¹² We must question the assumption that there is in fact—or should be—an international culture of the Church of the Nazarene. Does this lift up denominationalism rather than Christ? Is our essential identity our membership within the organization, or does the organizational structure really unify what are common beliefs and experiences? Perhaps we should be looking for the underlying, unifying experiences of God's grace, and the common goal of Christlikeness, rather than a uniform expression of holiness, conference discussions in Guatemala indicated.

Experiences and Labors in America, India, and Australia (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1893), 211-247.

¹⁰Donald W. Dalton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan, 1987), 21-23.

¹¹Kimber Moulton, quoted in Donald S. Metz, *Some Crucial Issues in the Church of the Nazarene* (Olathe, KS: Wesleyan Heritage, 1994), 138.

¹²Cunningham, "Faithful: The Church of the Nazarene in North China," *The Mediator* 3 (October 2001), 37.

With globalization we all the more need a common memory. Just as biblical history unites us as Christians, our collective denominational history unites us as Nazarenes. Perhaps we will find the undercurrent to the story we share in common spiritual experiences as well as in a common doctrine.

Local History

The good news is that in telling our whole story, there is a great, ample supply of stories about Christlike pastors, humble missionaries and people in local congregations around the world who, from one generation to the next, sacrificed for the church, its schools and missions, rescued families and loved individuals into the Kingdom. Ours is the story of a people who often were different from the world and who provided alternatives to the message of the world. Though a historian as a historian cannot say it quite this way, these local stories reflect a response to a movement of the Holy Spirit in our midst.

We need not only to re-write the history of the church and its mission from a scholarly rather than promotional perspective but to encourage local histories told by and primarily about local leaders. For this very reason, we should encourage a small cottage industry of church history writing among us, especially between now and our centennial celebrations. This historical writing will reflect our diversity. We need to encourage the widespread, decentralized writing of the church's history. In this age and generation, people suspect that official histories tell the story in ways that suit institutional ends. We need authors who can tell the story from their own perspective and local leaders who can write their own histories. Much of our history has been produced to promote missions. There is a great need to note the ministries of pioneer local leaders, who, in many cases, preceded missionaries, or who worked alongside them from the beginning.¹³ We should cultivate local historians and regional histories, in languages other than English. At the same time, though such histories need to be written in national languages, the whole church somehow needs to hear how local

¹³Among the books that have been *about* local leaders, Helen Temple, *Like a Tree by the River: The Story of Dr. Cristobal E. Morales, Pioneer Preacher, Educator, and Musician in Mexico* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1973), A. Brent Cobb, *Tried and Triumphant: Testimonies of Twelve Korean Nazarenes* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 1984); and Chuck Gailey, *Daughter of Africa: The Story of Juliet Ndzimandze* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1998). Among the few books written *by* a local leader, see Nobumi Isayama, *Consider Nippon: Incidents from My Life* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1957).

historians are telling their stories. Such accounts will not only supplement present ones but will correct misunderstandings about our identity.¹⁴ Such descriptions will enrich us all.¹⁵

Our church's history needs to be looked at from all angles. We need to encourage histories like that of Sergio Franco's account of our church in Nicaragua. Franco shook confidence that there was only one way for evangelicals, and, in particular, Nazarenes, to view the civil war that ravaged Nicaragua in the 1970s and 1980s.

When I, as an outsider, look at the Church of the Nazarene in Korea, I rejoice. It is by far the largest church in the Asia Pacific region. It had fewer missionaries and stronger local leaders than most other churches in the region and around the world. It had one of the first districts in the world to reach "regular" status. Korea is, in short, one of our shining success stories. However, when Kim Sung Won and other Korean Nazarene scholars look at their own story, they compare the Church of the Nazarene to other denominations in Korea. They see missionary domination, American control, limited growth, and a church struggling for relevancy to the Korean context.¹⁶

It is likely that local histories will teach us that, contrary to early Nazarene missions policy anticipations, the Holy Spirit's presence produced *different* responses among different people around the world and across time. As they read scripture and learned doctrine, people encountered Christ in their particular historical and cultural contexts. Understanding the roots of our tradition helps us to realize that while biblical truths about entire sanctification endure, our articulation of entire sanctification has always been within certain changing historical contexts. Various historians have noted the shift between the eighteenth century British articulation of holiness by John and Charles Wesley, and the nineteenth century American

¹⁴Sergio Franco, *Wounded but Transformed: A Story of Christians in Nicaragua Today: A Story of Good News* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1990).

¹⁵Among recent works doing this is Kim Young Baek's recent (2002) biography of Chung Nam Soo, founder of the Church of the Nazarene in Korea. Unfortunately, Kim's book is not yet translated into English.

¹⁶Kim Sung Won, "A Critical Reflection on the History of the Church of the Nazarene in Korea," paper presented at the Guatemala Conference. See also, similarly, Hong Ki Young, "Planting an Indigenous Nazarene Church in Korea as a Basis for Church Growth," *The Mediator* 1 (1996): 37-63.

articulation of holiness by Phoebe Palmer and those she influenced.¹⁷ One clearly sees shifts between the terminology of holiness used by J. B. Chapman, for instance, and William Greathouse. Through the Bible each generation tests its understanding anew.

The Story of Ourselves

Another implication of our discussion of “memory” at Guatemala was that, though recognizing the limitations of history, we must have a history that both invites others into the stream of it, and is honest.

A poor model of church history would portray us as a collection of faultless individuals. Timothy Smith honestly and fairly discussed the rift in our church’s history between Seth Rees and Howard Eckel in the late 1910s; but it is not always easy for us, a people aspiring to be holy, to be open about our conflicts. Sometimes we have described more holiness and less humanness among our founders than Luke described within the apostolic church. The church is less “incarnate” than Christ. It is fully human, and not in its earthly state “fully divine.”

The reason for Nazarene history is that as a people aspiring to be holy, we must have as true a picture of ourselves as we can. Church history’s purpose is to enable us to better understand the present, not to venerate ancestors. Like everyone else, historians know that good men and women sometimes fail, or fail to grasp all of the truth. After having researched Nazarene archives to uncover the histories of the Nazarene churches in the countries of my students, I realized how far available accounts were from our whole story, our inner story. Sometimes, there were personal conflicts among missionaries who bore the second blessing holiness message to a people whose highest values were living together in harmony. What conception of holiness could the people have had if missionaries themselves could not cooperate with one another? Normally, the history of a squabble would not, need not be told. But in the case of Japan the story is significant because of its lasting affect upon our churches.¹⁸

¹⁷See, for example, Harold Raser, *Phoebe Palmer: Her Life and Thought* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1987), 227-287.

¹⁸Cunningham, “Mission Policy and National Leadership in the Church of the Nazarene in Japan, 1905-1965,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 28 (Spring-Fall 1993), 139.

Such accounts may help correct some misunderstandings about Christian perfection itself. The story may prove to be instructive, cathartic and redemptive. We must speak the truth, but in love—out of a deep, passionate love for Christ and his church. We do not tell stories whose purpose is to bring embarrassment, hurt and shame to ourselves or to our ancestors, but to lead us on a corrective path closer to the Kingdom. If a story does not do that, it is not worth telling.

The conference's participants challenged the church, as a Kingdom-seeking people, to tell the whole story. We can (and must) handle the truth, participants at the conference contended, because in order to be a holy community, we need a collective repentance from collective sin. While as individuals we may find personal forgiveness through sorrowful repentance, how do we corporately confess our failures to reach beyond them to what we aspire to be, a holy people? Just as we face our estrangement from God, we must also face the historical roots of our estrangement from others—if there is to be repentance, reconciliation, wholeness and holiness. Several of the discussion groups and papers at the Guatemala Conference lamented our earlier stand (or the lack of it) on apartheid in South Africa, and our segregation in North America. To be a holy church, we cannot afford a “selective memory” that forgets the legacy of racism in our church. During the days when we were silent on apartheid and practicing segregation, we were seemingly orthodox in our theology of second blessing holiness.

Racism is not some others' story; this is our story and we cannot escape from it. Racism is part of our collective historical identity. It is difficult for us to really tell the truth about this because we are not accustomed at various levels to deal with collective or systemic guilt and sin. We must face this side of our story in order for us to understand how others look at us, why they are not part of us, and to look critically upon ourselves in our own time and place—to avoid the sin of our ancestors.¹⁹

We must have a history that glorifies God, not us, members of the conference declared. But how? If we are writing a history that is filled with our humanity, will it still bring glory to God? Will it invite others to join us? Will it be winsome?

Do we fear that if we were to tell our whole story, some would doubt our claims about entire sanctification, would question our credibility? How can we be both honest and winsome? Would collective repentance deepen the testimony of our lives' commitment to God and testify well to God's

¹⁹Compare Al Truesdale, “Christian Holiness and the Problem of Systemic Evil,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 19 (Spring 1984), 47-54.

sanctifying grace in our midst? Some at the Guatemalan conference believed so, but still wondered: Would confession take away the positive center and replace it with a sense of failure; or would it evidence a self-emptying humility that should be at the core of holiness?

The good news is that history not only provokes us to sorrow but to joy. It shows that the past cannot and need not hold us captive. History offers options, choices, and hope. Our knowledge of history enables us to overcome it. Jesus has the power over dead ancestors, we have affirmed.

While a lot of our story is racist, we might also tell the story of some of our ancestors and brothers and sisters in Christ who repented of their complicity in corporate evil. The Holiness Association of Texas, many of whose members became Nazarene, some through the Holiness Church of Christ, and others through membership in the college church at Texas Holiness University in Peniel, which united with the Church of the Nazarene in April 1908, addressed the state of race relations in the South. In 1907 Association members issued this statement: "With humiliation we confess that we and our fathers, of the white race, of this country, have not done near as much as we might have done toward the well-being and advancement of the colored race and are willing to take our part of the blame for the unneighborly and unbrotherly feeling which has sprung up and seems to be growing every day." They went on to say that they must take the initiative in "correcting the wrong and effecting a reconciliation, and if we have the spirit of Christ, to accomplish this, we will be willing even to yield up some of our rights and preferences, to suffer wrong rather than do wrong." They admonished white employers to supply Christian literature to African American workers and even to worship with them. Evangelists should take opportunities both to preach to both whites and African Americans, and to attend their worship services, Association members advised. White preachers should speak out both publicly and privately about crimes committed against African Americans and advocate speedy trials whenever they are accused. At the same time, holiness people should denounce mob violence, Association members declared. For the time and place, at the height of "Jim Crow" segregation in the American South, the affirmations of the Holiness Association of Texas were remarkably bold.²⁰

Asians realize even more than Westerners that in some sense we carry about inherited shame. On March 15, 1993, the Church of the Nazarene in Japan issued a "Confession." It stated the church's "regret" that at the time

²⁰*Holiness Association of Texas Year Book 1906-07* (n.p., n.d.), in the "Merging Religious Bodies" microfilm.

when militarism dominated the country, the Church of the Nazarene “did not resist the aggression, but rather cooperated with it.” This was publicly read at a gathering of the Asia Pacific Region.

Should such actions help to alleviate the fear of declension from core values and doctrines? Perhaps something historians can say is this, that from the beginning our church was more seeking, more restless, more heterogeneous, and more human than we have sometimes made it out to be. Another reason for hope is that fearfulness that the next generation will lose something precious has been a perpetual characteristic of our church—from the time of the passing of the first generation in the 1910s, through the dark 1940s, and shadowing the 1958 and 1983 Pilot Point celebrations. Any review of the sermons of various evangelists across our history indicates that we have *always* been fearful of movement away from our original message. We have always nervously wondered whether the next generation would embrace and internalize the essence for which the church stands. Evangelists call us to repent. We do. The church moves on. Perhaps that in itself should encourage us.

Conclusion

It seems we must learn how to tell the story not of a church that is glorified, not of a denomination that has arrived, but of a church yearning and learning to know what it means to be a holiness church in various contexts. A church that has “arrived” has lost its mission and sense of “movement.” Ours is the history of a movement aiming to do the impossible: to “organize” holiness experience, practice and doctrine. Ours is a denomination that always has been in the process formation. We have not arrived at whatever we will be, but we are in the process of becoming. Just as we are understanding Christian perfection this way, so are we understanding ourselves. We are trying, particularly in this glorious time of globalization, to find out what it means to be *corporately* a holiness church, a holiness people in this place and in this time. Wesley figured it out, at least in part, for his time and place, American holiness people did so again in the nineteenth century, and our predecessors in the twentieth did so as well. But what does it mean for us to be a holiness church, or to be both individually and collectively holy now, in the thousands of places where the Church of the Nazarene is? As soon as we think we have arrived, we not only betray our arrogance, but find that society has changed, and that our expression of holiness must also.

REFLECTION ON HOPE

John M. Nielson

If, as Dante wrote, the sign over the portal of Hell is “Abandon Hope, All Ye Who Enter Here,” then the Gates of Heaven are flung open wide—inviting us into a Kingdom that overflows with **Hope**.

As I have wrestled with these papers and responses over the past few months and as I have listened to our dialog over the past few days, there are a few dominant themes that have emerged and some secondary themes that seem to have rested in the quiet shadows of our conversations. I have given up any hope of trying to synthesize this dialog, or referee it, or in these few moments debate with it. Let me share, however, a few observations.

Some of the issues that drive our discussion

- 1 Our discussion indicates a deep fear of being identified with, and reaction against, the extremes of a fundamentalist, misguided eschatology.
- 2 We have a deep concern for matters of accountability for the ravages of systemic evil and for matters of community—for brothers and sisters who live in situations of helplessness and apparent hopelessness.
- 3 Many of us are concerned that an “escapist” eschatology holds danger of creating a passive attitude toward establishing the Kingdom in our own times and places.
- 4 There seems to be a longing for finding, expressing, and nurturing hope through a compassionate community of faith that serves as a model of the Kingdom and that functions in the contexts of holistic worship.

In looking at these issues, I went back to the Scriptures and collected all the references to hope. I did not do as thorough a job as I intended, but in

Endnote, Nazarene Global Theology Conference, Guatemala City, Guatemala, Central America, April 7, 2002.

sorting them, I did find at least four different concepts in the New Testament—

There were everyday uses (e.g. 3 John 1:14).

Some phrases express trust, faith, confidence, possibility, optimism (1 Tim 4:10).

They speak of matters that are clearly eschatological (1 Peter 1:13).

We find expressions of hope “in the midst” of difficulty (Phil 1:20).

I also looked for definitions of hope that would help me. One describes hope as desire with the expectation of fulfillment. Hope is not wishful thinking, but confident expectation and anticipation.

Our conversations have not brought us to resolution on the issues related to hope. However, in our listening and dialoging we have broadened our understanding of both hope and of each other. We **are** people of hope—even though we do not seem ready to agree on whether that hope is “Maximal or minimal,” or how to integrate love and sovereignty, or on millennial issues. Let me examine some of the themes that emerged from the papers, responses and the group reports I have received (along with some of my own comments).

Observations

1. In our desire to emphasize community, we have said little about hope for individuals or about hope in the gospel of regeneration. We must not lose one in favor of the other.
2. Most of our dialog has been in the realm of the discussion of theological constructs rather than with a wrestling with Scripture. We must do both.
3. We prefer engagement to escapism—but we must be careful to express that preference in both present as well as eschatological frames of reference. In settings of temporal oppression and “violence,” the Church must not herself be violent, but must seek to redeem and lift. Hope is a significant gift to others.
4. There is one important concept of hope that we have left in the shadows. It was in a couple of the papers, but did not surface strongly in the dialog. It is about how we respond in helpless situations where nothing is going to change. Do we have a word of Hope in those conditions? Yes!—a hope that is centered in God’s love and presence “in the midst” of life’s trials and difficulties. In that context, we must be careful that in our discussion of abundance and privation that we do not imply that our hope is in economic and political deliverance. Speaking out of the difficult context in His own country, one of our Latin brothers (Jorge Julca) stated the matter even more forcefully in

the panel than he did in his paper—"Hopelessness does not have to do with our state of being, but in the absence of Christ as our personal Savior." While we must do more to bring hope to the helpless, we must **not** do so in ways that imply that our hope is in wealth or in the horses of Egypt—it is in Jesus Christ. We have noted that there is often more Christian hope among the poor than among the affluent. There is little in the first world that indicates that wealth and power have done much to engender hope. It usually seems to result in more suicide. Hope is in new life, not just in the change of situation.

These aspects of hope rely on God but require our involvement—therefore—We must neither abdicate our responsibility nor rely on our capability. We must trust God in every situation even though it remains unchanged—and

We must work to transform every situation even when it seems hopeless. As we set a trajectory for our further reflections on Hope, we must remember that if our discussion deals with the choice of the maximal over the minimal—the details of Parousia—

if it is escapist in either the present tense (temporal) or the future tense (eternal)—

if it recaptures the importance of community and vital worship—

BUT it does not include hope in the midst of unchanged circumstances—then our message and our mission will be less than the world needs and deserves—less than the Gospel provides (see Richard Thompson's paper in this regard).

In the months before my father died, the Lord gave him a gracious joy in the expectation of heaven. However, in the hours before his death, he also experienced a different sense of hope. His final words were, "Dying grace. Dying grace." It was not an expression of the imminence of his escape, but his awareness of God's presence in the midst of the process. Later, our daughter-in-law expressed it in these words:

Your Dying Grace has become our Living Hope.

5. A number of voices have challenged us to continue to try to bring concepts together and try to reconcile the various emphases of scriptures—to attempt the both/and before demanding that we choose either/or.

My left eye is corrected so I can see the near.

My right eye is corrected so I can see the distant.

My brain can handle both.

How Wesleyan!! If my brain can do that with my sight, then surely we can be passionately active in the present while he look with anticipation toward the future.

Bumper Stickers — Proverbs

It seems inappropriate to reduce our thoughts to such brief statements, but here are a few of our thoughts expressed in even fewer words.

Whether apocalyptic or emergent–eschatological or imminent–personal or corporate

—Our only hope is in Jesus Christ.

If the problem is sin – both personal and systemic,
then the only possible hope is Jesus Christ.

Resurrection hope means that life is not terminal or hopeless or futureless.
The situation may be hopeless, but we are not.

Christian Hope assures us that life does not end in death.
Death ends in life.

Our present situations are hopeful both because of
the hope-filled redemptive act of God (at Calvary and the Tomb) in the
past and
the expectation of the future consummation—
both of which require Divine interventions.

We must reflect God’s optimism that every person, every situation is
salvable.

While thinking on these things, I heard a familiar secular song —
“Walk on, walk on with hope in your heart, you’ll never walk alone.”
They got it wrong. “Because Jesus walks beside us, we never walk alone,
And thus we walk with **hope** in our hearts.”

It seems to me that **HOPE** is the stuff of which the rest of this conference
is comprised

—Memory, Mission, and Message.

Our Hope is ignited by Memory.

MEMORY reminds us that hopes of the past have been realized and
that therefore hope for tomorrow is realistic. Our hope is grounded in the
memory of the God who seeks and saves.

The Biblical memory reminds us that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

—that He is the same Yesterday, Today, Forever.

—and that these truths are contained in the Name by which He said we should call Him—“I will be what I have been—I AM.”

Our Eucharistic memory reminds us that **“Whenever we eat this Bread and drink this cup, we show forth the Lord’s death”**—that intervention of God (incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension) which is the soil of all present and future hope—future hope that is anticipated by the words **“until He comes.”**

Our personal and denominational memories provide evidence that many of the hopes of our fathers and mothers, our sisters and brothers have been realized.

Our Mission is inspired by Hope.

MISSION demands that we have hope in the present and for the future. It cannot be undertaken without the hope that we will be fruitful and that the world can be changed. Our mission is filled with hope that rests in the universality of Christ’s invitation and the promise of His presence unto the end of time. If there is no resurrection, and life ends in death, then we are, Paul says, “of all men most miserable” (1 Cor. 15:19) and are therefore helpless and hopeless and life is “meaningless.” Therefore, resurrection hope not only points toward a heavenly future, but also rescues our present efforts, our missional task, from being in vain.

Our Message is infused with Hope.

Holiness, and the Wesleyan understanding of its powerful impact on **all** of the Gospel, declares that there is hope. It is a radical optimism in what God can do—both by imputation and impartation. It is a message that affirms—that hopes—that “confidently expects”—

This situation is redeemable

This temptation is conquerable

This person is salvable

This trial is endurable

This sinner can be holy

The unlovely can be loved

This relationship can be restored—

Light, love, purity, Christlikeness, can leaven all of society.

This conference is rooted in an earlier meeting held in Oxford England held in 1995 that concluded with the Oxford Affirmation. Although I have not been “commissioned” to write one and have no authority to speak for you (and thus write these lines in first person singular), my response to the discussions of this conference prompt me to commit myself to this—

The Guatemala Covenant –

- I will continue this conversation, listening and contributing, and will seek words, images, and adequate explanations that will enable the understanding of people from other disciplines, other nations, and other ministry roles.
- I will never allow my theological constructs to come before my grappling with Scripture.
- I will seek never to be the cause of hopelessness in others. Instead I will whisper words of hope in the ear of the dying, and shout hope to the community that surrounds me.
- I will never give up on the both/and of the via media until forced to do so.
- I will always remember our heritage of diversity in non-essentials and not force my brothers and sisters to affirm my view unless it is clearly required by Scripture.
- I will never be passive in addressing the hopelessness of others but will seek to alleviate the hopelessness of the helpless.
- I will never let helplessness lead me to despair.
- I will choose only biblical methods to escape situations of helplessness.
- I will seek God’s presence **in** the situation before seeking escape **from** it.
- I will never “escape” without bringing as many others along with me as I can.
- I will embrace Hope
 - For me and for you
 - For both the person and the community
 - For humanity and for creation
 - For pardon and for purity
 - For endurance as well as for deliverance
 - For the present and the Parousia
 - For the oppressed and disadvantaged
 - And in the midst of situations that will not change.
- Here I stand.
- I dare not do otherwise.

AMEN

In facing the issues raised by this topic, it would be comfortable to believe that if we just worked harder, we could usher in the Kingdom or, that on the other hand, to believe that there is nothing we can do until the Parousia—but that is not the nature of our hope.

It would be more comfortable to believe that if we could finally get the End-Times Chart finished and could know what the fourteenth hair on the seventh mole of the 12th horn of the 9th beast revealed by the 7th prophet will tell us what will happen on the 26th day of July 2036—but that is not where our hope lies.

It would be more comfortable to believe that once we accept the atoning work of Christ in our own lives, that for us and for our world all the darkness will become light, all injustice will disappear, all problems will be solved, all contradictions will be understood—but that is not the nature of our hope.

Our hope is in Jesus Christ Who died and rose for us—Who promised to return for us. And we can trust in Him.

Our confident expectation is that Hope flourishes wherever and whenever God's Kingdom is allowed to come.

Our hope is that persons, and families, and cultures, and human systems and all of creation is redeemable.

Our hope lies in the promise that in the midst of the darkest night, in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death, in the midst of trials, temptations, and persecutions—we are not alone and the end is not yet.

As we leave this conference, we “hope”—we confidently believe—that we will never be the same.

In hope, let us continue to grapple with and dialog over the concepts that have been raised at this conference, doing it with our best reason, and on the basis of the data that God has revealed to us, and in fidelity to our heritage.

Let us seek to establish and reflect the Kingdom of God in our own time and space, seeking the transformation not only to the hearts of persons but also of the systems of humanity. But let us do so only with those methods that are consistent with what we find in the example of Christ and the teachings of His word.

Let us continue to present to the world Jesus as the Hope for every person in the midst of every life circumstance.

Let us confidently expect that God's Kingdom can transcend our differences of culture, language, nationality, academic discipline and ecclesial role.

