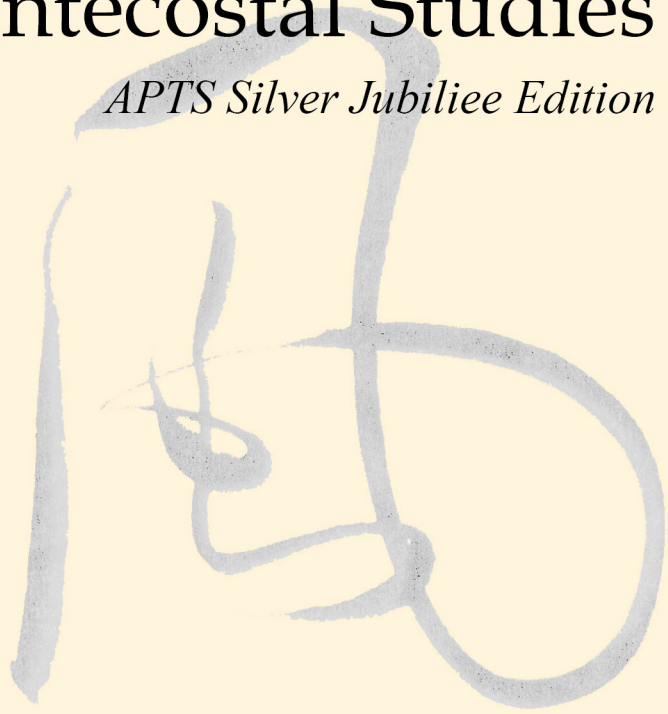
Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies

APTS Silver Jubiliee Edition



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THE JOURNAL SEEKS TO PROVIDE A FORUM: To encourage serious thinking and articulation by Pentecostals/Charismatics in Asia in all disciplines within the field of Pentecostal studies; to promote interaction among Asian Pentecostals/Charismatics and dialogue with other Christian traditions; to stimulate creative contextualization of the Christian faith; and to provide a means for Pentecostals/Charismatics to share their theological reflections.

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EDITORIAL

ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS

[AJPS 27.2 (August 2024), pp. 155-157]

APTS Silver Jubilee Edition

Sixty years have now passed since the Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS), then known as the Far East Advanced School of Theology (FEAST) and located in Metro Manila, first opened its doors to a total of six students. It began by offering only bachelor's degrees because the Assemblies of God Bible institutes in the Asia Pacific and Pacific Oceana regions, which the school was designed to serve, offered only three-year diplomas at the time. As Bible school teachers updated their credentials, FEAST/APTS upgraded to master's degrees and, eventually, added post-graduate programs. As of March, 2024, a total of 1,441 students from fifty nations have graduated with their Bachelor's, Master of Arts or Master of Divinity, or with one of our post-graduate degrees. In many cases, students went on for a second degree at well. Many of them have also gone on to become district and national leaders in Assemblies of God churches or other groups, normally in their homeland. Hundreds more have gone on to teach in Bible schools all over Asia and Pacific Oceana, multiplying the legacy of FEAST/APTS in training workers for the Lord's great harvest. Faculty members have also travelled far and wide in teaching in FEAST/APTS extensions and other Bible schools as they were invited, as well as participating in forums such as the Asia Pacific Theological Association, the Asia Theological Association and the Association for Theological Association in Southeast Asia, as well as others.

With this celebration also comes a significant transition on our campus. The Reverend Tham Wan Yee, who has served school as president for fifteen years, making him the longest serving president in the history of the school, stepped down in March and will be taking up the president's role at the Ecclesia Theological Seminary in Hong Kong. In honor of his outstanding service and leadership, the Board of Directors, upon the recommendation and endorsement of the faculty, conferred a Doctor of Divinity degree on him at our commence exercises in