Let us seek to do the work of his Kingdom with humility and grace.

Let us HOPE that we will be true to our heritage,
that our mission will bring people to faith and holiness, and
that the best days of our Church are still future.

Let our Hope—our confident expectation—include purity as well as pardon—endurance as well as deliverance—and eternity as well as time.

Let us have the courage to take the difficult road—a
to accept the paradox and stand in the *via media*
to reject the neither/nors and embrace the both/ands
knowing that perhaps it is precisely there, and only there, that hope will
be born and flourish.

And when we have come to the end of our own efforts, let us still hope—joining the Christians of all centuries in the hope-filled prayer—**Maranatha**.

May the God of **hope** fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with **hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom15:13).

Let us hold unswervingly to the **hope** we profess, for he who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23, NIV).

The first word is Grace.

The foundational word is Faith.

The “previous” word is Memory.

The active word is Mission.

The highest word is holy Christlikeness.

The word of response is “Yes.”

The bottom line is Love.

The final word is

HOPE!

WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM: MEMORIES OF NEW ZEALAND NAZARENE SAINTS

Stephen & Christi Bennett

“At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we shall remember them.” This statement is repeated every year without fail at dawn parades throughout New Zealand. The parades are held on ANZAC day, New Zealand’s “memorial day” when troops from the World Wars are honored. The conduct of these troupes, and how they are remembered, is indicative of and formative for New Zealand culture. The troops are remembered for embodying virtues New Zealand most cherishes as a society.

No doubt the same is true around the world, and also in the church. A sermon published by Victor Potopov of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Washington, D.C. lauds the memory of Russian saints. He opens his message with these words, “Of the limitless richness of Christ’s personality, each nation has selected those features of holiness that are closest to its heart, that are most readily understood, that are, for that particular nation most attainable.”¹ Potopov identifies three particular Russian virtues embodied by the saints of his church: patience, humility, and love. He places all in a context of suffering and calls his parishioners to remember the saints, to bring to mind their expressions of those virtues and to strive to imitate them.

In the latter years of his life, Peter Bourke (d. 1992), a New Zealand journalist, began compiling notes for a history of the Church of the

A paper presented at the Nazarene Global Theology Conference in Guatemala City, Guatemala, Central America, April 2002.

¹Victor Potopov, “The Day of all the Saints of the Russian Land,” The Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, Washington, D.C., June, 1985, online, <http://www.stjohndc.org/Homilies/8506.htm>.

Nazarene in New Zealand. Nazarene work in New Zealand began in 1951. Bourke's notes include selections from missionary books on the Church of the Nazarene in New Zealand, Bourke's own personal memories and notes from interviews with several other New Zealand Nazarenes. Not surprisingly, the remembrances of Nazarene saints gathered in the manuscript yield more insight into New Zealand's cultural values than into general holiness values. Even though many of the pioneers described by Bourke were not New Zealanders, the characteristics Bourke identifies in them are virtues and personality traits valued and idealized by New Zealand society as a whole.

The traits which come through strongest in Bourke's notes are those of hard work, inventiveness and ingenuity, frugality, perseverance despite meager resources and opposition, a sense of humour, a friendly personality, and team spirit. These are the features of holiness that are closest to New Zealand's heart. This is not to say that the other "spiritual" virtues were not present in Bourke's notes, but they were not as important in defining holiness for Bourke and most of those he interviewed.

In the classroom at Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, we asked students to write about the person who for them most embodied the ideals of holiness.² In their essays Filipino students (the largest group in the class) emphasized patience, humility, not getting angry, and hard work, while some also mentioned effective preaching and prayer. Missiologist Paul Hiebert observes that while North Americans define the cardinal sin as sexual immorality, in South Asia losing one's temper is considered much worse.³ This cultural value comes through as Filipino students list "not getting angry" among the treasured traits of their own "holy heroes."

A life of prayer, including time spent at the "prayer house" was, not surprisingly, important for the Korean depictions of holiness. Papua New Guinea and Myanmar (Mizo) students mentioned the absence of vices and the importance of sexual purity. Korea and Myanmar cultures do not allow a man even to touch a woman who is not his wife. Putting holiness into practice, and not just words was mentioned by students from the Philippines and Bangladesh. The students tended, then, in rehearsing their memories, to select those virtues which are "closest to the heart" of their cultural experience, their cultural ideals.

²Christi Bennett's class "Doctrine of Holiness," 2000.

³Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985), p. 47.

The portrayal of the Church of the Nazarene in New Zealand reflects this principle. While Bourke's history is not consciously attempting to describe holiness, it is recording the beginning of a holiness denomination in New Zealand. The holiness distinctive is emphasized in the history. The doctrine is the reason why the church was introduced, and opposition from other churches was because of the doctrine. An initial openness to Roland Griffith's (American) preaching was abandoned by all denominations in New Zealand except the Salvation Army and Brethren.

Explicit definitions of holiness are twice included as a clarification for other denominations which accused the Nazarenes of teaching "sinless perfection." Bourke writes that "it really meant perfect love or perfect motive and that God was able, through the Holy Spirit, to deal with the sin problem, but that this would be a continuing process" and "it simply means perfect love and aiming for the highest standards, as put forward by Jesus Christ."⁴ Gideon B. Williamson (American General Superintendent) is remembered to have preached on the "power to witness" in a service in 1953 where Mrs Aline Taft was sanctified entirely.⁵

Yet it is not specifically adherence to these definitions of spirituality, which is emphasized by Bourke and his informants. It is what "perfect love" meant to these New Zealand Nazarenes that is interesting. The virtue of being a hard worker, especially in manual labor, is mentioned of pioneer Roland Griffith (American) in the construction of the first church, which was in Auckland. The first District Superintendent, S. Palmquist (American North West) also engaged in manual labor and was "never afraid to roll up his sleeves."⁶ In regard to the campsite at Piha, Palmquist "worked like a Trojan" and often had to be carried off the job at the end of a "working bee."⁷ Those unwilling to join in the physical tasks were seen as unworthy for the holiness denomination. Not surprising in a country not far-removed from its pioneer days, a country built on the sweat of agricultural workers. A young ministerial student, Rex, was helping with the excavation for Auckland First church when he declared that he had been called to preach—not to crack rocks, and he walked off the job.⁸

⁴Bourke, 13, 21.

⁵Bourke, 5.

⁶Bourke, 79. Palmquist was D.S. from 1968.

⁷Bourke, 14.

⁸Bourke, 41.

A sense of humor and a friendly personality are also valued in New Zealand culture. James A. Michener in *Return to Paradise* identifies the “typical New Zealander” as a person “addicted to dreadful jokes.” Bourke notes Palmquist, Jervois Davis (American immigrant pastor), and Hillary Hansen (pastor) for their sense of humor.⁹ Friendliness is noted with regard to George Yearbury (pastor) and Jervois Davis.¹⁰

Perseverance despite opposition and hardship is another New Zealand value that is noted in Bourke’s history. This is often linked to faithfulness. Bourke quotes extensively from Griffith’s appeal in the *Voice of the Nazarene* which calls for martyrs, that is, people willing to make costly sacrifices.¹¹ The Tonga family (immigrants from Nuie Island) provides an example of this. Otara pastor’s wife Joan Ranger remembers that they “were faithful witnesses and, amidst many trials and battles they proved to be real saints of God.”¹² This is the same virtue New Zealanders idealize at ANZAC day as they remember the disproportionate sacrifices New Zealand made in the world wars of the twentieth century.

More spiritual characteristics such as prayer, preaching, patience, kindness, and caring are also mentioned (in some cases more by the females that Bourke interviewed). But the definition of holiness in terms of the values of New Zealand culture seems unmistakable. In Bourke’s history it is the ideals that are closest to the New Zealand heart that receive the most attention.

The definition of holiness and the memory of the saints is conditioned in part by the culture of the observer. This realization is important in the presentation of holiness and the memory of the church in New Zealand, and in any culture. It is important, too, for the writing of church history in an international church—even historians have a hard time escaping the shaping force of cultural values. “At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we shall remember them.” But will you remember the same things about them that I do?

⁹Bourke, 14, 53, 67.

¹⁰Bourke, 39, 57.

¹¹Bourke, 9-10, July, 1957.

¹²Bourke, 33. Events are from 1973.

**A RESPONSE TO HOLINESS
IN THE CONTEXT OF PRESENTATIONS MADE
AT THE GLOBAL THEOLOGY CONFERENCE,
SPONSORED BY THE CHURCH OF THE
NAZARENE**

Robert Charles Donahue

Background

Mendell Taylor used to tell his classes at Nazarene Theological Seminary that virtually anything was possible to be legislated in the Church of the Nazarene if there was a broad enough consensus among the members of the General Assembly! Of interest in this regard is the removal of the term “eradicated” from our Articles of Faith by action of the 2001 General Assembly and subsequent concurrence by the necessary number of district assemblies. It had long been taught in the Church of the Nazarene that “original sin continues to exist with the new life of the regenerate, until eradicated by the baptism with the Holy Spirit.” Most of the theologians of the church, however, seemed to have taken issue with this statement several decades before it was ultimately changed. Their views were communicated to one or more generations of pastors who in turn made this sentiment more widely known across the general church. Change may seem to happen quickly when it happens, but most change takes time and goes through a process.

Crisis

Jim Bond, General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, in his address to the theologians of the church assembled in Guatemala City, stressed that there is a crisis concerning sanctification in our church today. Much of the time of the theology conference was taken up with discussions about aspects of this crisis. The crisis was summarized by Bond that “we are adrift in a sea of theological illiteracy, marginalization, and uncertainty.”

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The illiteracy is often evident among the laity of the church who seem to have little understanding of theology. Often the laity will move freely from denomination to denomination with little or no understanding of theological distinctives. This lack of theological literacy can often be traced to the pastoral leadership of the local church. Preaching is more often relational than doctrinal, conforming to popular topics rather than grounded in good exegesis and sound theology. Particularly, a clear preaching and teaching of the “what,” “how” and “when” of holiness is simply not done. Increasingly, for instance, the secondness or subsequentness of holiness is not heard. Could it be that this arises increasingly from a lack of emphasis and clarity in the educational institutions of the church? Could this perhaps be a reflection to a large extent of the teaching that has been given by current and recent theologians of the church?

Bond points out this lack of mention of the secondness or subsequentness of holiness as a point of concern. He says that when it is “not taught clearly and with conviction, it results in uncertain proclamation from the pulpit.” He goes on to say:

If the pastor has doubts regarding the “how” and “when” of entire sanctification, will this not reduce his/her holiness emphasis almost exclusively to process? Ultimately, does this not erode one’s conviction regarding the “what” and “why” of Article of Faith X? Does this not marginalize the holiness message and ultimately contribute to our theological malaise?

That many no longer teach or preach the secondness or subsequentness of holiness is obvious. It is also clear that many wish to drop one or both concepts as exegetically and hermeneutically indefensible. However, General Superintendent Jesse Middendorf makes the point: “I am not able to relinquish the conviction that the passages . . . at least allow an interpretation of ‘secondness’.” This statement speaks volumes for the issues at hand. A general leader of the church is reduced to pleading for at least an inclusion of these interpretations in the face of strong teaching to the contrary.

Accommodation

It seems to me that there has been a growing tendency within our Nazarene circles to accommodate ourselves to a wider theological audience that is often skeptical of our stated positions. On the local church level this has led to the dropping of even our denominational name in favor of more “community” kinds of names, and, indeed, a whole range of accommodations to make our churches more like community churches offering a kind

of evangelical pluralism and a theological buffet from which to choose according to one's likes and dislikes. Therefore, ultimately, the necessity to restate, re-narrate, and reformulate our doctrinal statements must be carried out to make our church more understood within this new context. The danger may be that we may only attempt to make ourselves more palatable within a large context without bringing forth much understanding.

Scripture

There is every reason to do good scholarship. As Roger Hahn pointed out, we do need "to seek a full-orbed biblical theology of holiness that is driven by Scripture . . ." Scripture is the bedrock of our holiness theology. Let us be careful in our scholarship lest we imbibe from wells of theological and even biblical reflection not based upon a firm foundation and appreciation for the plenary inspiration of Scripture. Some scholarship upon which we rely from the outside may be too quick to relegate often clear and authoritative passages to a pejorative category of "biblicism." Let us not forget that experience, tradition, and reason also have their supporting parts to play. Often these elements can be illuminating and helpful in our understanding. But let us at the same time reaffirm that Scripture always has the premier role in theology.

Liturgy

I propose that our holiness emphasis can only be maintained, communicated effectively, and strengthened as a living reality among our people if we give close attention to the liturgy of the church. Specifically, I mean the practice of believer's baptism, the joyous sharing of the Lord's Supper, and the celebration and praise of the Triune God in worship and prayer.

The new believer must be received into the Body of Christ visibly and quickly through the rite of baptism. This is the first element of the fulfilment of the Great Commission. It must be taught by the symbol of baptism that believers are justified and regenerated unto a new life in Christ Jesus. And that we are to pray for and wait upon God for the fulfilling of the promise to give us His Holy Spirit. The water baptism is the foreshadow of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and with fire. This baptism of the Spirit is the baptism of heart cleansing and purity-holiness or entire sanctification.

The joyful and often sharing of the elements of our Lord's broken body and shed blood must be both a symbol and a point in time in which

believers especially receive grace and experience the mystical presence of the living Christ in community. Holiness is always social in nature. We do not progress in holiness in isolation, but in living community. John Wesley seems to have understood the necessity of this for the holy life. Bond reminds us: “It was his [Wesley] passion to bring people into the holy life which we must recapture.” We must recapture this emphasis upon the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper with its reminder of our Lord’s return—this hope of His return acts as a purification for our souls as the Holy Spirit draws us into the Hope of the One of is Pure.

Our music, praise, prayer and worship must be much more than following a prescribed program! The testimony of the redeemed must be heard in word and song. The joy and celebration, the pouring out of the soul before God in a creative experience must be re-captured in the practice and life of our churches. The glory of God should permeate our gatherings and move our souls before God. This is a celebration of the holiness of God—as the seraphs sing holy, holy, holy—so we come in adoration, awe, and wonder before Him and are touched anew by the purifying coals of fire from His presence.

The liturgy of the church is the methodology to keep holiness within the warp and woof of the life of the people of God. Liturgy must be revisited with an eye toward careful biblical implementation. This is part of the original genius of the Wesleyan movement.

Morality

Some argue that holiness should not be understood as moral. This may be a reaction to a narrowly defined moralism. However, we ought not to throw out the baby with the bath water! If holiness is not moral, what is it? Certainly not immoral. And certainly not amoral. The moral nature of the church itself as the Body must come into clear focus in regard to an understanding of holiness. This has not been clearly articulated, though we see it in Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments. It comes through in the vision of Isaiah, and well as the dealings of Ananias and Sapphira as well as many other passages. Doug Johnson states: “Ultimately, Holiness theology is lacking because it refuses to reflect upon embodied holiness in the life of the Church.” Holiness must be reflected within the lives of believers within the Church. Holiness must be a live experience rather than an abstraction. Johnson further says: “It is toward the life of the faithful that all Christian theology must gesture, if it is to help sustain the promise of holiness.” Holiness must be the living reality in the lives of the people

of God, therefore the quality of life within the church is of great importance to the understanding and sustainability of the doctrine of holiness.

Caution

Bond notes, “It is time to reaffirm this important aspect of our theology and restate it in the most plausible manner from our primary sources: tradition, reason, experience, and Scripture.” Let us be careful in any restatement. Let us be careful that a restatement does not nullify that central doctrine of the church altogether nor make that doctrine less understandable. Let us be careful to make Scripture primary as we consider these things. May we begin a reaffirmation through personal affirmation and application of doctrinal truth to our own lives.

A Continuous Call

I believe General Superintendent Jim Bond gives us all a strong challenge in regard to the crisis we face in the church. He says we must participate in “a continuous call for believers to make a whole-life commitment, exercise faith, and experience the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit in purity and power . . . this ‘is obtained in an instant, the result of entire sanctification.’” May we arise to the challenge before us.

INTEGRAL MISSION AND DEVELOPMENT WHERE ARE WE?

William A. Dyrness

Lecture on Holistic Development
Asian Theological Seminary, July 2002

A. Introduction

This lecture is an attempt to repay a debt that has been accumulating over the past twenty-five years. Every since my wife Grace started studying Anthropology here at Ateneo de Manila, I have been an eager learner from the social sciences and development studies. I have seen this field of study (or these fields of study) as filling in a part of the essential context for doing theology, especially outside the West. As I recall we even introduced a course in what we called “holistic mission,” and as a theologian I tried to add my voice to those trying to open a conversation between theology and development practitioners. My debt lies in the fact that I have shamelessly borrowed from people working in these areas, indeed I am sure I have learned more than I have contributed. For this I am very grateful.

In this paper then I will attempt to acknowledge this debt by suggesting where I think this conversation stands at the present time. I will do this by outlining the progress that theology has made in recognizing its social and political context on the one hand, and the growing sophistication of Christian development agencies on the other hand. Then I will argue that, in spite of this encourage progress—indeed I will argue partly because of this very sophistication, the gap between theory and practice is still too large, and indeed may be growing. I will attempt to suggest some of the

We gratefully acknowledge the permission given by Dr. William Dyrness, and by World Vision, Inc., and Asian Theological Seminary for allowing the *Mediator* to be the first to publish this address given by Dr. Dyrness, July 15, 2002 at Asian Theological Seminary, Quezon City, Philippines.

reasons for this situation and the challenge that this presents to both partners in the conversation. Since outlining the challenge before us is already far more than any single person should attempt, I will tell you from the outset that in this lecture I have no great solutions to propose—as I said I have learned more than I have contributed, and I am just a learner!

B. The Growing Conviction and Commitment to Integral Ministry

When we taught courses at ATS on theology and development 20 years ago, this was considered, for us at least, something of an innovation. I remember the difficulty we had even finding things for students to read. There were a few things, written especially by scholars outside the West who had first come to prominence at the Lausanne conference in 1974. Beyond that Liberation theologians in Latin America were proposing a theological framework for Christian social engagement. The magazine *Partnership in Mission*, published for a few years in the late 1970's, provided something of a model for us to follow, and Patmos was just beginning to speak about these issues here in the Philippines.

The situation today is vastly different, indeed I believe one could say we have experienced a sea change in attitudes towards mission and development. Today among Evangelicals around the world it is widely assumed that God's purposes—what the Bible calls salvation, includes the renewal of the whole of creation and therefore addresses people holistically, including their relations with God, other people and with the created order.¹ I immediately qualify this by admitting that a debate still continues about whether evangelism ought to be primary or whether it is an equal partner with works of mercy in the Church. I might have been more emphatic about the changes a few years ago, but since Jim Engel and I wrote our book *Changing the Mind of Missions*, we have had ample evidence that the debate, among Western Evangelicals at least, is still very much alive—and Jim and I in the view of many are clearly on the wrong side of the question.² I certainly would not want to belittle those that take issue

¹Although I agree heartily with Charles Ringma's suggestion that strictly speaking integral ought to replace holism in speaking about our mission, the words, in most peoples' minds are used interchangeably. See "Holistic Ministry and Ministry: A Call for Reconceptualization," a lecture given at ATS, December 11, 2001.

²James Engel and William A. Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000). The debate has been carried on, among other places, in the pages of the *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* and *Christianity*

with our assumptions, but I agree with Charles Ringma who argued in last year's lecture on Mission and Development, that the debate itself reflects the continuing influence of the Enlightenment dualism, or what is called Modernism, on Western thought.³

In the West we have entered what is widely called a post-modern era. While there is not complete agreement what this means—in part because we are still finding our way in this brave new world, there is at least the rejection of the universalistic aspirations of the modern era and an openness to alternative voices. People in the West are more apt to be moved by moral or aesthetic issues than arguments over the nature of truth. When so many of the people in the world are suffering from civil wars, famines or from AIDS we do not have the luxury to argue about the precise relationship between evangelism and social concern.

Here there appears to be an interesting convergence between what is called postmodernism in the West, and the more integrate world views that prevail outside the West. Christians outside the West are generally untroubled by a holistic perspective on theology. They do not need to be told that spiritual and secular concerns are related. Indeed in the minds of most people in the world, these things were never separated in the first place. When Grace and I were teaching in a Pentecostal college in Accra, Ghana last summer we were amazed by the interest in perspective that helped them integrate their faith with the development of their people. In fact when I opened the class by asking what is the major challenge they face in their mission work, the first response (from an Assembly of God District Superintendent) was: "How can the Gospel have more of a social impact on the lives of the people?" It is not surprising then that some of the most interesting things written recently on these issues have been by Third World Evangelicals. One thinks for example of the work of Deborah Ajulu, Jayakumar Christian and Vinoth Ramachandra—from whom we have all learned a great deal.⁴

One of the characteristics of the Postmodern turn in the West is the reaction against the overly spiritual pieties of traditional faith and the

Today.

³Ringma, 6.

⁴See Deborah Ajulu, *Holism in Development: An African Perspective on Empowering Communities* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 2001); Jayakumar Christian, *God of the Empty-Handed: Poverty, Power, and the Kingdom of God* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1999); Vinoth Ramachandra, *Faiths in Conflict* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, c1999).

aggressive call to see the practical evidence of faith. In part this is generational. Younger people in the West are impatient with institutions in general, including the Church. They want to see what difference faith can make in the world, in part because they want their own lives to make a difference. My colleagues in the School of World Mission tell me that research among the so-called new paradigm (or gen-X) churches in the US and Britain has shown conclusively that integral mission is simply assumed (right along with the assumption of new forms of worship). The debate between evangelism and social concern is simply not an issue for most of them; their ministries are built on the assumption that the Gospel addresses the whole person.⁵ Sociologist Christian Smith in fact concluded his recent study of American Evangelicalism by reporting that there is a new social gospel emerging in America and it is through and through Evangelical in orientation.⁶

While these Western developments are interesting, they are no longer determinative. Indeed I believe the presumption of holistic ministry has grown in the worldwide church because of the emergence, one might even say the centrality, of the non-Western churches on the world stage. Andrew Walls called attention a generation ago to the shifting center of gravity of the world church.

One of the most important . . . events in the whole of Christian history, has occurred within the lifetime of people not yet old. It has not reached the textbooks, and most Christians, including many of the best informed, do not know it has happened. It is nothing less than a complete change in the center of gravity of Christianity, so that the heartlands of the Church are . . . in Latin America, in certain parts of Asia, and . . . in Africa.⁷

⁵See Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downersgrove: IVP, 2000) and Donald Miller, *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997). Miller along with Ted Yamamori is completing a four year study of world wide Pentecostal churches in which he has discovered the same pattern: holistic ministry is frequently assumed. Ryan Bulger working with Eddie Gibbs reports the same results of their study of emerging churches in Britain.

⁶*American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 37, 45.

⁷“Towards and Understanding of Africa’s Place in Christian History,” in *Religion in a Pluralistic Society*, J. S. Pobee, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 180.

Little by little it is the concerns and holistic world view of these churches that is coming to define our theological reality. This changing reality has recently been underlined by the publication of Philip Jenkin's important book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*.⁸ In his description of this new globalism in which Christianity finds itself, he makes two points that are critical to our argument. First, he points out that in this emerging situation, "Christianity is deeply associated with poverty" (215). Contrary to media stereotypes, Christians are not primarily fat cat Westerners driving big cars, but he notes, they are mostly poor "often unimaginably poor by western standards" (216). One has only to mention the holocaust of AIDS in Africa to recognize that ministry and witness in that continent will inevitably address social as well as spiritual needs. But the second point is, if anything, more significant. When one looks at the enormous, and growing, divide between the north and the south, Jenkins says, it does not take any imaginative leap to suppose that this will increasingly be the key issue of the new century. Moreover, he points out, given the demographics and world view of the majority Church, the conflict will surely be "defined in religious terms" (160).

Economics, health care, ethnic and religious violence—these are the issues that provide the context of ministry and mission for most people in much of the world. Fortunately, Christians are more and more sensitive to these issues and anxious to carry out their ministry in ways that address them. To them, moreover, these are not "secular" problems, they are through and through religious issues. But here the challenge becomes acute: how, they want to know, can the Church effectively address these overwhelming problems? While churches themselves frequently seek to reach out to their communities, more and more they are founding separate non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or partnering with such groups to carry out their diaconal ministries. What are the implications of this development? We turn now to our next section: the rise of the NGOs.

C. The growing number and sophistication of Non-Governmental Organizations

It is safe to say that the privileged means of addressing most of the major social problems of the Western and non-Western world today is by means of the worldwide growth of non-governmental organizations

⁸Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* (Oxford University Press, 2002). Subsequent pages in the text.

(NGOs). While initially these were based in Northern countries, there are now a growing number of Southern (or National) NGOs as well. Their growth can be correlated with the failure of national and multinational programs of poverty reduction in the 1960's and 1970's. These voluntary associations have become a major factor in meeting the development challenges in the new century, and their very existence is testimony to the difficult history of development programs.

To greatly oversimplify this history, development theory has gone through three stages. The first immediately following the Second World War emphasized direct aid to emerging nation states, which developed elaborate (and bloated) bureaucracies with which to address social problems. By the 1960's it was clear that this strategy was a failure—a fact first evident in Latin America, but soon visible elsewhere. Development theorists then turned to the development of free markets as a means to social development, often driven by huge multinational corporations. The idea was that as economies improved they would reach a take off point and benefits would trickle down to the people who needed them. But by the early 1990s it was clear that even when GNP increased—which did not in fact happen everywhere—other indicators of social and educational health might grow worse. Development strategy at this point, sometimes called post-growth development, turned to the people as the answer to development challenges. Terms like “participatory or people centered development” became common and experts spoke in terms of sustainable development as the goal.⁹

By the end of the century the primary providers of services to reach this goal were the proliferating NGOs. Even bilateral (USAID) or multinational aid (UN or EEC) is now frequently channeled through these agencies. While their visibility is non-Western capitals is evident to even the causal observer, their numbers have grown exponentially. US NGOs registered with USAID, for example, grew from 52 in 1974 to 419 in 1994.¹⁰ The largest of these—World Vision, Care, Doctors without Borders—are well known but there are literally hundreds of smaller agencies as well. Estimates for local NGOs are still higher, ranging from 20,000 to 50,000 and their numbers have grown proportionately since the '70s. Many of these are faith based, but an equal or greater number of the

⁹See Marc Lindenberg and Coralie Bryant, *Going Global: Transforming Relief and Development NGOs* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2001), hereafter L & B; and Deborah Ajulu, *Holism in Development*, Chapter one, hereafter Ajulu.

¹⁰L & B, 4.

largest are secular or humanistic in orientation.¹¹ These represent an extremely important response to the great variety of human, and even environmental, need. With names like the World Wildlife Federation, Center for Law Enforcement Education, Coalition on Penal Reform, Amnesty International, and so forth, one sometimes has the feeling that wherever a need exists, an NGO is likely to spring up precisely to meet this need. I have described these elsewhere as secular missions going into all the world to spread their various gospels¹²—a fact that I want to comment on below.

Two particular elements of this situation call for comment. First, there is a growing number of agencies who work from a clear Christian orientation. World Vision, World Relief, Opportunity International are some of the larger organizations who provide relief and development services, but there are many others. By any standard the services these provide are of a high standard. As a speaker at the international conference of one of these, I can attest to the high level of professionalism I observe. But I noticed something else which was both impressive and troubling. I noticed how frequently and easily these professionals spoke in the jargon of the professional development world, one from which for all my interest and education I was excluded. There were all, I have no doubt, believers who were committed to express their Christian values and convictions in their work. They were also highly trained development specialists equipped by education and experience to address very specific human need. Yet, for all their expertise, I learned from the leadership who invited me to speak, that they struggle to integrate their professional work with clear Christian values and witness.

I have been involved in extensive conversations with another of these agencies in which senior practitioners have asked how theological reflection can become integral to their work. In the course of our conversations a case study was used from Africa. They described a development practitioner entering a village to drill a well. As he prepared to do his work he began to determine according to his best training where the well should be drilled. The elders immediately became upset, and told him that it was the

¹¹L. & B. point out that before 1980 NGOs in Ethiopia were primarily faith based, suggesting that initial entrants into the relief and development arena have a faith orientation. One wonders what percentage of workers in secular organizations are motivated by their faith. This is an area that calls for further study.

¹²See Dyrness. "What Good is Truth: Postmodern Apologetics in a World Community," *Radix* (Volume 26, No. 3, 1999), 4-7 and 23-26.

water spirits should determine where the well should be, rather than what seemed to them foreign criteria, and if these spirits were not properly consulted there would surely be trouble. While the elder was not a Christian, and the development worker was, we realized the former opposed the intervention on the basis of indigenous spiritual values, while the latter was proceeding with his work according to what were the residents of this village at least, secular values. We asked ourselves: What development strategy currently on offer would prepare workers to address these kinds of theological issues?¹³ It turns out that neither the humanistic nor the Christian agencies are prepared to address these religious issues in their development strategies.

It is not that neither of these groups are opposed to spiritual values, indeed there is a new awareness of their importance. Even agencies that do not work out of a faith orientation, increasingly recognize the importance of values, even of spirituality, in development. In response to failure of previous reductive development strategies, these agencies, whether faith based or not, work out of a clear value-based orientation. A recent scholarly study of NGOs defines them as organizations which (1) provide useful goods or services, (2) are non-profit, (3) voluntary (that is run by unpaid boards of directors), (4) and which exhibit what they call “values-based rationality, often with ideological components.”¹⁴ This reflects what may be the most significant change in development studies in the past fifteen years, which have moved beyond a narrow focus on economic growth to consider a wider range of factors and values. Amartya Sen’s important work has focused for example on personal capability and freedoms. Michael Edwards even speaks of spirituality in development.¹⁵

An example of the change comes from our friendship with David Korten which extends to our time in the Philippines when Korten worked with the Ford Foundation and I was teaching at ATS. The evening we first met he explained at great length the projects he was involved with. After some time he turned to me and asked: “What do you do?” “Oh,” I said, “I teach theology in a seminary here in Manila.” “Theology,” he said, “Now

¹³A similar problem appears in Ajulu. In the chapter in which she discusses power, there is lengthy exposition of “power to” and “power over” but only when she turns to Biblical materials does she consider spiritual power. Where is this to be found in the development literature?

¹⁴L & B, 5, 6.

¹⁵Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 2000). Michael Edwards, *Future Positive: Intercooperation in the 21st Century* (London: Earthscan, 1999).

there's a conversation stopper!" Subsequently by his own admission he grew disillusioned with the accepted development paradigm which focused on economic growth alone and wrote his famous "When Corporations Rule the World" (1997) which outlined the dangers of the misuse of power in multinational corporations.¹⁶ A few months ago he was the featured speaker along with Walter Wink in a conference on sustainable development in Pasadena. There he stressed how essential it was to take account of the spiritual values of people to allow their full flourishing and development. The biggest mistake of previous paradigms, he now believes, was their failure to take account of the full context, material and spiritual, of peoples' lives. Presumably theology no longer stops conversations for him! For this we can be grateful, but this change may, like the growth of NGOs, be something of a mixed blessing. To this ambiguity I now turn.

D. For Missions and Development: The Best of Times and the Worst of Times

What do we make of this new situation? In many ways it seems that we can be grateful for the current situation: most Christians no longer are bound by older paradigms and dualisms; they understand the comprehensive nature of God's programs. Meanwhile the number and sophistication of NGOs, many with a Christian or at least a spiritual orientation, suggest that resources are increasingly available to churches to improve their communities. But as I hinted in the beginning, it is precisely these advances that provide the greatest challenges to the integration of mission and development today. Let me explain what I mean.

First of all, the growing openness to development issues on the part of Christians, while encouraging, poses several major challenges. Do Christians, even with their new openness toward holistic ministry, have the capacity to become players in the issues we face? At the least such capacity would imply a major overhaul of the curriculum of theological education, and it calls for a generation of scholar-practitioners to address issues in an integral manner. This challenge exposes needs at the opposite ends of the theological education spectrum: the very highest area of research and the very lowest where most pastors and practitioners work. In my judgment, the work of responding to these needs has hardly begun. Meanwhile, in the

¹⁶David C. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 1996); see also David Korten, *The Post-Corporate World* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 1999).

second place, the very growth and success, the professionalization if you will, of the NGO sector militates against the holistic claims of the Gospel and the missionary nature of the Church. In many ways, I would argue, the integral mission that we seek still eludes us. Indeed the split between the theory of the Gospel and the practice of development is as wide as it has ever been.

As I said I will not propose any solution to this problem but I do want to conclude by suggesting two major reasons why it exists—which also may provide something of an agenda for the next generation of theologians and NGO leadership. These suggestions work on the assumption that we will not come up with solutions, unless we understand precisely where the problems lie. I believe the major elements of this problem lie in the continuing (even growing) influence of educational specialization and, secondly, the associated methodological naturalism. In other words, though our heart (perhaps even the hearts of our secular colleagues in development who call for sensitivity to spirituality), are in the right place, the structures and patterns of thinking we have inherited still hamper any genuine integration. In spirit of our non-Western holism and postmodernism, in other words, I will argue that we are still captive to a thoroughly modern paradigm.

Let me briefly explain these two issues. The first problem I will call the problem of specialization of knowledge. It is generally agreed that a major characteristic of modern and modernizing societies is the growth of what Nicholas Luhmann calls “functional differentiation.” Contemporary technology and the educational systems that support this increasingly reflect the growth of independently defined subsystems of reality. Moreover, these subsystems necessarily become increasingly differentiated from other subsystems. As Luhmann says: “Politics cannot take the place of science, nor can science take the place of law—and so forth for all relations between systems. The old, multifunctional institutions and moralities are, therefore dissolved and replaced by a coordination of specific codes to specific systems that distinguish modern society from all those before it.”¹⁷ What this means is that particular fields, subspecialties within development studies, for example, become increasingly specialized and, as a result, often

¹⁷Nicholas Luhmann, *Ecological Communication*, English Translation by J. Bednarz, Jr. (Chicago University, 1989), 48,49, quoted in Michael Welker, *God the Spirit* translated by John F. Hofmeyer (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 29. Welker interestingly proposes a theology of the Spirit as a force field that integrates these subsystems. While we may not agree with his proposed solution, we do agree that the solution is necessarily theological and religious.

take on a life of their own. Economists, social workers, and development experts sometimes cannot even agree among others in their own specialty let alone contribute to joint planning for a particular region of the world. Even secular scholars on relief and development recognize this problem. Surveyed in a recent study, leadership of large NGOs worry that “their own increasing professionalization and bureaucratization as they grew to address the global problems . . . [challenged] their ability to sustain commitment and mission.”¹⁸

Nor is theology exempt from this danger. While, as I noted above, there is a growing awareness on the part of many of the social and political context of theological reflection, studies at the highest level—Trinitarian studies or debates over the human and divine nature of Christ, like development studies, still tend to take on a life of their own and function in a language that only other scholars can understand. Little wonder that “theology” becomes a conversation stopper! Or that development experts speak in a language that only they can understand.

What is worse, the growth of education in the developing world often follows educational models that foster the kind of specialization I am describing. What happens is all too familiar to all of us. A girl travels from the village to the capital city to attend university. She has been raised to understand her world as an integrated whole in which spiritual and material factors interact. Her professors in the big city however encourage her to understand some particular subsystem of knowledge—law, medicine, politics—as fundamentally independent of other systems. So even if she is a Christian she goes back to her village to practice what she has learned and struggles to explain what she now believes to be true to those whose world has not suffered this death of analysis. Something similar happens if she attends a Christian seminary. Here she will learn Greek, Church History and Theology, each with their own rules and authorities. She too will struggle with the elders’ concern over the water spirits.

Now I am not arguing that specialization is a bad thing. Indeed much of the progress in science and technology depends on the freedom to pursue truth which specialization encourages. One can even argue that this reflects God’s original commission to Adam in the garden to “name” creation, that is to distinguish the various elements of creation from each other. But this is just the point that I want to make: naming is part of God’s mission, and we have been appointed to carry it on under his guidance. All the various departments of human knowledge we believe are

¹⁸L. & B., 22.

various aspects of the glory and wonder of the creator. But this is just what is usually denied, or at least overlooked, in the practice of development (even Christian development). This brings me to my second reason for this current situation.

Let me call this second factor methodological naturalism. That is, not only does current educational and scientific practice tend to compartmentalize knowledge, it tends also to “naturalize” it. Even for workers in Christian agencies whose mission may be to “promote human transformation, seek justice, and bear witness to the Kingdom of God” (which is World Vision’s mission statement), neither their development studies nor their theological studies by themselves have given them clear guidance as to what this looks like or how it can be measured. African theologian John Mbiti tells what may well be an autobiographical story of the return of a young man to his home village in Africa after studies in a famous European university. The village turned out in mass to welcome him and killed several goats to celebrate his homecoming. In the midst of the party, and old man loses consciousness and falls over. The people rush over to help him. Suddenly all eyes are on the newly minted doctoral student returning from Europe. He has learned from the best teachers in the best university, what, they ask, will he do? Suddenly, Mbiti says, all the knowledge of Barth and Bultmann seems worthless. What should he do?

Of course you are thinking Mbiti went to the wrong school. If he had come to ATS he would have learned about healing and miracles and the intervention of God’s Spirit. He would have called the elders to prayer. But what if we extend this thought experiment further. What if he later discovered that the man was having an attack of cerebral malaria? What if he learned that malaria had become a serious problem in the village while he had been away? How would this graduate in cooperation with village health workers, develop a community health program that would address this problem? How would this effect his theological reflection? Would he have learned that community health can itself be seen as uniquely related to the Spirit of God, whose special ministry is to restore creation to the wholeness that God intended? This connection would not commonly be made in the school where I teach, not even in the places I have taught in Africa.

Here I hasten to acknowledge that this problem of methodological naturalism is primarily a Western problem, indeed one of the noxious products of the European Enlightenment (among some of its blessings). And in spite of the fact that it is generously exported along with our textbooks and technology, the non-Western world has been resistant to this particular disease. Indeed the current worldwide explosion of Pentecostal

spirituality attests to the continuing belief in the influence of supernatural powers. In fact Philip Jenkins believes: "If there is a single key area of faith and practice that divides Northern and Southern Christians, it is this matter of spiritual forces and their effects on the everyday human world."¹⁹ But when Christians from these Southern regions review and interact with the development literature they frequently find themselves absorbing the naturalistic world view that animates this. An example is the otherwise excellent study by Deborah Ajulu, *Holism in Development*. In a chapter on power she speaks of "power to" and "power over" as discussed in some of the best recent sociological analyses. Then she acknowledges that biblical teaching includes a strong component of powers that include "forces of evil in heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12), and thus comprise a power that is not subject to sociological analysis. Then she goes on to conclude, in terms that many secular development experts (David Korten among them) would approve:

The implications are that those who wish to see justice and power and authority properly exercised, according to the example Jesus gave, especially for rural development, must not think they are dealing only with physical realities. They must contend also with the spiritual ethos of institutions and structures.²⁰

This is true as far as it goes, but many non-Western Christians would go further and insist that spirituality is not simply the inward values-component of development, but that it includes spiritual forces and beings which operate quite independently of such processes. Moreover they would insist that only the personal power of the transcendent and triune God can ultimately be effectual over such powers. The challenge they face is great: How do they bring their radical faith into their development reflection and practice?

But this methodological naturalism offers a further challenge to the newly emerging churches that may be the thorniest issue of all. While many, indeed most, NGOs operating in the Philippines for example would appreciate what has come to be called "faith based" development, they recognized, as we noted, the need to consider the values and spirituality of a people. And in itself we have argued that this is not a bad thing. But

¹⁹*The Next Christendom*, 123.

²⁰She is dependent here on Korten's hero, Walter Wink, who she quotes uncritically, and incorrectly, as espousing a fully biblical world view. Though in her conclusions she goes further than Wink. See *Holism in Development*, 119.

invariably those that speak the loudest of “values” and “spirituality” are also insistent that development should not be tied in any way to what is called “proselytism.” I want to be careful here. There are surely times and situations when development work done in cooperation with people of other faith should be done as an end in itself. There are even appropriate occasions when Christian relief organizations accept US government funding only by agreeing that there be no evangelistic activities involved. Such activities can be valid and appropriate, indeed they are expressions of God’s love and grace even when they are not tied to a presentation of the Gospel.

But ultimately the integration of mission and development must acknowledge the fact that as a sign of kingdom values the processes of development are meant ultimately to glorify God. This is to say they do not have their full meaning outside of this transcendent purpose. The transformation they point to is ultimately found, we believe, only in an encounter with this living God through the good news of Christ embodied in the Gospel account. As the Spirit awakens hearts and minds, and as bodies and communities are renewed, God calls all people to worship him in spirit and truth. To insist on this is not to say merely the practice of theology trumps the practice of development—as a theologian you might expect me to say this. It is to say that God’s presence and purposes trump our own. This is important to stress for at least to reasons.

First, it is a central teaching of Scripture that God does not simply call people to missions activities, but that first and primarily, God is a missionary God. Within the very nature of God there is a loving exchange between the persons of the Trinity and in creation God has created an arena in which those relationships can be reflected. The world exists for this process of reflection. In Christ the process took on a particular shape that Christians believe is definitive for their life and work, indeed for the life and work of all peoples. So missions exists in history because in a certain sense it existed first in God. We love God because he first loved us. I am troubled when too often in our development work we agree to mute our evangelistic mandate. For this call to faith ultimately is not ours, it is God’s—we simply are privileged to be bearers of it. The call to invite people to experience God’s love is part of our core beliefs as Christians.

Secondly, it is this triune and divine context of the world that gives coherence finally to the practice both of mission and of development. This coherence we seek to embody in fragmentary ways in our work—I want to stress this briefly in a minute. But it is only fully grasped, while we are in this world, in the experience of worship. This posture of worship grows out of the Trinitarian life of God even as it rests in that life. It is an activity

motivated by Christ but energized by the Spirit, who prays for us with groanings that cannot be uttered, to the praise and glory of God.

So to disallow Christians from insisting on this end and ground is to ask them not to be what, by God's grace they have become, people made new in the Body of Christ. But it is also to ask their development work to be something other than it is: that is a sign of the renewed Kingdom of God. This divine reality and the practice of mission that it demands, is not something that Christians can put to one side or agree to temporarily keep secret. For it lies at the center and core of the Christian faith and therefore of our Christian identity.

E. Conclusion

In making these points I do not mean to deny that development has its own integrity and or that it must not follow the best practices it can find. In fact because of the graceful purposes of God embedded in creation, people of all faiths or none, are able to discover processes and methods that we treasure and appropriate—the world is better and God is glorified by the faithful work of many of these development agents. Back before the split that took place at the Enlightenment, Christians, learning from Francis Bacon, used to refer to the two books in which God speaks to us. The one book is the special revelation of God in Scripture, where the story of salvation is described and celebrated. The other is the book of nature, where by following the freedom of God's children we can discover slivers of light that reflect something of God's goodness and grace. Perhaps we need to recover this way of listening for God both in Scripture and in the best thinking of development workers.

David Tracy has recently developed the notion of “fragments” to explain what is possible for us to discover of God. Learning from the African American tradition he prefers fragments to the overworked “pluralism” which still assumes a center and a periphery. He finds in the African American heritage, and we might add the developing charismatic churches, the possibility of discovering “the intense presence of infinity in religious forms.”²¹ Fragments have the advantage of embracing the partial and the occasional as well as the diversity of context in which Christianity finds itself. They avoid the modern habit which tried “to deny the singularity of each culture . . . to eliminate those discrete and potentially

²¹Tracy, “African American Thought: The Discovery of Framents” in *Black Faith and Public Talk*, Dwight Hopkins, ed. (Orbis, 1999), 32. Pages in the text.

explosive images that one finds in such works as the slave narratives and in the great songs” (35). Such forms of worship might find their counterparts in practices of development, which empower communities not simply to live and work, but to dance and sing. Fragments from both our worship and our development may spark new visions of the possible. They certainly are more compatible with the growing awareness that development in the new millennium is “more about partnerships and joint problem solving than Post World War II Northern largesse.”²² They may even embody in new forms of art, as Tracy says, “the actuality of the explosive, marginal, liberating fragments of our many heritages” (37).

Mind you this is not an answer to the challenges I outlined; it is merely my hope, and, my prayer.

²²L. & B, 25.

A RESPONSE TO WILLIAM DYRNESS, INTEGRAL MISSION AND DEVELOPMENT: WHERE ARE WE?

Robert Charles Donahue

Samuel Hugh Moffet has observed: “There is nothing quite so crippling to both evangelism and social action as to confuse them in definition or to separate them in practice.”¹ Evangelism is not social action, and social action certainly is not evangelism. Evangelism is narrowly defined and illustrated in the New Testament as both an announcement of God’s everlasting kingdom and an invitation to personally enter His kingdom through faith in Jesus Christ with repentance. Good works flow from this new position and relationship. Christian social actions are the results of evangelism. In turn, the social actions of believers may help to prepare the hearts of unbelievers for the reception of the good news of evangelism. Social action and evangelism should work together, as faith and good works, or word and deed go together.

One of the disturbing realities in many Christian NGO’s today is what has been called the agreement “to mute our evangelistic mandate.”² This agreement to mute the proclamation of the gospel is indeed a fundamental confusion of social actions with evangelism on the one hand, and a repudiation of the core of the gospel on the other. Social actions cannot substitute for evangelism. This growing practice is ironic in a way in that these same NGO’s often are the ones calling for a holistic gospel! Confusion reigns in regard to the essential need for the marriage of evangelism and social action, not their divorce!

¹Samuel Hugh Moffet, “Evangelism: The Leading Partner,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, Third Edition, edited by Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1999), 576.

²William Dyrness, “*Integral Mission and Development: Where Are We?*”: 23.

The nature of the problem that has been identified by Dr. Dyrness is: “the gap between theory and practice is still too large, and indeed may be growing.”³ This leads to two major aspects of the problem: (1) the question of the capacity of Christians to address development issues, and (2) the professionalization “of the NGO sector [which] militates against the holistic claims of the Gospel and the missionary nature of the Church.”⁴ The reasons for the problem are given as: (1) educational specialization, and (2) methodological naturalism.⁵

The question of capacity is very real. My wife, JoAn, and I have experienced this first-hand. We desired to help an individual child—something we were physically and financially able to do—but were prevented by well-meaning “professionals” who worked from a premise of helping not the individual as such, but doing the most good for the most people through allowing only “professionals” to handle the child’s welfare. The question of capacity, however, may be economic for some, but it also entails the attitude of professionalism, as in this case, and for others it might include a lack of exposure or understanding.

If we see the solution to this problem of capacity as training pastors to become “professionals” in the same way many in the NGO workers are now professional, we will have missed the solution altogether and simply compounded the problem by producing more of the same. It seems to me that the solution will lie in the area of equipping pastors and other church leaders to become equippers of members of the Body of Christ generally to do the works of service.

That NGO’s of Christian orientation have proliferated so much may well speak to the failure of the church leaders at the local level to take this matter of equipping fellow believers to do the works of service seriously. Somehow it seems that service has been made to appear complicated. It need not be. While some might be tempted to simply see this proliferation as an expression of the church, it is not. It is rather a para-church expression which has arisen in the absence, often, of social action from the churches. Professionalism in turn has taken control of the situation to such an extent that many on the local level of the churches are intimidated from taking initiative. To intimate that only professionals are somehow qualified to do social action certainly does tend to limit the involvement of the

³Dyrness, 2.

⁴Dyrness, 15

⁵Dyrness,16.

average believer in such action. This does work against a holistic gospel and the missionary nature of the church. Perhaps this situation is aggravated by the educational specialization Dyrness mentions. It would seem that a truly integrated approach to the education of both social action persons and evangelists would not only be a balance but create a working relationship between gospel proclamation and development work. This would tend toward a truly holistic approach.

It might be helpful to identify another aspect of the problem—finances. The power of money from NGO's can have tremendous repercussions. Often the sums of money are greater than anything local churches may have. The money can be a powerful instrument not only for good but for manipulation. If, for instance, money is made available to churches for projects with the stipulation that there be no proclamation of the gospel, then the tendency will be to make no overt mention of the gospel. The temptation to take the money will be great. This is manipulation to mute the gospel.

Many churches seem to be of the opinion that they can do no social actions without the money that comes from the comparatively wealthy NGO's. This, too, is a false impression which works against the very nature of the church. It seems to me that there may well be a tie between the problem of methodological naturalism identified by Dyrness, and the problem of finances generally. The practice of naturalism can cause a business type of outlook on Christian work which may give little place to the spiritual and the supernatural. This naturalistic methodology seems to imply that there are always "natural" answers to problems which enough money and planning can overcome. This, of course, is not true. Social change will take place truly only when there is a religious reality that promotes that change.⁶ For the Christian that reality is faith in Jesus Christ and repentance which brings transformation to the individual and in turn to the society.

⁶William A. Dyrness, *Learning About Theology From The Third World* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1990), 156.

THE GOSPEL AND SYNCRETISM: CONTEXTUALIZING THE GOSPEL IN COLOSSIANS

Dean Flemming

A missionary colleague in the Philippines described a chance encounter he had with a grandmother in a part of the country where the local animistic religion was widely practiced. He noticed a cross hanging around her neck and asked her if she were a Christian. “Yes,” she assured him, “I am a follower of Jesus Christ.” When she discovered that my friend was a Christian missionary, she invited him to visit her humble dwelling. To his surprise, she showed him a traditional spirit house behind her home that was intended to ward off the evil spirits. “If you are a Christian,” he queried, “why do you still keep a spirit house?” Her matter-of-fact reply: “I just want to make sure that all of the bases are covered.”

Syncretism—the mixing of incompatible religious ideas and practices—is a constant threat to the gospel, particularly when converts have recently come out of a pagan religious background. Paul’s letter to the Colossians reflects such a situation. He writes to a young and predominantly Gentile church (cf. 1:21-22, 27; 3:5-7) in a region of Asia where religious pluralism and syncretism were a familiar part of the fabric of life.¹ These believers apparently were under intense pressure to syncretize their new Christian faith by incorporating elements from other traditions and teachings, including their own past religious experience. Presumably, Paul learned from the church’s founder Epaphras that a destructive error had emerged in the Lycus Valley, one that threatened to compromise the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Colossians had received.² Paul’s response is

¹For evidence of the syncretistic character of the religious scene in the region of Phrygia, see especially, Clinton E. Arnold, *The Colossian Syncretism: The Interface between Christianity and Folk Belief at Colossae* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996).

²We cannot be certain whether the error emerged from within the congregation or was imposed from the outside, or even the extent to which it had already been adopted. See Victor Paul Furnish, “Colossians, Epistle to the,” in

a letter which not only confronts the syncretistic teaching, but it positively affirms what is central to the gospel and offers a fresh expression of that gospel for a new life setting. This article will examine how Paul contextualizes the gospel in light of its encounter with a syncretistic context. Paul's brief correspondence with a first century Asian congregation, I propose, has important lessons for the church's theological task today.

The Colossian Context: A Syncretistic "Philosophy"

One of the challenges facing any effort to understand Paul's contextual theologizing in Colossians is the notorious uncertainty over the specific background and nature of the teaching he is countering.³ Scholars have tried to root the opponents' "philosophy" (2:8)—a term that could be used in a fairly broad sense—in some form of early Gnosticism,⁴ in Greek philosophy,⁵ or in Jewish mysticism,⁶ all without full success. Since no

Anchor Bible Dictionary, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1: 1091-92.

³Some scholars, in fact, have questioned whether there was a Colossian "heresy" at all. In an influential essay, Morna D. Hooker argues that Paul is not attacking an actual false teaching that had infiltrated the church but rather is offering a kind of "preventive medicine" against the external pressure to conform to certain pervasive beliefs and practices in the society at large. "Were There False Teachers in Colossae?" in *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, C. F. D. Moule, FS, ed. B. Linders and S. S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1990), pp. 121-36; cf. N. T. Wright, *The Epistles of Paul to the Colossians and to Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 27-28; James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 25-26, 34-35. This argument, however, fails to adequately take into account the specific and unusual nature of Paul's polemical language in 2:8-23, which suggests he is citing specific terminology from his opponents.

⁴E.g., Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, trans. W. R. Poehlmann and R. J. Karris (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), pp. 127-131; G. Bornkamm, "The Heresy of Colossians," in *Conflict at Colossae*, pp. 123-45; Petr Pokorný, *Colossians: A Commentary*, trans. Siegfried S. Schatzmann (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), pp. 117-120, all of whom see the Gnostic element of the Colossian error as part of a syncretistic teaching.

⁵Eduard Schweizer, *The Letter to the Colossians: A Commentary*, (London: SPCK, 1982), pp. 125-134 (neo-Pythagoreanism); R. DeMaris, *The Colossian Controversy* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994) (Middle-Platonism); Troy W. Martin, *By Philosophy*

single religious movement we know of can account for the collection of polemical references we encounter in Colossians 2:8-23, it is better to see the problem Paul speaks to as a kind of syncretistic stew made up of a number of religious influences from first century Asia minor.⁷ This is hardly surprising, given that the cities of the Lycus Valley in Western Asia Minor were intersections of various criss-crossing cultures. By the first century, the indigenous Phrygian culture and religion had become well integrated with Greek and Roman influences, and a significant Jewish minority contributed to the cultural mix.

Clinton E. Arnold sharpens the question by drawing attention to the often underestimated role of folk religious belief for understanding the worldview and teachings that are the backdrop for Paul's theologizing in Colossians.⁸ Popular religion in Asia Minor was highly syncretistic and sprang out of a worldview that was conscious of a host of evil spirits, capricious gods and goddesses, and astral powers that formed ever-present

and Empty Deceit: Colossians as a Response to a Cynic Critique (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) (Cynic Philosophy).

⁶E.g., Fred O. Francis, "Humility and Angelic Worship in Col 2:18," in *Conflict at Colossae*, pp. 197-207; Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon* (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), pp. xxxviii, 141-45; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 22-26. For brief but helpful summaries of the various possibilities, see O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, pp. xxx-xxxviii; John M. G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 39-48.

⁷James D. G. Dunn has argued that the Colossian "philosophy" was not syncretistic, but was rather a Jewish "apology" that promoted the distinctive religious practices of the Jews (*Colossians*, pp. 29-35); cf. idem, "The Colossian Philosophy: A Confident Jewish Apologia," *Biblica* 76 (1995): 153-81; Wright, *Colossians*, pp. 24-30; David E. Garland, *Colossians/Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), pp. 26-32. This reading of the evidence, however, seems to artificially impose on Colossians the "new perspective" on Paul, which maintains that Paul's critique of Judaism was centered on certain boundary-defining practices such as circumcision, food laws and Sabbath observance. The lack of a polemic against law observance such as we find in Galatians (the word "law" does not appear in Colossians) and the virtual absence of Old Testament citations makes this highly unlikely. Furthermore, it fails to account for the extensive polemic against the "philosophy's" deference to the cosmic powers.

⁸Arnold, *Syncretism*. For a more popular summary of his position, see Arnold, *Powers of Darkness: Principalities and Powers in Paul's Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), pp. 138-47.

threats to daily life.⁹ Fear over the onslaught of the powers caused people to try various means of counteracting them, including “magical” practices such as calling on divine intermediaries for protection, ritual acts of power, and ecstatic forms of worship.¹⁰ Arnold thinks that it is against this background that we may best be able to understand a number of the features of the Colossian “philosophy,” including the difficult phrase, “the worship of angels” (2:18), which suggests the veneration of angels by invoking them for protection against the hostile spirits.¹¹ Whether or not we accept Arnold’s whole picture of the false teaching Paul targets in Colossae, he seems to be correct in seeing it as a thoroughly syncretistic melange that drew heavily from the worldview and practices of the pluralistic environment in the region and especially emphasized the need to come to grips with the powerful heavenly forces that ruled the cosmos.

Unfortunately, the limited and often elusive nature of Paul’s references to the Colossian syncretism make efforts to be more specific in describing its origin and character tentative at best.¹² We can therefore only suggest a number of features which may have been included in the opponents’ hybrid version of Christianity: (1) elements of popular Phrygian folk religion, with its fear of evil spiritual powers (1:16, 2:10, 15), and practices such as invoking angels (2:18), observing taboos (2:21), and rigid asceticism (2:23) as means of gaining protection from unseen forces; (2) a Jewish orientation toward legal ordinances (2:21), regulations concerning eating and drinking (2:16), and ritual observance of festivals and special days, including the Sabbath (2:16); (3) ecstatic visionary experiences, possibly

⁹Arnold, *Syncretism*, p. 229.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 234-44.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 8-102, 310-11. The phrase “the worship of angels” (2:18) has been highly controversial, and there is still no consensus among scholars as to its precise meaning. Those who see the primary background for the Colossian error in Jewish mysticism generally take it not as an objective genitive, i.e., worship directed to angels, but as a subjective genitive, “the angels’ worship,” signifying the mystical experience of joining with the angels in worship around the heavenly throne of God. See Francis, “Humility and Angelic Worship”; Dunn, *Colossians*, pp. 179-182. For a critique of this position, see Arnold, *Syncretism*, pp. 90-95.

¹²See the helpful but somewhat overly skeptical comments about the possibility of reconstructing the Colossian error by John M. G. Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon*, pp. 48-54. As always, we must be cautious about “mirror reading,” i.e., using the text of Colossians to reflect a reconstruction of situations behind it which are not actually mentioned.

connected with ritual initiation from the realm of the pagan mystery cults (2:18);¹³ (4) a devaluing of the role of Christ, who may have been seen as an intermediary spiritual being and therefore unable to offer full deliverance from the fearsome forces that threatened peoples' daily lives.¹⁴ In addition, Paul's frequent and rather polemical references to "wisdom," "knowledge," "understanding," and "fullness" in the letter may suggest that the false teachers saw their "philosophy" as a means of gaining access to a fuller knowledge of God than is available in the gospel they received from Epaphras.¹⁵ Sharply put, this teaching represented an "over-contextualization" of the Christian gospel in relation to the local religious surroundings and worldview, one that was willing to embrace elements from both Jewish and pagan thought and religious practice.

In particular, the Colossian syncretism held that trusting Christ alone was not enough to deal with the vise-grip that the spiritual powers held on people. The gospel of Christ needed to be supplemented with additional "wisdom" (2:23) and with rituals and ascetic practices in order to help people survive in a world dominated by forces beyond their control. In effect, the rival teachers were trying to "cover all the bases" by paying homage to both Christ and the powers. No doubt, the strongly syncretistic nature of popular religion in the Lycus Valley made it an approach that would have seemed quite natural and appealing for the Colossian converts. For Paul, however, such a message poses a grave threat to the life of the community. On the one hand, it inflates the control of the supernatural

¹³The interpretation of the difficult phrase "entering the things he has seen" (*ha beoraken embateuōn*, 2:18) as being derived from technical language for the initiates' entry into the holy chamber, resulting in their receiving secret knowledge and a climactic vision, was argued early in the twentieth century by William M. Ramsay, "The Mysteries in their Relation to St. Paul," *Contemporary Review* 104 (1913): 198-209, and Martin Dibelius, "The Isis Initiation in Apuleius and Related Initiatory Rites," in *Conflict at Colossae*, ed. F. O. Francis and W. A. Meeks (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1973), pp. 61-121, who cites inscriptional data from the sanctuary of Apollo at Claros; cf. Lohse, *Colossians*, pp. 119-120; and Arnold, *Syncretism*, pp. 104-157. This cultic background seems preferable to the more general sense of the soul's journey to heaven from earth advocated by Fred O. Francis, "The Background of EMBATEUEIN (Col 2:18) in Legal Papyri and oracle Inscriptions," in *Conflict at Colossae* ed. F. O. Francis and W. A. Meeks (Missoula: Scholars, 1973), pp. 197-207. In any case, the errorists likely claimed superior enlightenment and power as a result of their mystical spiritual experiences.

¹⁴Arnold, *Syncretism*, p. 311.

¹⁵Furnish, "Colossians," p. 1092.

powers over Christians. On the other, it drastically diminishes Christ's lordship over the cosmos and the effect of the salvation he offers to the church.

Paul's Contextualized Gospel in Colossians

Paul responds to the threat of this "supplemental" Christianity both as a missional theologian and as a pastor who is deeply concerned for converts still struggling to fully make the shift from their old patterns of thinking and acting. The distinctive situation in Colossae calls for a new "translation" of the gospel into language and theological categories that address the vital issues at hand. Not only must Paul counteract the syncretistic tendencies of the false teaching, but he must also transform some of the basic worldview assumptions, beliefs, and behavior patterns of the Colossian Christians.¹⁶ How does he accomplish this?

Part of Paul's strategy in Colossians is to expose the rival teaching for just what he believes it is—a "human tradition" that threatened to kidnap the Colossians through its "empty deception" (2:8). This is imperative, since Paul thinks the very boundaries of the Christian community are at stake. Adopting the false teaching and its associated practices means living as though one is still a part of the unbelieving world (2:20).¹⁷ Paul's direct assault on the "philosophy" is mainly confined to 2:8-23. In this section, he apparently takes up a series of catchwords from the lips of his opponents, which he then turns against them in boomerang fashion.¹⁸ These references serve as warnings to the Colossians against getting caught up in specific practices that are incompatible with the Christ-centered message they have received (2:6-7).

Paul's primary response to the syncretistic error in Colossians, however, is not to refute its features point by point. Instead, he challenges

¹⁶See *Ibid.*, p. 245.

¹⁷Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians* (Collegeville, MN: Glazier/Liturgical Press, 2000), pp. 12, 106.

¹⁸E.g., "philosophy," 2:8; "the elemental spirits of the universe" 2:8, 20; "insisting on self-abasement" and "the worship of angels," "dwelling on visions," 2:18, "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch," 2:21; "wisdom," "self-imposed piety," "humility," and "severe treatment of the body" 2:23. See O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, p. xxxii. Any identification of the language of the false teachers, however, must remain tentative, since it is not always clear if Paul is quoting or simply describing his perceptions of the error.

its misunderstandings by focusing positively on the meaning of the gospel. The paramount danger of the false teaching for the Colossians is its diminishing of the lordship of Jesus Christ, and it is on this bedrock concern that his exposition of the gospel in the letter concentrates. The Colossian syncretism gives Paul the occasion to reflect theologically on the supremacy of Christ and the sufficiency of his salvation in a way that becomes a targeted word for the church. Several closely-related themes emerge in this reframing of the Christian message, pertaining to the gospel, the all-encompassing role of Christ, the character of the Colossians' salvation, and the Christian lifestyle.

The Truth of the Gospel

At the letter's outset, Paul reminds the Colossians that their hope is in "the word of the truth, the gospel" (1:5). This phrase almost certainly implies a contrast with the rival teaching that, if left unchecked, would undermine the authentic gospel of Christ. In the same spirit, Paul urges the new converts to "continue securely established and steadfast in the faith," not shifting from the hope of the gospel which they had heard (1:23). Yet, the gospel in Colossians is more than simply a truth to be believed. Unlike the restrictive human traditions of the "philosophy," it is a dynamic agent of God's transforming grace with a universal scope (1:5-6, 23).

Paul enlists a variety of terms to describe the gospel in Colossians, including "the word" (4:3), "the word of God" (4:3) and "of Christ" (3:16), "the faith" (1:23; 2:7), and "the truth" (1:5), all of which recall for his readers the content of the genuine message they have received. Especially noteworthy is Paul's identification of the gospel as the "mystery of Christ" (4:3; cf. 2:2)—a mystery that was formerly hidden but now has been revealed to the saints (1:26). Paul's understanding of "mystery" (*mysterion*) is rooted in Old Testament and apocalyptic Judaism, not in the Greek mystery religions of the day. Nevertheless, Arnold plausibly suggests that some of the Colossian Gentile believers may have had a background in the mysteries that were related to local deities. It is also conceivable that the "philosophy" of the opponents itself included elements of mystery belief and practice; the rival teachers may have even used the term "mystery."¹⁹ Arnold concludes that "given the nature of the situation at Colossae and the background of the Gentile readers, it is surprising that Paul does not avoid using the term altogether."²⁰ Yet Paul is willing to take the risk of

¹⁹Arnold, *Syncretism*, p. 272.

²⁰Ibid.

seizing a term with strong local religious overtones in order to reinterpret its meaning to refer not only to God's eschatological plan of salvation, but to Christ himself. The content of God's mystery which has been made known among the Gentiles is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (1:27). As John Barclay observes, it seems to be no accident that Colossians portrays Christ as "mystery," since this term represented the supreme commodity offered both by Jewish apocalyptic theology and by Graeco-Roman mystery cults.²¹ The Colossians need look for no other "mystery," because according to God's eternal purpose they have received *the* mystery—Christ—who now indwells their lives and embodies their hope for the future. What is more, they should abandon the search for any higher form of spiritual truth, since "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" are hidden in Christ, the mystery of God (2:2-3).

The Supremacy of Christ

The most glaring flaw of the Colossian "philosophy" from Paul's perspective was that it subverted the supremacy of Christ. That is not to say it necessarily denied Christ and his saving work. But it apparently "down-sized" his role in regard to creation and questioned his ability to fully protect believers from the influence of the unseen powers. Christ, in this shrunken state, became a part of the cosmos, not lord over it. As a result, Paul's theologizing in Colossians exalts Jesus Christ as unrivaled Lord of everything and proclaims him as the sole and sufficient mediator of salvation between God and his people.

Paul affirms the supremacy of Christ above all in the magnificent christological "hymn"²² of 1:15-20. This passage is not polemical as such; however, it speaks forcefully to the concerns of the context and lays a foundation for Paul's christological response to the Colossian syncretism in

²¹Barclay, *Colossians and Philemon*, p. 79.

²²While the majority of scholars take Col 1:15-20 as a pre-Pauline hymn which came out of early Christian worship and was adapted to the context by the author of the letter, it is not inconceivable that it was composed by Paul himself. So, e.g., O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, pp. 40-42; N. T. Wright, "Poetry and Theology in Colossians 1.15-20," *NTS* 36 (1990): 444-468; Larry R. Helyer, "Colossian 1:15-20: Pre-Pauline or Pauline?" *JETS* 26 (1983): 167-79. For overviews of the issues and the abundant research on the questions of the background, literary structure and authorship of Col 1:15-20, see especially O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, pp. 31-42 and Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, pp. 227-242. In any case, our main concern is with present form of the hymn and its theological function in the letter.

2:8-23.²³ Drawing on themes from the Old Testament and the Wisdom tradition of Hellenistic Judaism,²⁴ the hymn praises Christ as sovereign Lord of both creation (1:15-18a) and redemption (18b-20).

The hymn extols Christ's cosmic dominion in a variety of ways. He is the pre-existent "image of the invisible God," as well as the "firstborn of all creation" (v. 15), a phrase which affirms both his priority to and his sovereignty over the whole universe. In fact, he himself is the creator of all things (v. 16a)—the mediator ("through him"), the goal ("for him" v. 16b), and the sustainer of the whole created order (v. 17b). He has no rivals. The hymn gives special emphasis to Christ's pre-eminence over the cosmic powers. His lordship over "all things," includes things in heaven and things invisible, which are enumerated as "thrones," "dominions," "rulers" and "powers" (v. 16: cf. 2:10). Peter T. O'Brien is quite right that within the context of the letter "no doubt it is the hostile rather than the friendly powers Paul has particularly in view."²⁵ Given the fear and regard Paul's readers apparently held for the cosmic forces and the concern of the rival teaching to appease them, it is not surprising that Paul deflates the power of the powers by insisting they are a part of the order that was created and

²³Walter J. Hollenweger, building on the thesis of Ernst Käsemann ("A Primitive Christian Baptismal Liturgy," in *Essays on New Testament Themes* [London: SCM Press, 1964], pp. 149-168), argues that the Colossian hymn itself in its original form reflected a kind of "New Age" syncretism characterized by mythical poetic language about Christ overcoming the powers. Hollenweger thinks that Paul, while accepting the syncretism of the Colossians, has refocused it by anchoring it in the historical realities of the cross and the church (1:18, 20, 22). This strategy is commended as an example of "theologically responsible syncretism" on the part of Paul ("A Plea for a Theologically Responsible Syncretism," *Missionalia* 25 [1997]: 12-15). I would question not only the attempt to assign different "theologies" to the "Colossian" and the "Pauline" parts of the hymn, but also Hollenweger's basic point that the hymn as it appears in Colossians is the product of syncretism—"theologically-responsible," or otherwise. Part of the problem seems to be terminological, and some of what Hollenweger would label as syncretism, I would term contextualization.

²⁴That the portrayal of Christ in Col 1:15-20 echoes descriptions of divine Wisdom in Jewish Wisdom teaching has become a matter of wide consensus. See, e.g., A. J. M. Wedderburn, "The Theology of Colossians," in A. T. Lincoln and A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 18-19.

²⁵O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, p. 46; cf. Arnold, *Syncretism*, p. 255.

is sustained through Christ and are thereby subject to his sovereign rule.²⁶ The Colossians need a redefined cosmology and a transformed worldview.

Paul goes on to stress that Christ is supreme not only over creation, but also the *new* creation; he is the head of his body, the church (v. 18a). Whereas in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and Romans 12:4-5 the body metaphor primarily has to do with the interrelationship between the members of the community as the body of Christ, in Colossians the accent is on the relationship of Christ, the head of the body, to his church. This shift in focus to Christ's lordship over the universal church not only demonstrates the flexibility of the "body" image, but it is well-fitted to a context where the sufficiency of Christ was in question. When one is a part of the body of which Christ is head, there is no need to fear or try to manipulate any other spiritual beings.²⁷

Furthermore, Christ is the one through whom God has reconciled all things, earthly or heavenly, to himself (v. 20). Christ's reconciling work is universal in its scope and encircles not only the church, but the heavenly powers that oppose it, as well. In the latter case, however, reconciliation takes the form of "pacifying" (v. 20c) or subjecting all the malignant forces under the rule of Christ.²⁸ This cosmic reconciliation has already been set into motion (cf. 2:15), but in the wider horizon of Paul's thought, it anticipates a final restoration of harmony when everything "in heaven and on earth and under the earth" will unite to acknowledge Christ as Lord (Phil. 2:10). The powers are not only subdued and defeated; they are re-enlisted in the original creative purpose of giving praise to God.²⁹ God's reconciling work in Christ is thus enacted on a broader cosmic stage in

²⁶Arnold, *Syncretism*, p. 258.

²⁷P. J. Achtemeier, J. B. Green, and M. M. Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 410; O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, pp. 49-50. It is therefore unnecessary to make the common assumption that the different usage of the body metaphor in the ecclesiology of Colossians from that of Paul's undisputed letters constitutes evidence of a deutero-Pauline author. Contra Lohse, *Colossians*, pp. 55, 179; Furnish, "Colossians," p. 1093.

²⁸See Dunn, *Colossians*, pp. 102-103; O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, pp. 56-57; Bruce, *Epistles to the Colossians*, pp. 75-76. This means that Col 1:20 cannot be interpreted to support universalism, in which Christ will redeem all persons and hostile powers in the universe in the end.

²⁹John H. Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 61.

Colossians than in Romans (5:10-11) or 2 Corinthians (5:18-20), where Paul focuses on the reconciliation of the Christian community. In the present context, the hymn's all-embracing vision of Christ's victory resounds as a word of assurance to the Colossians that the subjugated powers "cannot finally harm the person who is in Christ, and their ultimate overthrow in the future is assured."³⁰

Significantly, the hymn anchors the cosmic Christology and redemption it acclaims in the center of the gospel, Christ crucified and risen from the dead. He is pre-eminent over all things because he is the "firstborn from the dead" (v. 18b), and his universal reconciliation is put into effect through "the blood of his cross" (v. 20). Colossians 1:15-20 sings the story of Christ as pre-existent creator, as the crucified and risen redeemer, and as the exalted Lord of the universe. He is Lord over the total history of God's salvation.³¹

Paul gives this exalted and unrivaled picture of Christ in 1:15-20 concrete application to the needs of the congregation in the main polemical section of the letter in chapter 2.³² Picking up language from verse 19 of the hymn, he affirms that in Christ "all the *fullness* of deity dwells bodily" (2:9). Has Paul co-opted the key term "fullness" (*pleroma*) from the rival philosophy and infused with new christological content?³³ Or has Paul himself drawn this language from the Old Testament to positively assert that the completeness of God's nature and power has taken up residence in Christ?³⁴ The answer is not entirely clear. In either case, Paul counters a heresy that devalues the role and power of Christ with the assurance that

³⁰O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, p. 56.

³¹Robert W. Wall, *Colossians and Philemon* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 26.

³²For the connection between the Christ hymn of 1:15-20 and Paul's specific arguments against the false teachings in chapter 2, see Stephen E. Fowl, *The Story of Christ in the Ethics of Paul* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 131-154.

³³So e.g., O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, pp. xxxii, 52, 113; Fowl, *Story of Christ*, pp. 128-29; Lohse *Colossians*, p. 100. Given the unusual usage of *pleroma* in Colossians, this is a distinct possibility. In any case, there is a widespread agreement that *pleroma* was not used either by Paul or his rivals in the technical sense of second century Valentinian Gnosticism as the fullness of heavenly emanations that came forth from God.

³⁴So Arnold, *Syncretism*, pp. 262-264; 277; cf. Pokorny, *Colossians*, p. 121, n. 71; Dunn, *Colossians*, pp. 100-101.

Christ is the full embodiment of all that God is and does. The Colossians have no cause to pay homage to any lesser supernatural beings or angel-intermediaries.³⁵ He is not just one among the many competing gods or powers. Christ reigns supreme over every ruler and authority (2:10).

In 2:15 Paul profoundly contextualizes the death of Christ, bringing his theological argument in 2:8-15 to a fitting climax. Three vivid metaphors are drafted from the Greco-Roman world in order to paint in bold colors God's victory in Christ over the dominions of darkness. In the cross of Christ, God "disarmed" the rulers and authorities, stripping them of their power; he "publicly exposed" them as being shamefully weak and worthless; and he led them in triumphal procession, as a victorious Roman general paraded his vanquished enemies through the city in his train for all to behold.³⁶ Due to the needs of the situation, the "powers" that Christ has defeated in Colossians are not explicitly those of sin, death, and the law, as we find elsewhere in Paul's writings (e.g., 1 Cor 15:54-57; cf. Rom 6-8). Here it is the forces that ruled the cosmos that are conquered by the cross. The Colossians no longer need be tempted to appease the powers or to live in fear of forces that have already been broken. Only a cosmic Christology could adequately address the new concerns raised by the Colossian syncretism.

The Present Experience of Salvation

The Colossian "philosophy's" inadequate view of the role of Christ meant that it also lacked a proper understanding of the salvation made available in him. Unlike the situation Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians, where he encounters Christians who claimed too much for their present salvation, defenders of the new teaching in Colossae claimed too little. In their thinking, redemption in Christ needed to be augmented with other means—ascetic and ritual practices, angel worship, legal regulations,

³⁵Wright, *Colossians*, p. 103.

³⁶Scott Hafemann has demonstrated convincingly that the Roman triumphal procession normally ended in the prisoners of war being executed, meaning that the verb *thriambeuein* would mean "to be led to one's death in the ceremony of the triumphal procession as a display of the victor's glory." See Hafemann, *Suffering and the Spirit: An Exegetical Study of II Co. 2:14-3:3 within the Context of the Corinthian Correspondence*, WUNT 2.19 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986), pp. 31-33, here p. 33. The metaphor in Colossians 2:15 would then spell the ultimate death knell to the powers.

visionary experiences—in order to be truly effective. Paul’s theological response is that Christ is not only supreme; he is also wholly sufficient for the Colossians’ present experience of salvation; nothing else is required.

In Colossians, Paul spotlights the completeness of the reconciliation believers have received from Christ. As in Romans, Colossians affirms that believers participate in the saving events of Christ’s death and resurrection, but with a striking difference. Whereas Romans 6:4-8 and 8:11 state that Christians have died with Christ, but their resurrection with him remains in the future (but see Rom 6:4b), Colossians declares that they have not only died (3:3) and have been buried with him in baptism (2:12), but they have *already* been raised with him to a new heavenly life (2:12-13; 3:1). In other words, Paul has shifted the weight of the tension between the salvation already realized and the salvation not yet obtained to the side of the present experience of God’s empowering and transforming grace. This is a daring move and no doubt capable of being misunderstood. Nevertheless, it is precisely what the Colossians needed to hear. By participating with Christ in his resurrection they share in the fullness of resurrection life, and in particular in his deliverance from the tyranny of the unseen powers.

Paul’s introduction of spatial categories in Colossians 3:1-4 (“things above” 3:1, 2) rather than temporal ones (“things to come”) likewise risks being misconstrued as a sell-out to a Greek dualism in which Christians must escape their earthly bodily existence for a heavenly, spiritual one. Once again, however, this familiar language speaks directly to the concerns of the Colossians. As Andrew T. Lincoln insists:

The heavenly realm centres around the one with whom they have been raised and since he is in the position of authority at God’s right hand, nothing can prevent access to this realm and God’s presence and there can be no basic insecurity about the salvation they have in him and its final outcome.³⁷

Their lives are now “hidden with Christ in God” (3:3) in a place of security and safety, protected from any menacing forces.

³⁷Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul’s Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 125. Furthermore, for Paul, unlike Greek thought, the world above has a future eschatological dimension. His use of spatial categories in Colossians is therefore quite consistent with the thought of his undisputed letters (cf. Gal. 4:26; Phil. 3:14, 20). See Garland, *Colossians*, p. 214; Arnold, *Syncretism*, pp. 305-306.

The theme of the present appropriation of salvation in Christ runs throughout the letter like a scarlet thread, particularly in the heart of Paul's polemic against the syncretistic error in 2:8-15. The section is peppered with Paul's characteristic "in Christ" and "with Christ" terminology,³⁸ highlighting the church's ongoing participation in Christ and the fruits of his salvation. This *participatory* Christology is no less significant than Paul's *cosmic* Christology in Colossians.³⁹ In 2:9-10 he promptly applies the magnificent affirmation that the entirety of the divine "fullness" dwells bodily in Christ to the situation of the church: "and you have come to fullness in him." As a result, "The fullness of God—his power and grace—are bestowed on believers by virtue of their incorporation into Christ."⁴⁰ This is Paul's counterpunch to the opponents' apparent suggestions that fullness of salvation could not be secured by Christ or Christ alone. The immediate corollary of the believers' participation in Christ's fullness is that they also share in his "headship," particularly his ongoing authority over the ruling cosmic powers (v. 10b; cf. 1:18; 2:19).

In 2:11-15, Paul marshals a medley of images to interpret Christ's atoning death and resurrection and their present meaning for believers who are in him, some of which we have already noted. He describes in 2:11 the Colossians' union with Christ as a "spiritual circumcision" (literally, "a circumcision not made with hands"). Although the language of verse 11 is difficult to decipher, this seems to be a reference to the inward heart circumcision (cf. Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; Ezek 44:7) that is effected by Christ ("the circumcision of Christ") in his death and resurrection and actualized in the believer's union with him [in baptism].⁴¹ While it is possible that the syncretists promoted circumcision among the Colossian

³⁸Note the "in him" references in 2:10, 11, 12 (and possibly 2:15) and the "with him" compound verbs in 2:12-13.

³⁹See Wall, *Colossians and Philemon*, p.26.

⁴⁰Arnold, *Syncretism*, p. 295.

⁴¹Bruce, *Epistles to the Colossians*, p. 104 Pokorny, *Colossians*, pp. 124-5. The alternative interpretation is to take the phrase "the body of flesh" as a reference to Christ's body and "the circumcision of Christ" as an unusual metaphor for Christ's own death ("circumcision") on the cross. So Dunn, *Colossians*, pp. 157-58; O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, pp. 116-17; Barth and Blanke, *Colossians*, pp. 364-5.

Gentiles as a rite of entry into the group,⁴² the fact that Paul does not directly condemn the practice as he does in Galatians makes this less than certain. Even if they did not, the Jewish input into the Colossian “philosophy” and Paul’s desire to explain metaphorically the fullness of the redemption the Colossians have already received would have made this appropriate language. Incorporation into Christ effects a radical inward purification involving the stripping off of the old sinful self, in contrast to the outward physical circumcision of Judaism.⁴³

Another colorful metaphor from the financial world of the day expresses the meaning of the Christ event in 2:14. The “certificate of indebtedness” (*cheirographon*)—a kind of commercial bond or IOU—incurred by their transgressions has been publicly displayed as canceled, through God’s “nailing it to the cross.” The occurrence of the term “legal demands” (*dogmata*) in the same verse suggests that Paul may have specifically had in mind the kind of ascetic and ritual requirements that the opponents were trying to impose upon the Colossian Christians (2:16, 20).⁴⁴ The cross

⁴²So, e.g., Dunn, *Colossians*, pp. 155-56; Lohse, *Colossians*, pp. 101-102; A. J. M. Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection: Studies in Pauline Theology against Its Graeco-Roman Background* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1987), p. 83.

⁴³Margaret Y. MacDonald suggests that circumcision in 2:11-13 could have been applied metaphorically to various rites promoted by the false teachers (2:16-23), which stand in contrast to the ritual of baptism (*Colossians and Ephesians*, pp. 107-08; 125). Accordingly, “[a]n appeal to baptism in 2:11-13 serves the author well in the attempt to rebuke the repetitive rituals and practices of the opponents because it instills a sense of finality and completion among the recipients” (p. 106). MacDonald is probably correct that Colossians promotes baptism as an alternative to the praxis of the “philosophy,” given the significance of outward ritual and ascetic practices for the false teachers. I have less sympathy, however, for MacDonald’s argument that competing visions of baptism and the relationship between the rites being promoted in Colossae and baptism were central to the conflict between Paul and the Colossian syncretists (pp. 13, 107). From Paul’s perspective, the heart of the problem is Christology, not ritual.

⁴⁴So Pokorny, *Colossians*, pp. 138, 139; Ralph P. Martin, *Colossians* (London: Oliphants, 1974), p. 84; Arnold, *Syncretism*, p. 293. Alternatively, *dogmata* could refer more generally to the regulations of the Jewish Torah, which serve to condemn those who fail to keep them. So, e.g., Garland, *Colossians/Philemon*, pp. 151-152; Wright, *Colossians*, pp. 111-113. In light of Paul’s references to “submitting to regulations” (*dogmatizēin*) in 2:20, as well as the phrase “human commands and teachings” in 2:22, it seems more likely that Paul has in mind special human requirements.

of Christ has liberated them from the condemnation associated with such external and legalistic prescriptions.

Paul's portrayal of the present reality of redemption in Christ also addresses the Colossians' concerns about the hostile powers. At the conclusion of Paul's opening prayer for the Colossian church (1:12-14), he assures them that they have not only been rescued from the dominion of darkness, but they have been transferred into the kingdom of God's Son (v. 13). Here Paul draws upon Exodus language from the Old Testament ("rescue" v. 13; "redemption" v. 14) to describe their present deliverance from bondage to the evil domain over which the powers rule (cf. Eph. 6:12). A stalwart strain of realized eschatology runs through 1:12-14, as well. Believers in Christ even now share in the end-time inheritance of the saints (v. 12). They have already been uprooted from the old realm and transported into the new kingdom (v. 13). Whereas elsewhere in the Pauline corpus believers' full participation in the kingdom of God usually has a decidedly future cast (1 Cor 6:9-10; 15:50; Gal 5:21; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5; 2 Tim 4:1), here the emphasis is on their present share in the blessings and the resources of the kingdom to come.⁴⁵ What this means practically for the Colossians, F. F. Bruce explains, is that "no longer was there any need for them to live in fear of those forces which were believed to control the destinies of men and women: their transference to the realm of light had been accomplished once for all."⁴⁶ Later in a polemical context, Paul reminds the Colossians that they have died to the "elemental spirits of the universe" (*stoicheia tou kosmon*), a term which, in light of the Colossian "philosophy," probably signifies the astral and cosmic powers that were thought to hold a sinister influence over the daily lives of human beings.⁴⁷

This does not exhaust the present benefits of God's transforming grace. Believers have appropriated the reconciling work of Christ on the cross lauded in the Christ hymn (1:20-22). Christ's death has brought them forgiveness of sins (1:14, 2:13; 3:13), an aspect of salvation that receives

⁴⁵See Dunn, *Colossians*, pp. 77-78; Arnold, *Syncretism*, p. 289.

⁴⁶Bruce, *Epistles to the Colossians*, pp. 51-52.

⁴⁷See Lohse, *Colossians*, pp. 96-99; Arnold, *Syncretism*, pp. 158-194; Garland, *Colossians/Philemon*, pp. 159-163. For a discussion of the various possibilities for understanding the *stoicheia* in Paul, see Daniel G. Reid, "Elements/Elemental Spirits of the World," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, D. G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), pp. 229-233.

special attention in the letter.⁴⁸ They have already stripped off the old self and put on the new self that is now being transformed into the Creator's image (3:9-10). Their lives are currently indwelt by the presence of Christ (1:27). This accent on the indwelling of Christ rather than the indwelling Spirit (as e.g., Rom 8:9-11) fits the letter context. Paul apparently felt that Christology offered a stronger defense against the particular Colossian menace than did pneumatology.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the community is strengthened with the enabling and overcoming power of God (1:11, 2:10; cf. 1:29). Paul's prayer for the Colossians in 1:11 conspicuously piles up the language of "power." The Colossians need divine strengthening not only for fruitful Christian living and service (v. 10), but also for endurance in the face of all opposition (v. 11b), including "the pressure of evil forces in the Lycus valley that would lead them astray as well as make them dispirited."⁵⁰

Given this pervasive emphasis on the *now* of salvation in Christ in Colossians, we might be tempted to think that the contextualizing of the gospel in Colossians has spun out of control—that the Pauline tension between the "already" and the "not yet" has collapsed and the future has been swallowed up by the present. This is not the case, however. For all of its emphasis on the Christian's present experience of resurrection life, Colossians retains a firm expectation of the future hope. When Christ returns, Christians "will be revealed with him in glory" (3:4; cf. 1:5, 22, 27, 28, 3:6, 24). Christ's victory over the powers is decisive (2:15), but it has yet to be consummated.

The Transformed Life

The context-sensitive translation of the gospel in Colossians would be incomplete without Paul's unfolding its meaning for Christian discipleship and the formation of the community. Beginning with chapter three, Paul shifts his main focus to the practical holiness that is demanded by the

⁴⁸David M. Hay, *Colossians*, (Nashville, Abingdon, 2000), p. 98 may be correct that Paul's emphasis on the forgiveness of sins in Colossians "suggests that the Colossian philosophy induced great fear that Jesus had not brought full forgiveness."

⁴⁹Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA, 1994), p. 637; Bruce, *Epistles to the Colossians*, p. 28. There is only one explicit reference to the Holy Spirit in the letter (1:8).

⁵⁰O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, p. 24.

gospel. The ethical teaching in Colossians reveals a profound interaction between the constant gospel and the contingent situation he is addressing.

In the first place, Paul grounds the “imperative” of living in a way that is worthy of the Lord (1:10) in the “indicative” of God’s gracious and saving action in Christ. As they “received Christ Jesus the Lord,” they are now to “walk” in him (2:6). Since they have been reconciled to Christ, they must continue on in holy living or else risk falling back into their old evil way of life (1:21-23). In Colossians, as elsewhere in Paul’s letters, theology and ethics are interwoven. Nowhere is this more apparent than in 3:1-4, which provides a christological foundation for Paul’s instruction on living as a transformed community in 3:1-4:2.⁵¹ Paul calls the Colossians to a new moral vision, one that is determined by their participation with the triumphant, exalted Lord and their experience of dying and being raised with him (vv. 1, 3). Consequently, they are to seek the “things that are above” and exchange what is earthly for what is heavenly (vv. 1, 2, 5). This entails a complete reorientation of their existence, a radically different way of viewing the world. They must now live by the norms and values of God’s future heavenly kingdom, not those of the world (cf. 2:20). The saving story of Christ, his death, resurrection, exaltation, and return (v. 4), thus becomes fundamental not only for their redemption, but also for holy living.

Paul adapts the concrete instructions for Christian living that follow to his cultural setting and in the process employs a number of standard forms from the moral teaching of the day. These include traditional motifs (“put off/put on”), vice and virtue lists, and so-called “household codes.”⁵² Yet he recasts each of them christologically, giving them a distinctively Christian basis and motivation. The list of vices to avoid (3:5-9) concludes with the motif of inward moral transformation into the divine image and the confession that “Christ is all in all” (3:9-11). The ensuing code of virtues (3:12-17) calls believers to forgive one another on the basis of their experience of Christ’s forgiving grace (v. 13) and then grounds community ethics in the ruling peace and the indwelling word of Christ (vv. 15-16). The list of virtues reaches a pinnacle in verse 17, where the church is urged to do “all things” under the lordship of Christ.

⁵¹Paul refers to “Christ” four times in 3:1-4, in each case preceded by an article. Robert Wall, *Colossians and Philemon*, p. 132, notes that “this grammatical strategy is quite unusual and may well stress the decisive importance of Christ for what follows.”

⁵²Dunn, *Colossians*, pp. 199-200.

Paul's use of the Greco-Roman ethical convention of the "household code" (3:18-4:1) that fosters appropriate behavior for various members of the household, reflects a sensitivity to broader cultural concerns for order in family and social relationships.⁵³ It is a form of instruction that would have sounded quite familiar to his Hellenistic readers, and the ethic it promotes shares much in common with contemporary standards of social behavior. But although there is overlap with conventional Greco-Roman morality, there is also an internal difference. When Paul adds a phrase such as "in the Lord" (3:18, 20) to his instructions to wives or children, or when he tells slaves that by their working for their earthly masters they are in reality serving their heavenly Lord (3:23), this is no mere attempt to coat a pagan institution with a Christian veneer. It transforms mundane household relationships, giving them an entirely new orientation; the way Christians behave toward others is an outworking of Christ's lordship over the community (3:17).⁵⁴ The claim that "Christ is all in all" (3:11) means that every household role, every social condition, every cultural situation becomes an expression of allegiance to Christ.

At the same time, Paul's moral teaching, like his theological exposition of the gospel, involves a targeted response to the concrete issues facing the community.⁵⁵ As we have seen, Paul's polemic in 2:16-23 is directed in part against a bogus form of holiness that embraced human regulations and taboos, "self-imposed piety," "severe treatment of the body" (2:23), and possibly visionary experiences such as those found in the rites of the mystery religions (2:18). Paul considers such practices to be of the world (2:20) and the flesh (2:18), completely useless to restrain sinfulness (2:23).

⁵³See P. H. Towner, "Households and Household Codes," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. R. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, and D. G. Reid (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 419. The Colossian household table has numerous parallels in current Stoic and Hellenistic Jewish moral teaching, as well as discussions of "household management" by Aristotle (*Politica* I. 1253b.1-14) and others. The literature on the "household codes" is vast. In addition to the major commentaries, consult the bibliographies in David Balch, "Household Codes," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3: 319-20 and Towner, "Households and Household Codes," p. 419.

⁵⁴See O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, pp. 219, 233-34; John M. G. Barclay, "Ordinary but Different: Colossians and Hidden Moral Identity," unpublished paper presented at the meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, 2000, esp. pp. 6-11.

⁵⁵Against Petr Pokorny, *Colossians*, p. 158, who judges that "the paraenesis accords surprisingly little attention to the actual situation of the letter."

They are a part of the “earthly things” that Christians must put to death (3:2, 5) and are therefore “off-limits” for the people of God. At stake in Colossae is not only a false theology, but also a wrongheaded perception of what constitutes holy living. It is therefore important to see 3:1-4:6 “as an integral part of Paul’s polemic, setting forth the moral flip side of his theological argument against the ‘hollow and deceptive philosophy.’”⁵⁶ The “household codes,” for example, seem to challenge the asceticism of the false teaching by engaging the every-day institutions and kinship relations of Greco-Roman society in a transforming way. While Paul’s ethical exhortations in Colossians are not limited to a specific response to the heresy, they offer a radical alternative to the kind of external religious piety advocated by the opponents’ philosophy. N. T. Wright makes the point with characteristic verve:

The old taboos put the wild animals of lust and hatred (see 3:5, 8) into cages: there they remain, alive and dangerous, a constant threat to their captor. Paul’s solution is more drastic: the animals are to be killed (3:5). The old method of holiness attacked symptoms: the true method goes for the root.⁵⁷

The goal of Christ’s redeeming work in the Colossians is no less than genuine perfection in Christ (1:28; cf. 1:22), a radical inward transformation in the Creator’s image (3:10).

In Paul’s thinking, the praxis of the errant teachers is simply an extension of their bad Christology. It represents a submission to the cosmic powers (2:20) and a devaluing of the lordship of Christ (2:17, 19). The Colossians do not need the “shadow” of ritual observances required by the philosophy; they already have the “real thing” that belongs to the exalted One (2:16-17).⁵⁸ This is by no means a condemnation of all religious ritual, or even regulations about special days and diet within Judaism, as such. Rather, such practices, apparently motivated out of deference to the elemental spirits (2:20), become transitory and irrelevant with the coming of God’s salvation in Christ. It is no coincidence, then,

⁵⁶Wall, *Colossians and Philemon*, p. 129. Cf. Wright, *Colossians*, pp. 128, 131; Lohse, *Colossians*, p. 132.

⁵⁷Wright, *Colossians*, p. 128.

⁵⁸The contrast between “shadow” (*skia*) and “substance” (*soma*) reflects familiar language that Paul has apparently drawn from Plato and Hellenistic Judaism. See e.g., Philo, *De plantatione* 27; *De migratione Abrahami* 12; *De confusione linguarum* 190. For additional references, see Lohse, *Colossians*, p. 116; Dunn, *Colossians*, p. 176.

that Paul begins his moral exhortations with an echo of Psalm 110:1, which calls believers to share the heavenly life of the enthroned Lord who has defeated all his adversaries, including the powers (3:1; cf. 2:10, 15). Later, the theme of the renewed creation where Christ is “all and in all” in 3:10-11 recalls the cosmic Christology of the hymn of chapter 1. Christ’s reconciliation of “all things” (1:20) includes the tearing down of national, cultural, and social barriers within the renewed community (3:11).⁵⁹ Eduard Lohse is quite right that the entire ethical section of Colossians “is stamped with the leitmotif that runs throughout the letter from beginning to end: Christ is Lord over everything—over powers and principalities, but also over the Christian’s daily life” (see 3:15, 17; 3:18-4:1; 2:6). In Colossians, exalted Christology and Christ-centered living walk hand in hand.

Conclusions

Paul’s letter to the Colossians bears importance well beyond its size for our understanding of contextualization in the New Testament. It provides a glimpse of how the gospel comes to grips with the challenge of a new situation, one that is colored by a syncretistic onslaught that threatens to dilute the gospel and to undermine the life of a young Asian church. Above all, the distinctive mixture that was brewing in Colossae tried to supplement the converts’ faith and offer them substitutes for an exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ. Paul tailors his new translation of the gospel to address this alluring alternative with both firmness and flexibility. On the one hand, the truth of the gospel sanctions no compromise with syncretism or a religiously plural environment. Although Paul is willing to become “all things to all people” in matters that are non-essential, he draws a “line in the sand” before anything that challenges the unique supremacy of Jesus Christ, his sole sufficiency to mediate salvation, or his lordship over Christian conduct. If Jesus is Lord, he can have no rivals.

On the other hand, Paul’s expression of the Christian message in Colossians shows a remarkable sensitivity to the context. Writing out of a missionary-pastor’s heart, he seeks not only to turn the Colossians away from the errant teaching, but also to reshape some of their worldview assumptions in light of the gospel. This leads him to elaborate more profoundly on the cosmic dimensions of Christ’s lordship and redemption than we find in earlier letters of Paul. Furthermore, the need to assure believers of the present sufficiency of their salvation from sin and the forces of evil calls forth a daring vision of the Christian’s resurrection with Christ as something already realized. Sometimes such creative theologizing

⁵⁹See Dunn, *Colossians*, p. 227.

is interpreted as evidence for a post-Pauline author of this letter.⁶⁰ I prefer to see it as the result of a flexible missionary trying to re-contextualize the gospel in ways that are appropriate to the life circumstances of his audience.

Paul's contextual theologizing in Colossians engages his readers' world in transforming ways. He co-opts images and metaphors from Greco-Roman culture (see especially 2:9-15) in order to re-express the meaning of the Christ event in terms that resonates with his readers. He adopts a familiar ethical convention like the "household code," only to give it a Christological grounding recasts existing family and social relationships. He even risks seizing familiar language from the syncretistic religious culture of the Colossians (e.g., "wisdom," "mystery," "power," "fullness"?) and infusing it with new Christ-centered meaning. Paul's re-articulation of the language of his culture bears witness that Christian communities do not invent their own special language. Instead, they use existing language and forms from their social worlds in different and transforming ways.⁶¹

Finally, Colossians offers an instructive pattern for the church's encounter with syncretistic teaching today. We cannot miss the similarities between the context Paul addressed in Colossae and that of many non-Western worldviews and cultures, where established religions, popular folk beliefs, and Christianity routinely intertwine. The message of this letter speaks with uncommon force to contemporary situations where animism inculcates fear of the destructive powers or where idolatry pits rivals against the supremacy and uniqueness of Christ. Authentic contextualization recognizes that sinful worldviews and behaviors must still be challenged and transformed. Syncretism, however, is always a threat to the people of God, whether it takes the form of a blatant christopaganism or a more subtle capitulation to a materialistic "health and wealth" gospel. Unfortunately, the lines between syncretism and "cultural relevance" are not always easy to draw. Yet, like Paul, we must learn to recognize when the Christ-centered gospel cannot be bent without breaking. In a time in which a

⁶⁰See, e.g., Lohse, *Colossians*, pp. 177-83; Furnish, "Colossians," pp. 1092-94. The issue of the authorship of Colossians has by no means been settled. While the majority opinion among scholars favors a deutereo-pauline origin, a significant contingent of interpreters continue to support the traditional Pauline authorship of the letter. See, e.g., the arguments of O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, pp. xli-xlix; Wright, *Colossians*, pp. 31-34; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The New Testament Writings: An Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), pp. 393-395.

⁶¹Miroslav Volf, "When Gospel and Culture Intersect; Notes on the Nature of Christian Difference," in *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William W. Menzies*, ed. W. M. and R. Menzies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 228, 232.

spirit of pluralism and flabby religious tolerance has become commonplace not only in the so-called Third World, but increasingly in Western societies as well, the unflinching christocentrism of Colossians needs to be voiced again and again. The unique and universal lordship of Jesus Christ must be the anchor of any Christian theology.

At the same time, Paul's context-sensitive theologizing in Colossians offers a paradigm for the church's theological task in every generation and culture. We must have the courage, guided by the Spirit, to find ways of authentically articulating the gospel that draw upon our own stories and cultural resources, that engage *our* audiences, with their worldviews and life experiences. Remarkably, Paul does not respond to the threat of syncretism by indoctrinating the Colossians with a pre-packaged, "one-size-fits-all" theology, as sometimes happens in mission settings today. Instead, he allows the gospel to speak directly to their fears and felt needs, to address their particular worldviews and behavior patterns. We might find a contemporary parallel in the gospel's encounter with worldviews that are still burdened with a fear of unseen powers thought to exercise control over practical concerns like crops, flocks, health, and family relations. Too often the form of Christian theology that has been imported to these settings from the West has failed to address such issues, giving people the impression that God was powerless to overcome the fears and forces that touched their daily lives. Unless we learn from Paul and proclaim Christ as the One who has defeated the powers and is able to free people from fear, it is likely that they, like the Colossian syncretists, will turn to other answers—amulets, rituals, shamans, occult practices—for protection against the enslaving spirits. A gospel that neglects such worldview issues and their practical outworkings may end up actually promoting syncretism rather than preventing it.⁶²

Yet the contextualization of the gospel in Colossians does not dwell on the threats to Christ's lordship. Although Paul warns his readers of the dangers of the syncretistic error, he chooses to concentrate his energies on lifting up Christ—the all-encompassing and all-sufficient Savior against whom every human and cosmic alternative pales in comparison. Such a positive reformulation of the gospel, then and now, leaves no valid reason to syncretize the faith.

⁶²For an insightful elaboration of these issues, see Neville R. Bartle, "Developing a Contextual Theology in Melanesia with Reference to Death, Witchcraft, and the Spirit World," Unpub. D.Miss. dissertation (Asbury Theological Seminary, 2001).

COMMUNICATING CHRIST TO THE POSTMODERN WORLD: RHETORICAL PERSPECTIVISM AND CHRISTIAN EPISTEMOLOGY

Daniel Behr

Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. – Paul (I Corinthians 13:12b)

For that which is communicated is speech, but speech is not that which is perceived by the senses and actually exists; therefore the things that actually exist which are observed, are not communicated but [only] speech, but they are perceived by the senses. – Gorgias (Enos 1976, 45)

Then which kind of persuasion concerning justice and injustice does rhetoric effect in law courts and other public gatherings, the kind which produces belief without knowledge, or the kind which yields knowledge? – Plato (*Gorgias*, Helmbold, 6)

For nearly two millennia rhetorical theory has wrestled with epistemological controversies over such issues as the nature of truth, certainty, opinion, belief, and their relationship to persuasion. Thus rhetoricians have a unique perspective, both current and historical, from which to illuminate the *intertwoven* issues of knowledge and language. One arena where such contributions emerge is *rhetorical epistemology*, the study of the relationship between persuasion and human knowledge acquisition.

Today, Christianity is confronted with postmodernism and its denial of truth and the celebration of opinion (Middleton and Walsh, 1995). Rhetorical theory has presented an answer to the postmodern epistemology in the theory of *rhetorical perspectivism*, an outgrowth of the philosophy of perspective realism. Even though this essay examines the argument in the current communication and rhetoric literature, the answers provided by rhetorical perspectivism are consonant with Christian principles and may provide insight into a Christian response to postmodernism. I will explain the debate between the postmodern epistemic position of constructionism, that language constructs reality, and rhetorical perspectivism, that language

reflects our perspective of reality. Also, I will add several original components to the theory, commenting on the consonance between rhetorical perspectivism and Christian epistemology, and making suggestions for communicating the Gospel.

Central to the problem Christians have with postmodernism is its rejection of even the possibility of truth, in favor of story or opinion (Sire 1997, 178). The philosophical presupposition here is that if absolute truth actually existed, it would be absolutely true, and would be universally apprehended by all people everywhere. Since there is no single truth that is apprehended universally and equally, then there must be no truth at all. Doubt, then, is a proof against a proposition of truth. Postmodern reasoning would follow: "If I can doubt it, then it *must* not be true, because if it *was* true, then I could not *doubt* it." This reasoning is clear to non-Christians. For example, I was witnessing to a man who responded, "I'll believe in God when all you Christians can agree on Him." He suggested that if there really was an absolute sovereign of the universe, then he would be the same to everyone everywhere. This is where the epistemology embodied in Paul's statement in Corinthians is so important, "Now I see but a poor reflection . . ." for Paul realized that we are finite beings, limited in our ability to perceive. We only know *part* of God's creation, we can only see from our individual, unique point of view.

As I hope to demonstrate in this essay, *perspectivism* subsumes subjectivity in the individual's finite perception. Truth and reality can and do exist, but we perceive them from our individual perspective. It is reality independent from human knowers that insures a commonality for human communication. It is with effort and empathy that we can expand our perspective to include that of others.

According to postmodernism, without an objective reality that exists independently of the human knower, our language does not refer to real objects of reality, but becomes reality for us (Sire 1995, 174) This notion that language *constructs* reality formed the impetus for the current epistemological debate in rhetorical theory. It is to that debate we will now turn our attention.

An Overview of the Debate

Robert L. Scott directly confronted contemporary rhetorical theorists with the postmodern question of Rhetoric's epistemological significance in a keynote essay in 1967. Seeking to "set forth a different position as a starting point for rhetoric" (10), Scott advanced a claim that has become central to the discipline of Communication and other language arts: it is through language that our social reality is produced. As Scott (1967) put it, "Man must consider truth not as something fixed and final, but as

something to be created moment by moment in the circumstances in which he finds himself and with which he must cope" (17).

Scott himself took the epistemological position of *Constructionism* (that rhetoric constructs reality). He claimed that "cooperative critical inquiry" or rhetoric is what establishes certainty or a sense of truth (14). He believed that universals were not objectively true, but were accepted by individuals on faith as axioms for guiding behavior (14). Scott concluded that individuals can find commonality, but not certainty, in experience (15). As people attempt to act in an uncertain world, they must deal with conflicting claims about certainty and truth, and rhetoric serves as the means by which those claims are evaluated and acted upon (15). Ethical behavior, Scott claimed, is the result of facing this uncertainty with "tolerance, will, and responsibility" (16). Tolerance is essential, since no individual's knowledge claim can be certain, and enforcing tolerance is an act of individual will, but the individual must take responsibility for their own actions. Indeed, Scott's essay pushed beyond epistemological constructionism to include arguing that rhetoric contributes to social knowledge, which is not certain, but which is relative to individuals and cultures (16).

Ten years later, Scott had not altered his conclusion that "Rhetoric aims at knowledge that is social and ethical" (1976, 259). He confirmed the notion of "intersubjectivity," that certainty can be approximated in a society by individuals comparing their own purely subjective knowledge with other's equally subjective knowledge. This comparison, argued Scott, is done through rhetoric (259).

It must be noted here that Scott's contention (that truth does not precede its articulation in discourse, but is rather created as the result of language use) captured the imagination of numerous scholars who sought subsequently to enlarge and expand this doctrine. What soon became known as the "rhetoric-as-epistemic" thesis burgeoned as a multitude of theoretical explorations concluded that the creation of truth or knowledge proceeds, in one fashion or another, linguistically, that is, *through rhetoric* (Brummett 1976, 1981, 1982, 1990a, 1990b; Farrell 1976, 1978, 1990; Carleton 1978; Gross 1990; Simons 1990).

By the last decade of the twentieth century, the postmodern rhetorical knowledge thesis became commonplace, articulated in terms of a generalized doctrine. As Ann Gill expressed this predominant contemporary view in her recent book *Rhetoric and Human Understanding*: "Human beings experience reality only through their various systems of signs and as it is presented to them by the society within which they live and the groups of which they are a part." She concluded, "Reality is, in human terms, socially constructed by human means" (1994, 245). As Sonja Foss describes it,

“Reality, then, is simply the world as seen from a particular description or language: it is whatever we describe it as” (1989, 188). These versions of the rhetoric-as-epistemic thesis are typically called “constructionist” because they claim that reality is *constructed* by each individual through rhetoric. In this line of reasoning, “reality” is a word, and its meaning is individual to the user. Likewise “truth” is just a word, whose meaning is constructed. Thus “God” is reduced to merely a word, whose reality we construct linguistically.

This constructionist formulation of the rhetorical knowledge thesis has been vigorously opposed by a number of scholars. For the most part, opponents of constructionist theories do not deny that rhetoric *is* epistemic, in that it contributes to knowledge; rather, they question the ways in which Constructionism interprets this claim.

While the theorists we have examined to this point all developed epistemic theories of rhetoric that are clearly relativist in flavor, Richard Cherwitz (1977) proposed a theory in direct counterpoint. Although he agreed with Scott that rhetoric is epistemic, he denied that all rhetoric *creates* reality or that the knowledge attained by rhetorical means is wholly or necessarily relative. Instead, Cherwitz held that part of human rhetorical activity *validates* facts about the world that are independent of human communication behavior.

In other words, rhetoric is “truth evocative” because it does not create reality for each individual, subjective and relative to that individual, but in a *realist* sense it is part of the process that justifies, as true or false, claims made about an already existing reality (Cherwitz 1977, 216). Cherwitz suggested that rhetoric is part of the cumulative process of establishing knowledge. As ideas are debated in the marketplace of ideas, they are compared to reality as it is perceived from individual points of view, and either accepted or rejected or maintained for further evaluation. No single utterance may be, in and of itself, knowledge, but epistemologically productive rhetoric must be seen as “a dialogic process or a series of speeches whose cumulative effect is epistemic” (217). Reality is not created, argues Cherwitz, but truth about reality is earned, established, validated, and justified rhetorically. Thus we come to the theory of Rhetorical Perspectivism.

Rhetorical Perspectivism

The theory of rhetorical perspectivism as developed by Cherwitz and James Hikins (1982, 1983, 1986, 1990) is based on a version of philosophical *realism*. As such, it holds that the content of reality exists largely independent of humans’ attitudes, beliefs, values, or communication.

According to realism, whatever the nature of the world is, there is only one world and it includes more than humans and their language use. It follows that, in many significant ways, the world is not changed or changeable by what humans say or think about it (Searle 1995, 155).

According to the specific version of realism Cherwitz and Hikins adapt to rhetoric, all elements that comprise the world are produced by a fundamental ontological property, namely, *the relation*. A thing is what it is because of the relationships in which it stands to all else. Individual “things,” they contend, have no intrinsic properties, that is, no properties that are wholly constitutive of the thing itself. Instead, properties or characteristics of things *arise* only as the result of the *relation*. The chair is not a chair because of its “chairness,” but because of the relationships of the wood, screws, glue, and varnish which comprise the chair, as well as element such as gravity which allows us to sit in it. These are all just a portion of the relations that exist in the “Chair.”

In other words, everything that exists, exists *in relation* to everything else, and *independent* of humans. This is consonant with Christian ontology that claims God exists prior to and independent of mankind. Genesis 1:1 is, thus, an ontological statement of God’s relationship to reality, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

People, because they are aggregates generated from and situated in larger relational contexts, are always conscious of reality from their own particular locus or place in the universe. That locus situates individuals in relation to everything else in reality, and, being finite, they interact with everything else from their own unique place. This conscious interaction can operate through perceptions, which means that humans perceive reality from their own unique points of view. In other words, humans each have their own *perspective*.

As a result of this perspective, people often “see” only part of their immediate surroundings, and their rhetoric reflects what would appear to be a “subjective” stance. Unlike the constructionist notions of subjectivism and intersubjectivism, a perspective is not created through language; instead it represents the perceiver’s assay of an objective aspect of reality. This explains how reality can exist independently of the human knower, yet each human can know reality in a slightly different way. Thus, differences of opinion stem from differences in individual points of view, not differences in reality. As can be seen in a court of law, for example, five witnesses to an accident can see five different things. Not because there were five different accidents, but because the five witnesses each exist in a unique relation to everything else and their testimony evidences those five individual perspectives.

Could not the same be true of God? We each have a *personal* relationship with Jesus Christ. We each approach Him in the context of that relationship. We each perceive Him, in part and from our own unique point of view. Notice how the Bible uses many different names and titles for Jesus: Emanuel, Mighty God, Counselor, Prince of Peace, Son of Man. Each name embodies part of the available multiplicity of relationships between people and God the Son. Extending this idea, we can observe that we gather ourselves together in congregations, churches, and denominations that share commonalities between our own individual perspectives.

According to this theory, any communicator can, and frequently does, get others to know or “see” dimensions or aspects of the world through the linguistic descriptions of reality. One can describe certain features (aspects) of reality and get an audience to understand those features. Unlike related claims of constructionism, rhetorical perspectivism claims that subjectivity is rarely absolute and may be *overcome* through a certain mode of rhetoric (Cherwitz and Hikins 1983, 265). As humans, we share many perspectives and engage in discourse about those perspectives, a mosaic of the world can be constructed and tested. But what is the motivation to communicate? How can we ethically engage each other’s perspectives? I will add two concepts to the theory of rhetorical perspectivism which will aid in answering these questions.

Additional Concepts

I propose additional concepts, new to rhetorical perspectivism: the “epistemic impulse,” and “critical empathy.” The epistemic impulse is a concept that emerges from what I regard as a general human trait or characteristic, specifically, the desire *to know*. As a Christian, I believe God created this desire in us, so that we would turn our attention to Him and come to know Him. “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible Qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made . . .” (Romans 1:20). We have no excuse for not knowing Him.

This trait could be understood as a kind of innate curiosity. Curiosity is a motivation in humans to make and accept epistemic *judgments*, or *claims*, about various aspects of the world. We all make and accept such claims. We typically assess them as *true* or *false*. I define this “epistemic impulse” as the human need to know about reality. I am contending that humans, by the design of God, have an *innate* desire to know, and ultimately, to know God.

If all humans exist in their own unique perspective to objects in the universe, then people have different views of the same object. Some relatively “simple” objects may be more or less fully seen, while others may be so vast or complex that each of us sees only an incomplete portion. God is in the latter category. We, who are finite are attempting to understand the infinite.

In order to test and develop our knowledge claims, one thing we can do in the process is compare and contrast other perspectives. These multiple perspectives provide a way for us to develop knowledge outside our own unique point of view. The epistemic impulse thus provides the motivation for our communication. In order to know, and know more, we *must* communicate. In order to understand the other person’s perspective, we must *listen* as their language describes their perspective.

This is a dramatic conclusion for the Christian community. So much emphasis on personal evangelism is placed on *talking*, on the persuasive technique that will convince someone to accept Christ. But, as a consequence of rhetorical perspectivism, I propose that *listening* should be a significant part of personal evangelism. Listening allows us to see the world from another person’s point of view. This accrues two benefits. One, it communicates that the speaker is valued and accepted (Devito 1998, 148). The gospel message is not just one of doctrine it is one of love and acceptance. It is a message of hope, and when the speaker feels valued and accepted, they are more open to the gospel of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Two, listening to understand another’s perspective will aid us in understanding the speaker’s point of view. By understanding what they say, we can see into their heart, “Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:43b), and that is where the love of Jesus Christ can reach them. By knowing their heart, we can better communicate the Gospel in *their* terms, not ours. Christ came to fishermen as a “fisher of men” and came to the women at the well as a “well that will not run dry.” Imagine the confusion if he had told the woman at the well “I will make you a fisher of men.” We, also, must learn that people’s perspectives may be very far removed from ours, or their perspectives may occlude a view of the Gospel, and we must talk to them in their terms, not ours.

The responsibility of the Christian communicator is to be able to approach the rhetorical situation empathetically, listening to what the speaker, or rhetor has to say. In this regard the Christian communicator is much like the rhetorical critic, approaching the rhetorical situation presented by a speech or a rhetorical artifact. The communicator/critic tries to move into the same perspective as the rhetor, to see it from the

rhetor's position. Empathy is feeling with someone "seeing the world as they see it" (Devito 1998, 142). When the communicator or rhetorical critic engages in this empathy in order to critique a message or rhetor with the goal of increased understanding and knowledge, it is what I call critical empathy. The practice of critical empathy allows us to listen and increase our understanding of the rhetor's perspective while maintaining our own unique point of view.

The challenge for critical empathy is to be able to see from the rhetor's perspective, with a minimum of intrusion of personal valuation on the part of the communicator/critic. This by no means entails the slightest doctrinal compromise. We as Christian communicators are never divorced from our own relationship with Jesus Christ, and do *not* have to *accept or embrace* the rhetor's viewpoint, only understand it. The communicator's personal perspective can come into play later, after the rhetor's perspective is empathetically enjoined, in order to more effectively communicate the Gospel.

Critical empathy entails a flexibility on the part of the communicator/critic to see from another's point of view, while admitting that the unique perspective of the communicator/critic cannot be abandoned, and without having to agree with the rhetor's position. We can see, but not agree. Recall that rhetorical perspectivism suggests that some views may indeed be more accurate than others, not all views are equal as postmodernism suggests.

We all have our own ingrained enculturation and complete, absolute, disenjoined objectivity is practically impossible. Critical empathy allows us to celebrate diverse perspectives because no matter how accurate or inaccurate, they are all *multiple* perspectives of one reality, *one* God, *one* Lord and Savior. A benefit of approaching people this way is that the audience for the gospel is invited to engage in the same empathetic operation as the Christian: empathy, comparison, and evaluation. Thus, we never wholly lose our own individual uniqueness, while providing an opportunity for non-Christians to also have their perspectives widened and their view of the Gospel to increase.

In Conclusion

Postmodernism claims that there is no truth, no reality, no certain knowledge beyond our own language. Language creates a subjective, relative reality, and the best we can hope for is intersubjective agreement not knowledge. The realist theory of rhetorical perspectivism claims that humans exist in relation to reality, and language reflects the individual's

relationship. Language describes an objective reality, and we can gain knowledge of that reality. We see reality in part, we know it in part, from our own place in creation. This theory provides secular consonance with our own Christian ontology, that God and reality exist independent of humans, and our epistemology as illustrated in Corinthians: 13:12b, “Now I know in part, but then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

We have an epistemic impulse, a desire to know, and that is directed at different objects in reality. As Christians, we need to use the idea of critical empathy, empathizing with a rhetor to see from their perspective, to make our efforts at spreading the gospel more effective. Therefore we can see that this rhetorical/epistemological essay has returned us to an emphasis in Christian communication on empathy, love, acceptance, and hope. We want to save people, because we love them. So we find ourselves in the same place Paul did in I Corinthians 13:13 “And now these three remain, faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love.”

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EITHER IGNORANCE OR SIN?

Luke 15:16-19

Hitoshi (Paul) Fukue

It is sometimes said that the religious life of many Asian people deals with suffering instead of sin, ignorance instead of guilt consciousness, especially among those people who have been influenced by Hinduistic and Buddhistic worldviews. One missiologist's observation seems to demonstrate this typical view. In speaking on Buddhistic worldview, he says,

A person's problem is not understood in terms of sin but in terms of suffering. Ignorance of the true nature of his present state and the way of deliverance is pandemic and must be dispelled by the preaching of Buddha's message.¹

In speaking on how to communicate Christ to these people, he emphasizes that these people must be helped to understand that their problem is rebellion against God rather than ignorance. In other words, often the question on the part of Christian workers working among Asians has been how to communicate Christ to people who do not seem to have clear consciousness of sin and guilt before the omniscient God. So the important task for Christian pastors and missionaries has been how to raise sin consciousness among Asian people in order to communicate the atoning work of Christ correctly.

In traditional theology (in our Wesleyan tradition primarily) the definition of sin has been understood as a willful transgression of the known law of God. However, I wonder whether we can really draw such a clear line between sin and ignorance and suffering. In some cases I am sure we can make clear distinctions among these realities and there are necessities to do so. But I believe these concepts in fact overlap with each other in many ways and when we preach about the atoning work of Christ,

¹David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1991), 243.

I believe we have a need to address suffering and ignorance as well as sin and guilt.

Our biblical faith clearly states that the blood of the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world. There is no question about this and this is our crucial message to the whole world. But our Bible also speaks about suffering in relation to Christ's atoning work.

He endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain that we should have borne. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received (Isaiah 53).

There is no doubt that Christ atoned for our sins, if we understand the whole Bible.

But I wonder whether in our theology we have not neglected the fact that Christ's atonement was to solve the problem of human suffering as well. We preach Christ died for our sins, but should we not also preach Christ who died for our suffering. And the good news is not only our sins are forgiven, but also our suffering is healed.

Now as I say this, we immediately encounter a problem in this statement, because many times our physical and mental sufferings do not necessarily disappear however sincerely and truthfully we believe in the atoning work of Christ. In some cases our physical and mental suffering become even more acute after we believe in Christ and His salvation. So in consequence we tend to shy away from proclaiming that Christ died for our suffering as well as for our sins. But I believe we need to understand the meaning of suffering in its depth. Our real suffering is not physical or mental, however keenly we might feel them, but rather our deepest and ultimate suffering comes from our breach from our Creator God. Our ultimate suffering and pain come from the separation from our heavenly Father.

In the same way, ignorance is also an underlying cause of the separation from our heavenly Father. Let's take the prodigal son in Jesus' parable as an example. The Bible witnesses that the prodigal son began to feel that he had offended his father and his heavenly Father "when he came to his senses" (Luke 15:17). The son did not know any better. It is unlikely that he willfully intended to offend and rebel against his father. We can say that he had no intention of sinning against his father nor God. Perhaps out of his youthful ambition and desire and passion, he simply wanted to explore different things in life and enlarge his vision. Surely he was also tempted by the pleasures of this world. But I find it difficult to say that he willfully and intentionally desired to hurt the feelings of his father. He simply didn't know any better. He was blinded by the things of this world. He was

ignorant of the loving heart of his father. But when he fell into the bottom of his life, he realized what he had done. He realized his ignorance which led him to his senses of sin against his father and at the same time against God. Ignorance was inseparably related to his consciousness of sin.

Therefore, I personally find it difficult to say that people under Hinduistic and Buddhistic worldview usually do not deal with the problem of sin but suffering and ignorance. These concepts are in fact closely related and their relatedness are witnessed in the Scripture itself. And Christ came to our world to free us from our ignorance of the heart of God, from our deepest suffering and pain which are separation from our heavenly Father, as well as from our guilt and sins against Him.

When Christ uttered that anguished prayer on the Cross, "Father, forgive them for they **do not know** what they do," I believe that Christ was dealing with human ignorance concerning the hurting heart of God. If we can develop a theology of ignorance and suffering more, I believe we can better communicate the gospel to many many more Asians for Christ. This is only a burgeoning thought of mine as an Asian student of theology. So anybody can respond to this thought of mine and correct me where I am ignorant. Then I will begin to suffer.

GOD DEFEND NEW ZEALAND: CONTEXTUALIZING OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

Stephen J. Bennett

It was a normal morning in Manila. Much like many others that I've experienced in my six months so far in the Philippines. I left our flat to walk to the classroom, less than 200 metres away. Without a thought I walked down the concrete path, when suddenly, right in front of me was a huge black snake. It must have been . . . 1 feet long! And it just lay there, staring at me, waiting to make it's move - which could only have happened if there were a strong wind - it was already dead. OK so I don't have any gory snake stories. But I'm not a missionary to a remote jungle tribe. I'm a teacher at Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary in a city of 10 million people. There just aren't very many big snakes around.

Instead, my work goes on in the classroom. I teach Old Testament in the classroom. I try to make the Old Testament *live* in the classroom so that my students can go back to their countries and their churches, and make the Old Testament live for their people. I teach Hebrew, and Biblical Interpretation, and Old Testament theology, and the books of the Old Testament.

Actually I don't know how to make the Old Testament live in the countries where my students come from: Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Korea. I've never been to some of these countries and if I had, I wouldn't have enough experience to tell them what to say to their people. So I go to class and we talk about the Old Testament and they tell me a bit about their cultures, and we try to work together to come up with some starting points.

A Message to the New Zealand District Nazarene World Mission Convention, January 23, 2001.

We have a great text book in Old Testament theology to get us started. It's written by an American, Walter Brueggemann.¹ I wish we had a book like this written by someone from Asia or the Pacific, but there isn't one. And if we have to have a book written by an American then I think this is the best one to have. Brueggemann's book is about 750 pages long and the students don't like that part. But the good thing about it is that it tries to make the Old Testament live for the American context. Brueggemann doesn't think that studying the Bible is very interesting and when you finish you can put it down and get on with your life. He knows that the Bible has to make a difference. And to make a difference it has to be relevant.

And so he traces the history of Old Testament theology. But he doesn't cover the history just out of curiosity, or to show how the study has developed. He covers the history to show that Old Testament theology changes when the context changes. Old Testament theology is different for Germany in the 1930s than it is for America in the 1990s. So Brueggemann analyzes his own context and he identifies the main characteristic of his culture: pluralism. There is a new generation that doesn't believe in absolutes any more. Just look at how Clinton handled the questions at his impeachment trial. He redefined "truth." Many people now consider truth to be very individual: what is true for you may not be true for me. Brueggemann writes his Old Testament theology to address these issues.

In the classroom at APNTS we take this model, and we try to apply it to the different countries that are present. What is the cultural identity of the students? How does Old Testament theology address that context?

The cultures of the Philippines are more group oriented than the individualism of the West. Formal relationships are very important. There are expected patterns of behaviour when dealing with other people. Respect is shown through titles and loyalty. There is a concept called *utang na loob* – a debt of gratitude. It's something like "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." But it goes deeper than that. It's an obligation. It's not voluntary. So some workers will pay their boss a portion of their salary every month out of gratitude for having the job. It's not voluntary. It's expected. It's an expression of loyalty. Filipinos feel they must be loyal to their superiors, even if it hurts them, even if it hurts their family or friends. Loyalty is everything.

So I suggested to my Filipino students that loyalty may be the key for Old Testament theology in the Philippines. Loyalty is very important in the Old Testament. It's not the same as *utang na loob*, but it's very important.

¹Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

It's part of the covenant between God and Israel. God will protect his people and be loyal to them, and they must obey him and be loyal to him as their God. The deepest Hebrew word for love is *hesed*. *Hesed* involves loyalty.

I know even less about PNG culture than I do about the Philippines, but when I think about Papua New Guinea, I think of "payback." Payback is the rule of retaliation - an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.² It plays out in tribal battles where warriors are often killed. If one tribe loses a warrior, then payback is required. The warriors of the tribe must fight that tribe again until they can kill one of their warriors. And so the cycle continues—an endless cycle of payback. I asked my PNG student about payback. He said that it's not only negative, but also positive. Good is also paid back for good.

But what does payback have to do with Old Testament theology. I suggested to my students that it might be relevant in the context of God's sovereignty. "Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord. People want to get their revenge, but they need to leave it in God's hands. Old Testament law allows an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but that's not an invitation to payback; it's a limitation of payback. Payback might be relevant for the covenant relationship too. The covenant has blessings and curses. Blessings are for those who are faithful to the covenant with God, and curses are for those who break the covenant. It's like payback, positive and negative. God pays back good to those who love him, and he pays back curses to those who don't. That's an oversimplification of Old Testament theology of course. There are also natural consequences for those who disobey God. In fact, he can't protect those who step outside of his protection and love. And this is only supposed to be a beginning point for making the Old Testament live in Papua New Guinea.

But this is my job. To take the Bible, and help my students see how they can apply it to their own settings. I can't do that for them. I can only make suggestions that might get their thinking started. In the final analysis, they have to make the Bible live in their own contexts.

So I presented these ideas to my Old Testament theology class. I asked them what they thought. They all thought it was very good, of course. How could they disagree, the Filipinos are loyal to their professor and show respect in formal relationships, and the PNG student didn't want any negative payback!

²Some American proverbs reflect a similar principle: "What goes around comes around"; "turn about is fair play."

But I lay awake in bed the night after presenting these ideas, and I began to think. Here I am coming up with suggestions for the Philippines and Papua New Guinea; and I'm trying to get my students to make the Old Testament *live* for their contexts, but I don't have any brilliant ideas about how to relate the Bible in ways that specifically fit my own New Zealand culture. So I began to think about the most important characteristics of New Zealand culture. Buzzy bee and vegemite didn't seem to give any live options. Then I thought of Gallipoli.

I may be wrong, but it seems to me that Gallipoli was a defining moment for New Zealand. When we hear "Gallipoli," we're like a bunch of Texans when someone shouts "Remember the Alamo." During World War I, the British navy dropped ANZAC³ troops on a small curve of beach under steep cliffs. They were expected to defeat the Turkish positions at the top of the cliffs, the high ground beyond, and the entire Gallipoli peninsula. In the first three days 900 New Zealanders were killed. The final count eight months later was 2700, not to mention thousands wounded.⁴ At first the deaths were glorified. These men had made the ultimate sacrifice in war. But more recently it has become clear that those men were sacrificed because they were not British. They were little more than a decoy. Mother England had betrayed her children. Mother England was supposed to defend and protect her colonies—but she did not. Who will defend New Zealand?

Then I think of World War II. The conflict comes much closer to New Zealand. It's not just a European war fought far away, but it is also a Pacific war, and Japan is getting closer: Korea, Manchuria, China, Indo-China—New Zealand must defend its borders. But how can a couple of million people with limited resources defend thousands of miles of coast line? We tried. We built ramparts and battle stations. You can still see them around the bays of Auckland harbor and on Mt. Victoria. The ANZACs were away in the Middle East fighting. It was the territorials—18 year-olds, and World War I veterans who took up the challenge. They "stood guard in slit trenches along the coast armed with ancient weapons, knowing their resistance would be hopeless."⁵ We took our barbed wire

³Australia New Zealand Army Corps (a single armed force made up of soldiers from two countries).

⁴Stephen Barnett and Richard Wolfe, *New Zealand! New Zealand! In Praise of Kiviana* (Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), 18.

⁵Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Pelican, 1959), 290.

and a few .303 rifles and went down to the beach to keep the Japanese away.

But how can such an attempt from such a nation defend against the attack of an airforce and navy like that of the Japanese? It was ridiculous. By some twist of fate or Providence, the Japanese advance bypassed Australia and New Zealand and headed east across the Pacific towards Hawaii. Defenseless New Zealand was saved, almost at the last minute.

So what song do you sing when you're crouching in a trench on the beach in 1941 with a .303 rifle. You have ten bullets in your clip and a hundred yards of barbed wire. You're standing there to defend 60 miles of beach against the attack of the Japanese armed forces. What song do you sing in your most vulnerable moment? "God Defend New Zealand."

God of Nations, at thy feet,
 In the bonds of love we meet,
 Hear our voices we entreat,
 God defend our Free Land.
 Guard Pacific's triple star
 From the shafts of strife and war,
 Make her praises heard afar,
 God defend New Zealand.

Men of every creed and race
 Gather here before thy face
 Asking thee to bless this place
 God defend our Free Land.
 From dissension, envy, hate
 And corruption guard our State.
 Make our country good and great.
 God defend New Zealand

Peace, not war, shall be our boast.
 But, should foes assail our coast,
 Make us then a mighty host.
 God defend our Free Land.
 Lord of battles in thy might
 Put our enemies to flight.
 Let our cause be just and right.
 God defend New Zealand

Let our love for thee increase.
 May thy blessings never cease.
 Give us plenty, give us peace.
 God defend our Free Land.
 From dishonour and from shame
 Guard our country's spotless name.
 Crown her with immortal fame.
 God defend New Zealand

May our mountains ever be
 Freedom's ramparts on the sea.
 Make us faithful unto thee.
 God defend our Free Land.
 Guide her in the nations' van,
 Preaching love and truth to man.
 Working out thy glorious plan.
 God defend New Zealand.⁶

That song was written in 1875, but became New Zealand's national anthem in 1940. 1940 when the Japanese had already invaded northern Indo-China. At that time, more than any other in our history, we were aware that only God could defend us.

So what does all this have to do with Old Testament theology? Perhaps an Old Testament theology for New Zealand would be called "God Defend Israel." It comes back to the covenant relationship again. God made a covenant with Israel and that covenant included national protection and defense. So they sang a kind of national anthem, found in Deuteronomy 26:5b-9:

My ancestor was homeless,
 an Aramean who went to live in Egypt.
 There were only a few in his family then,
 but they became great and powerful,
 a nation of many people.
 The Egyptians were cruel and had no pity on us.
 They mistreated our people and forced us into slavery.
 We called out for help to you,

⁶Thomas Bracken, *Saturday Advertiser*, 1875. Adopted as national anthem in 1940 as set to music by John Woods.

the LORD God of our ancestors.
You heard our cries;
you knew we were in trouble and abused.
Then you terrified the Egyptians with your mighty miracles
and rescued us from Egypt.
You brought us here and gave us this land
rich with milk and honey (CEV).

The Israelites were helpless. They were defenseless. They were slaves in Egypt. But God came to their defence. He defended them and freed them and made a covenant with them to protect them always. When they tried to get other nations to defend them, God got upset. He spoke through the prophet Isaiah when Syria and Israel were attacking Jerusalem (Isaiah 7). King Ahaz asked Assyria for help; he asked the king of Assyria to defend him. But that was not God's plan. God wanted to defend Jerusalem himself. He longed to hear that anthem again, sung with meaning, "God Defend Jerusalem." But the anthem was not sung. Instead of singing about how God had rescued them from Egypt, King Ahaz wrote to the king of Assyria and said, "I am your servant and your son. Come up, and rescue me" (2 Kings 16:7, RSV), and because of that, Jerusalem became subject to Assyria.

We live in a very independent and self-sufficient age. But we need God, not only in our national security, but in our church. The Church of the Nazarene in New Zealand needs God. It sounds so obvious, I hope. But sometimes we need a reminder. A focus on God and his power in our hearts and lives is the characteristic of holiness. A focus on God as defender of our nation is characteristic of our culture. Too often we think we can defend our own country and run our own church, but we need God.

We have no military defenders now. Soon after World War II we realized that Britain could no longer defend us. So the ANZUS agreement was signed with America in 1951. Now we don't have ANZUS either. In 1973 Britain joined the EEC and we began to lose our biggest market for lamb. We are on our own now. The Church of the Nazarene, too, has come beyond its dependence on leadership from outside. We don't have any Nazarene missionaries here now. They will not defend us. They will not build the church here.

But we cannot defend ourselves either. Self-sufficiency is not the answer. We do not have the power to bring holiness to this great nation. We must look to God. God defend New Zealand.

I have a tape at home of the hymn “Be Thou My Vision.” I try to play it every day. I play it in the morning with my devotions. For those few minutes I don’t want to study anything, or read anything, or say anything. I just want to focus on God. I want to get my orientation centered on him. When I see my vision, I want to see him.

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art—
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven’s joys, Bright Heaven’s Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.⁷

His vision, his church. Jesus said, “I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” God defend New Zealand. “On this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Matt 16:13-20). When Auckland First church was built in 1951, they found volcanic rock, solid rock. They blasted that rock with dynamite to make a foundation for New Zealand’s first Church of the Nazarene. “On this rock I will build my church.” We need a focus on Jesus and his holiness. We need him to give us a vision and a passion for the Church of the Nazarene in this country. It is his church. He will build it. The vision he gives us will be himself—Jesus as Lord. That’s what missions is about. That’s what ministry is about. That’s what the church is about. It’s about Jesus Christ. God defend New Zealand. God defend Aotearoa again.

⁷Eleanor H. Hull, versification, 1912, of translation by Mary E. Byrne, 1905, of traditional Irish hymn, ca. 8th c. *Sing to the Lord*, 460.

PAUL'S CONCEPT OF SERVANTHOOD IN 2 CORINTHIANS

Jason V. Hallig

Second Corinthians reveals Paul's conception of ministry in the light of his apostolic defense. It is in this book that we find considerable information about the apostle Paul's ministry and his call as a **διάκονος**. Central to Paul's defense of his own ministry is the presentation of his understanding of **διάκονος**, which defines his concept of ministry in terms of servanthood ministry. The opponents of Paul are trying to portray themselves as the rightful **διάκονοι** for the church at Corinth. They claim to be the true **διάκονοι** of Christ because of the credentials they possessed such as the "letter of recommendation" (3:1). Paul, however, refutes his opponents and explains to the Corinthians his understanding of his call as God's **διάκονοι**.

Διάκονος in Paul's time was understood in several ways. The Greeks understood the word to be of no value. A servant was seen as the lowest sociological status in the society. The Jews, though more decent in their understanding of a servant, had a limited understanding of the nature of **διάκονος**. Servants were only valued in terms of their service to the great master, e.g. God and the prophets. During the intertestamental period **διάκονος** was used more for a religious status, i.e. a religious propagandist—a divine agent who stands in the same position with the god he/she represents. Paul's concept of **διάκονος** takes a radical shift from these contemporary concepts. Paul's understanding of **διάκονος** takes its renewed meaning from his new religious experience as a Christian.

Διάκονος – A Divine Slavery

Paul understands **διάκονος** as God's call to servanthood. Servanthood is an act of service rendered by a slave. A slave is under the authority of a master, either of human or divine. In Second Corinthians, Paul refers

"Summary, Conclusion, and Implications" of a Th.M. thesis submitted to Asia-Graduate School of Theology, 2000. APNTS is part of the AGST consortium of seminaries in the Philippines.

to himself as a captive slave of God who is being led in a triumphal procession in service for God (2:14). Paul's concept of **διάκονος** is synonymous to the idea of **δούλος**, which means a slave. **διάκονος** is an image of a divine slave.

Paul is no way a religious propagandist. He is a divine slave who is under the authority of God. God is the one responsible for his life and ministry. Paul's image of a captive slave in 2:14 perfectly supports the understanding of his role as **διάκονος**. Moreover, Paul pictures himself as the aroma of Christ, spreading out to the whole world (2:15). To be Christ's aroma does not mean for Paul power and honor; rather, he becomes an object of both praise and humiliation. Paul says, "To the ones (who are perishing) we are the smell of death; to the others (who are being saved) the fragrance of life." Obviously, Jesus was not generally accepted as Messiah. Some thought of him as a criminal for he died a criminal death. Others thought of him as an impostor, claiming to be the Son of God. To be identified with Christ means to be a smell of death and life. Such is the life of the slave of God, which Paul portrays himself.

Indeed, who is equal to such a task? Paul's enemies understand **διάκονος** as that of a divine representative—one that is given honor and power to represent God. No wonder they claim to be **διάκονοι Χριστού**, i.e. Christ's representatives. However, Paul believes that to be a **διάκονος** of Christ is to be a slave of God.

Διάκονος – Servant of the Gospel

The gospel is central to servanthood. A true **διάκονος** is identified with the gospel of Christ. Paul has given emphasis to the gospel he preaches as a defense against his opponents who do not only claim to be **διάκονοι Χριστού** but who also preach a different gospel. Paul accuses them of distorting the word of God (cf4:2) by preaching another gospel, a different Jesus, and a different spirit (11:3). Paul is a slave of the gospel, a gospel that is defined as in the framework of the new covenant is more glorious and far superior. The new covenant is not under the law/letter, which condemns and leads to death, but under the Spirit that gives life and brings righteousness (3:17-18). With the gospel of Christ empowered by the Holy Spirit, Paul is confident of his ministry (3:4ff.). He takes his confidence not in his own identity as an apostle but because he has been made competent as a servant of the new covenant (3:6). He does not water down the truth of the gospel by using deception and self-glorification. His hope is built on the life to come, where he wants to be found faithful as God's servant. The Corinthians bear witness to Paul's ministry (3:2-3). Their existence testifies to the authenticity of Paul's ministry: he is the true **διάκονος** of the new covenant.

Διάκονος – A Slave of the Church

The church is central to Paul's ministry. The church is composed of the people of God. Its people are not only recipients of God's grace but are also God's witnesses to the world. The church plays an important role in the divine plan of salvation. It is continuing the divine ministry through its faithful devotion to Jesus as Lord and its obedience to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul as **διάκονος** sees himself as a servant of the church. Paul says, "We preach Jesus as Lord and ourselves as your servants" (4:5). Paul is not the Lord of the church. He does not rule over them (cf 1:24). Instead, he teaches them the truth of the gospel and leads them to faithful service to the Lord (4:2f.).

Paul is indebted to the church to preach the gospel that is pure and holy. His task is to deliver the gospel message that leads to the change of their lives. For this reason, Paul is committed to the truth of the Gospel, and seeks not to distort it by his own human wisdom. Paul's opponents were the ones distorting the Word of God for self-gain. They preached for profit and not for the good of the church. Paul labels them as masquerading to be servants of righteousness. On the contrary, "they are false apostles, deceitful workers, and masquerading as apostles of Christ" (11:13,15).

Paul's attitude towards the church is an expression of his service in genuine love for their sake. His dealing with them reveals his depth of love for them (cf. 2:4). Furthermore, Paul does not burden them by preaching the gospel of God free of charge (11:9). All these Paul did because he is the church's slave.

Διάκονος - A Life of Weakness

Weakness plays an important role in Paul's understanding of his role as God's **διάκονος** relative to his apostolic ministry. Paul's opponents belittles him for his weakness, which they view as uncharacteristic of a **διάκονος** of Christ. They seem to hold a triumphalistic theology that emphasizes authority, skills, and credentials as the primary qualification of **διάκονος**. Hence, Paul is compelled to answer the criticism that he is weak and cowardly (10:1, 10; 11:7; 13:3-4), that he somehow lacks apostolic power (12:12), and that because he refuses to accept support from the Corinthians and continues to work at a trade, he in some way denigrates his apostleship and brings shame to the church (11:7-9; 12:13-18; cf. 1 Cor. 9:3-18). Paul defends himself with his own renewed understanding of weakness, but as Paul himself insists, he is not simply engaged in personal

defense (12:19). Paul views the opponents as attacking not only his apostolic authority but also the gospel he preaches. Paul defends his reputation but it is as much for the good of the church for whom he lives as a slave.

Weakness – Identification With Christ

Paul views weaknesses as an identification with Christ. Paul says, “We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body” (4:10). In these verses, Paul talks of his sufferings as participating in the suffering of Christ. As such, he carries in his body the death of Jesus.

Similarly, in 6:4-10, Paul speaks of his sufferings as servant of God. Paul says, “As servants of God, we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance, in troubles, hardships and distress, in beating, imprisonment . . .” (6:4-5). While for some, Paul’s commendation seems to be estranged; Paul strongly believes that as a true servant of God, suffering are inevitable for they are part of the call.

As Christ suffered, so must his servants. The disciples are no greater than their master (cf. Matt. 10:24). A servant is expected to suffer the same fate as his/her master. However, the suffering of the servants is not vicarious but rather participation in the life of the master.

Weakness – Revealing the Power of God

Paul claims that God works through his life and ministry. As **διάκονος**, Paul is under the direction and authority of God. Paul’s willingness to suffer reveals his status as slave of God, but his sufferings serve to honor God and to reveal the power of God (cf. 2:14-16).

Paul’s foolish speech is an expression of his confidence in weakness. He says, “If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weaknesses” (11:30). Suffering is a display of one’s weakness, but is also an opportunity to let the power of God be manifested. Surely, this is a Pauline paradox. However, Paul’s weakness is not to be replaced by the power of God. Weakness and power go together. What the Lord says to Paul of his weakness is an assurance of his grace: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (12:19:a). Hence, Paul declares, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (12:9b). He adds, “That is why for Christ’s sake, I delight in weakness, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (12:10).

Conclusion

Paul's concept of ministry is properly understood through his understanding of **διάκονος** in terms of servanthood ministry. For Paul, his role as God's **διάκονος** defines his office as an apostle. It is what makes Paul an apostle of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, it is more important for Paul to be called **διάκονος** of God than an apostle.

The relationship between **διάκονια** and **διάκονος** is seen in terms of their nature and function. **Διάκονια** is a ministry of service. It is for the service of the church and outside the church. The role of **διάκονος** as servant makes sense. A **διάκονος** is called to serve the church and to be God's slave in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

Practical Implications

What are the implications of this study on Paul's concept of ministry to the Filipino understanding of the Christian ministry? The following are the practical implications that I perceive as necessary for our understanding of the Christian ministry.

(1) The church now faces a grave threat in its conception of the Christian ministry. The church is bombarded with so many contemporary principles in leadership (in the guise of Christian leadership) that are not Christian or biblical but are often embraced in the church today. Self-propagation is only one of the many issues that are being promoted today in the church. Phrases such as "ministers are leaders" and "congregations are followers" if not properly understood may lead to self-centered leadership. Paul's understanding of **διάκονος** as a slave of God may provide the balance. Indeed, Christian ministers are leaders, but they are servant leaders. Ministers are all captive slaves of God by virtue of God conquering their lives. Ministers are servants of God and their lives are under the direction and authority of God. It is God who defines the mission and work of the ministers. Ministers discharge their ministry "in the sight of God" (4:2) as men "knowing the fear of the Lord" (5:11).

(2) The Christian ministry is still committed to the gospel truth. The gospel remains to be the only message that we have as Christian ministers. It is central to the Christian ministry. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ which includes the incarnation, death, and resurrection that we preach today, and not ourselves. Christian ministers must remain faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Any gospel that sets aside Christ or mixes Christ with others is not at all the Christian gospel. The gospel of Christ serves as the framework of the Christian ministry. Ministers are servants of the gospel.

The Filipino church faces a great challenge in the ministry. The rise of independent churches that claim to be preaching the truth but are not willing to embrace the gospel of Christ poses a threat to the truth of the gospel. Like Paul, Filipino ministers must be loyal to the gospel of Christ and seek to preach it with truthfulness.

(3) The ministry is given for the service of the church. Ministers are called to serve the church (4:5). Ministers' task is to protect the church and not to destroy it. They must be willing to endure all hardship for the sake of the church. As the master came to serve and not to be served so must his servants. Today, we have ministers who are working not to serve the church but to exploit the church for their own benefit. For some, the church is a stepping-stone in fulfilling their personal dreams and in gaining power and authority. Paul's understanding of the ministry as serving the church will help the minister understand his role in the church.

The socio-economic issues in the Philippines are major problems that every minister must deal with. The search for a better life seems to be an issue that most ministers are faced with. But ministers are called to serve the church. Service must remain the highest priority in the ministry. Every minister must seek the good of the church and not his/her own good.

(4) The Christian ministry proclaims the suffering of Christ and embraces its importance in the life and existence of the church. Today, ministers are in danger of falling into the philosophies of the world that embrace a triumphalistic theology where power and authority are considered necessary for the Christian ministry. There is some sort of equation of victory with ministry. Ministers are gauged in terms of their successes and not their faithfulness. Paul's view of weakness as an integral part of God's call to servanthood will help ministers understand their calling, i.e. ministers are called to be faithful.

Sufferings must not be viewed negatively. Filipino ministers can claim the promise of God: "My grace is sufficient for you and my power is made perfect in weakness." As Paul set Christ as the example, so must Filipinos. It is imperative that Christ's example be lived out in every minister's life. Ministers are called to servanthood ministry.

MOTIVATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS IN LUZON NAZARENE BIBLE COLLEGE

Carolyn M. Bestre

This study identified the motivations and expectations of students in the Luzon Nazarene Bible College (LNBC).

Specifically, the study analyzed the perceptions of 112 students from both the Bachelor of Arts in Theology (ABTh) and Bachelor of Science in Religious Education (BSRE) along (1) the effect or demographic profile of respondents in their choice of course, (2) the extent of perceptions of identified indicators towards the respondents' choice of course and in pursuing chosen course, and (3) the extent of conformity of faculty capability, instruction quality, physical facilities and curriculum to the respondents' expectations, as well as the importance of these factors to the respondents.

In order to come up with the results, the study used the survey method with the questionnaire as the main gathering tool. The Statistics Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software was used to analyze the data gathered.

The survey revealed that the respondents' chosen courses are gender sensitive, ABTh being preferred more by males and BSRE by females. Denominational affiliation was also found to have significant effect on the choice of course of the respondents. However, year level, age and economic status of parents showed no significant influence on the respondents' choice of course. The extent of personal indicators as "to become a competent pastor," "response to God's calling," "self-fulfillment," and "interest and desire to grow spiritually" have a high extent of motivational influence on the respondents' choice and in pursuing chosen course. However, the respondents have higher perceptions on the importance of quality teachers, instructions, physical facilities and curriculum than the perceived expectation to conformity.

Abstract of a Master of Arts in Religious Education thesis, Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, May 2002.

Based on the results of the survey, the findings on the high expectations of respondents to quality teachers, instructions, physical facilities, and curriculum have to be looked into. In order to have quality teachers and instruction the school should hire competent and qualified teachers to teach their major fields and encourage them to pursue their masters or doctoral degrees. Trainings, seminars, conferences, workshops, retreats, and other activities for the advancement of appropriate and quality instruction and instructor should also be encouraged. There should be a continuous program on building repair and development, procurement of new facilities and equipment and upgrading existing ones to maintain their efficiency. There should also be a periodic review of curriculum to develop and strengthen existing programs.

NEWS BRIEFS

Ministering Grace, by Floyd Cunningham

From the beginning, our campus has been blessed with a deep well. Last year this water became to us a symbol of God's grace.

We have never lacked water on this campus. We are blessed. Our water comes from deep down. The well was dug many years ago, long before the Church of the Nazarene purchased this campus.

A nearby college has dug all around its property looking for a well. It has never found one. It has all of its water trucked in. It pays for it.

But our water is free. The question is, what do we do with this water. The Lord provides this wonderful campus with its deep well. We could simply rejoice at his abundant grace to us. He provides water. Rejoice and drink it.

Early Thursday morning, March 21, 2002, a fire broke out among squatter homes across the street from our campus. The fire destroyed hundreds of homes. People lost everything they had.

Students and faculty were awakened about 3 a.m. We rushed to see the huge flames several stories high. We wondered for a few moments whether the flames would leap across Ortigas Avenue Extension to our campus. But it soon became evident that it would not. We could have simply rejoiced that our campus was spared.

But, all through last school year, we as a community had been organized for outreach beyond our walls, evangelizing, partnering with local churches, ministering to street children, visiting nearby jails. Our campus community was a team. We did not need to spend hours in prayer over this. Within a few moments of recognizing the magnitude of the problem, we began setting up tables and benches, brought out containers and cups for water, and began to offer (literally) cups of cold water to the suffering. By 3:30 we had unlocked the kitchen and were beginning to cook rice.

Exactly a week later, Thursday of Holy Week, as usual, tens of thousands of pilgrims made their way past our campus on foot from all over Metro Manila to the Antipolo shrine. Mr. Hendrix and our crew set up several spigots for water. As the pilgrims began to make their way on Ortigas Avenue Extension, up the hill to Antipolo, faculty members,

students and even students' children began dispensing water underneath a sign: "Living Water, Free." Again, we offered freely cups of cold water from our deep well. At the same time, Doug Flemming and the Media Center had set up the Jesus film. Hundreds sat on our driveway drinking water and watching the Jesus film. The Philippine Mission team distributed tracts.

That is what the Kingdom is all about, is it not? We are giving cups of cold water in Jesus' name to suffering ones. We are offering abundant, living water to thirsty pilgrims. We are ministering the cool, flowing, abundant grace of Christ to a thirsty world.

I confess to wondering when I turned on my faucet on Friday morning, would there still be water? We could choose to contain this water. To rejoice that we have it. Out of fear of losing it, to hoard it. How many times has the church been like that?

Bernard of Clairveaux remarked that grace was more like a channel than a reservoir.

We are leaning to be, yearning to find out what it means to be, a holiness Seminary: a "holy temple in the Lord," a "dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." We are learning as a Seminary that we are part of God's abundantly flowing grace-giving Kingdom. Miracle, the water of grace that we give out does not diminish our own supply. Instead, the more we give out of it, the more God keeps pouring out through us. We are learning as a Seminary that if we do not allow his grace to be poured out through us, we will have not more but less of it. Grace, we are finding out, must flow through us too.

A student who graduated on the Saturday following this Thursday of Holy Week remarked that this hymn (paraphrased) had become meaningful to him:

"Because we have been given much, we too must give. Because of His great bounty, each day we live.

Because we have been sheltered, fed, by his good care, we cannot see another's lack and not share

Our flowing water, our sack of rice, our roof's safe shelter overhead, that they too may be comforted."

"Because love has been lavished so upon us, Lord, a wealth we know that was not meant for us to hoard,

We shall give love to those in need, shall show that love by word and deed, thus shall our thanks be thanks indeed."

Amen.

River of Destruction, Showers of Blessings, by David Ackerman

As I sat in my office on August 13, reviewing my last sermon to be preached in the APNTS chapel as a full-time professor, I was startled from my thoughts by a roar that sounded like a freight train rumbling down the tracks. No problem, we get big rain storms all the time. It was time to head for the chapel to make sure everything was ready. Happily, that day I remembered my umbrella, but it offered little protection from the torrential downpour of water that was descending upon the campus.

As I neared the chapel, I was welcomed by a small stream that had collected along the walkway to the chapel—and the walkway heads downhill! Upon entering the chapel I was greeted by yet another stream, this one was inside the chapel! By 10:30, the time for chapel to begin, there was only a small handful of people present. Everyone else was stranded in Owens Hall. The rain had not let up after 20 minutes but had only intensified. A student in the chapel noticed that the Tikling river was rapidly rising. Soon, filled with debris, it had reached as high as the old footbridge.

With my mind on the river, I noticed Dr. Floyd Cunningham braving the now six-inch deep stream in front of the chapel. We wondered together if we should cancel chapel for the first time in the seminary's history.

All of a sudden we were interrupted by the approaching shouts of several mothers and children who lived in the small barungay on the backside of the campus. The river had risen so high that their homes were flooded. With no other option, they had climbed onto their roofs and over the back wall. Totally drenched, the closest, safest haven for them was the APNTS chapel.

Within minutes, the chapel was filled with a hundred soaking men, women and children. But also within minutes, the APNTS community was once again mobilized for compassionate care. Several students collected dry clothing left over from a recent yard sale. Others went home to prepare hot soup. Students gathered crying, wet children separated from their families and gave them the assurance that they were not alone. Counseling was offered to concerned parents. Health care was provided for the injured. Before the planned chapel service would have ended, the chapel had been converted into a sanctuary from the storm of destruction.

While half the campus was in the chapel, the other half was in the library. The runoff from the roof was too much for the rain gutters, causing water to pour into the library, leaving a flood several inches thick. Within minutes, computers were dismantled and books were removed to higher places. Students, faculty, and staff grabbed towels, mops, or

anything else that could help divert the water from ruining the library collection.

God enabled the seminary community once again to be a blessing to the community. No one was seriously injured and the library did not experience any permanent damage. A strong sense of community and compassion were the blessings God poured down on us that day.

Building Partnerships for Street Children, by Robert Donahue

The Student Body passed out prayer cards of five boys who have been rescued from the streets recently. A substantial fund will be given to help care for these boys. Some of our students continue to be involved in regular tutoring for the boys.

Drs. Cunningham, Donahue, and Fukue along with one of our senior students, Pastor Nic Abad, met with board members of the Burning Bush Foundation in Antipolo to review our shared partnership work with the street children. We were especially impressed with the testimony of one of the board members, a nationally known artist, who shared about the healing touch of one of the children who showed love and kindness to his wife who had been almost catatonic previously. This couple are now strong supporters for helping the street children to have a home, education, and an opportunity to know Jesus Christ.

It is exciting to see the positive change the Gospel has brought about in the lives of these former street boys. Some are in school for the first time. The happiness they show and the smiles on their faces tell of the peace and joy they have found.

Presidential Search

APNTS remains without a president. That last Board of Trustees meeting in April did not elect a President. During the interim, Dr. Floyd Cunningham continues as Officer in Charge. In addition, Dr. Cunningham also began serving as Regional Education Coordinator for the Asia-Pacific Region in February 2002 and is responsible for facilitating the educational endeavor of the Church of the Nazarene in this part of the world.

2002 Summer Modules

APNTS offered eight courses during the summer of 2002. In addition to courses taught by resident faculty members Hitoshi Fukue, David Ackerman and Robert Donahue, visiting professors included Dr. Lisa Bernal of Point Loma Nazarene University, who taught Systematic Theology, and adjunct professors Carolyn Seifert, Charles Seifert and Daniel Behr. In

addition, APNTS began a Clinical Pastoral Education program under the guidance of Dr. Al Cabrerra, pastor of the nearby Greenhills Christian Fellowship East.

Nazarene Global Theology Conference

In April, over 300 Nazarene theologians from around the world met at Seminario Teologico Nazarene de Guatemala in Guatemala City, Guatemala, Central America, for the first ever global theology conference for the Church of the Nazarene. APNTS was well represented at this conference through the attendance of several faculty members: David Ackerman, Stephen Bennett, Floyd Cunningham, Robert Donahue, and Hitoshi Fukue. Stephen Bennett preached a memorable sermon in both English and Spanish. Stephen and Christi wrote a paper together on memory from New Zealand published in this issue of *The Mediator*. Floyd Cunningham wrote a short response paper on memory and offered one of the key endnotes in the area of memory. Thoughts from both papers are included in Floyd's article in this issue. Hitoshi Fukue presented a paper entitled "Beyond Christ and Culture" (see *The Mediator*, April 2002). In addition to these, others who have taught at APNTS in the past also attended the conference and presented a number of papers including John Nielson, Dean Flemming, and Dwight Swanson. The conference was a significant time of dialogue for theologians with a significant amount of time devoted to small group discussions.

Departure of the Ackermans

After three and a half years of service at APNTS, Dr. David Ackerman, Associate Professor of New Testament, and family will be departing the seminary at the end of Semester I for a new assignment at Nazarene Theological College in Brisbane, Australia, where David will help develop the program in Bible. David has served as the editor of *The Mediator*, chair of several faculty committees, and the first director of the Ministry Development Center. Rhonda has served as the campus nurse. David will continue as an adjunct professor for the seminary.

Faculty Absences

Dr. Stephen and Dr. Christi Bennett are on a year's leave of absence due to the birth of their twin girls, Anna Christi and Judith Reine, on April 22. The girls were born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, and were 6 ½ weeks early. During this year Stephen is teaching Old Testament at Nyack College in New York.

Professor Beverly Gruver is presently on a seven-month furlough working on her Ph.D. in the College of Education in the Department of Teaching and Leadership, the University of Kansas. She is studying Second Language Acquisition and Teaching with a minor in Linguistics. She will be returning to campus at the end of December.

MST Program Begins

Seven students have enrolled this first semester in the new Master of Science in Theology degree program. All but one are taking this program as an additional degree to a Master of Divinity degree. One student is pursuing the Biblical Studies concentration, two students are working on the Christian Faith and Heritage concentration, and four students are enrolled in the Missions concentration. The degree is a thesis degree designed to give students a deeper concentration of study in a particular area of interest. The degree will be of special benefit to those who wish to teach in Bible, those who wish to prepare for missionary service, and those who want to pursue doctoral work.

Semester I Colloquium

The Ministry Development Center of APNTS hosted a colloquium in the APNTS cafeteria on August 10 in follow-up to the Global Theology Conference. The colloquium was well attended by APNTS students and faculty. Four faculty members offered reflections on the four key areas of the global conference: memory (Floyd Cunningham), missions (Paul Fukue), holiness (Robert Donahue), and hope (David Ackerman). These reflections are available on the Internet at www.apnts.com.ph/Center/Papers/index.htm and are included in this issue of *The Mediator*.

Visiting Professors 2002-2003

During Semester I APNTS is privileged to have again Dr. David Lim teach Biblical Hermeneutics and Dr. Carol Hermann teach Thesis Writing. Both are familiar to the APNTS community having helped with these classes in the past. During Semester II, we will welcome a number of visiting professors to the campus. Oh Won Keun (Abraham), an APNTS graduate now working on a Ph.D. at the University of Manchester, will teach in the area of Old Testament. Dr. Judith Bunyi, the president of nearby Harris Memorial College, will teach Oral Communication. Rev. Mrs. Julie Bustamante, a Wesleyan Church AGST Ed.D. candidate, will teach Foundations of Christian Education. Finally, Dr. Charles and Dr. Carolyn Seifert will return to the campus again. This will be the third time the Seiferts have come to APNTS in the past three years.

New Campus Nurse

With the departure of Rhonda Ackerman as campus nurse, the Administrative Council has appointed Jennifer Cacanindin, a registered nurse from the Philippines and current APNTS student, as the campus nurse. The nurse's clinic has been relocated to the bottom floor of the old men's dorm.

Campus Development Update

The campus grounds and buildings continue to undergo constant change. There has been substantial progress with the new Nielson Center for Education and Evangelism. The outer skin of the building is almost complete. The first floor should be ready for occupation by March 2003.

Dedication and Installation

On Friday, April 4, the Nielson Center for Education and Evangelism will be dedicated and the new APNTS president will be installed. Graduation exercises will be held on Saturday, April 5, with Dr. Jerry Porter, General Superintendent for the Church of the Nazarene, as graduation speaker.

Curriculum Revisions

The faculty is presently revising the M.Div. curriculum and plans to submit the revisions soon to the Philippine Commission on Higher Education. This revision proposal will include adding Supervised Ministry in place of Field Education.

New Th.M./Ph.D. Program

APNTS is part of a consortium of seminaries called Asia Graduate School of Theology (AGST). AGST offers a number of courses including Bible, Theology, and Church History. The Church History Th.M./Ph.D. program began Semester I 2002 and is being hosted by APNTS. Dr. Floyd Cunningham is the director of the program. The first batch of students includes two APNTS graduates, Ben Nacion from the Philippines and Alex Shipp from New Zealand.

2003 SUMMER SCHOOL SCHEDULE
Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary

Module One, April 7-16

LITERATURE DEVELOPMENT

Daniel Sangwichei, D.Miss.

Module Two, April 21-May 9

LIFE- SPAN DEVELOPMENT

Carolyn Seifert, D.Min.

HISTORY OF CHURCH MUSIC

Charles Seifert, Ed.D.

COMMUNICATING BIBLICAL HOLINESS IN ASIA-
PACIFIC CONTEXTS

Gilbert Montecastro, Th.D.

Module Three, May 12-May 23

WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Beverly Gruver, M.Ed.

COMMUNICATING CHRIST IN MUSLIM CONTEXTS

Melvin Rigsby, Ph.D.

Fourth Module, May 26-June 13

COMMUNICATING CHRIST IN FOLK RELIGIOUS
CONTEXTS

Neville Bartle, D.Miss.

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY II: PERSON AND WORK OF
CHRIST

Lisa Bernal, Ph.D.

SCRIPT WRITING

Daniel Behr, Ph.D.

Schedule subject to change. For application information, please see page 113.

CALL FOR PAPERS

One of the purposes of *The Mediator* is to provide a forum for dialogue about theological issues related to ministry in Asian and Pacific contexts. In keeping with this purpose, the editorial committee of the journal is seeking quality papers on the following topics. Also welcome are reviews of publications, including books and music.

Leadership Development, Evangelism and Church Growth

(Volume 4, Number 2 [April 2003])

We are looking for articles on issues faced by pastors at the local church. How can pastors more effectively lead, train, and inspire their congregations for effective ministry in their communities? The topics could be addressed from a number of directions including biblical, theological, sociological, historical, missiological, or psychological perspectives. Articles are due by February 2002.

In addition, articles on the following topics are always welcome:

- Various Approaches to Theological Education
- Contextualized Interpretations of Holiness or other Doctrines
- Christian Communication or Cross-cultural Communication
- Compassionate Ministry or Missions

Readers are also welcome to submit papers on topics not listed above.

Guidelines for Submission

Please submit all proposed articles to the editor in both paper and electronic forms. Articles formatted in most modern word processing programs are acceptable. The proposed article should be in standard international English. Citations should contain complete bibliographic information, or a bibliography should be provided at the end of the article. Footnotes are preferred over endnotes. Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, 6th edition, is the preferred standard. Papers may be of any length, although authors may be asked to condense longer papers. A list of non-standard abbreviations should be provided.

BRIDGING CULTURES FOR CHRIST

*For there is one God and one mediator between
God and humanity—
the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).*

Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary is a graduate level school of the Church of the Nazarene. It is located on the outskirts of Manila, Republic of the Philippines.

This graduate school exists to prepare men and women for ministry in the Asia-Pacific region and throughout the world by developing personal and professional attitudes and skills so as to enable analytical reflection upon Christian faith and life, and competencies in the practice of ministry. Since its first graduating class in 1986, APNTS has trained men and women for a wide range of vocations. Today, over 175 graduates serve as pastors, teachers, Bible college presidents, missionaries, and various other church and para-church workers.

APNTS seeks to live out the holistic approach to the Gospel—a distinctive Wesleyan contribution to Christianity.

Degrees and Programs:

APNTS offers a number of degrees and programs including:

- ✓ **Master of Divinity** (93 units) with possible concentrations in Biblical Studies, Religious Education, Missions, and Christian Communication..
- ✓ **Master of Arts in Religious Education** (48 units) with possible concentrations in Curriculum or Church Ministries.
- ✓ **Master of Arts in Christian Communication** (48 units) with emphasis in radio, video and print media.
- ✓ **Master of Science in Theology** (48 unites) with concentrations in Biblical Studies, Christian Faith and History, Christian Ministry, and Missions.

English is the language of instruction in the classrooms. Thus, students must pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or the APNTS English Proficiency Exam to register. A score of 500 is required for the M.Div., and 550 for the M.A. and M.S.T. degrees.

Faculty

The well-qualified teaching staff upholds a high level of education. Adjunct and visiting professors from both within and outside the Asia-Pacific region help expand students' worldviews.

Accreditation

APNTS is accredited by the Philippines Association of Bible & Theological Schools (PABATS), Asia Theological Association (ATA), and the Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA), and is recognized by the Philippines Commission for Higher Education (CHED).

For further information or for an application, please write to the address below and indicate

Program(s) of interest:

- Master of Divinity
- Master of Arts in Christian Communication
- Master of Arts in Religious Education
- Master of Science in Theology

Materials we can provide you:

- Student Catalogue
- Application Form
- Other (please specify)

Please send all correspondence to

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 Taytay, 1920 Rizal
 Philippines

Fax: (63-2) 658-4510

E-mail: apnts@apnts.com.ph

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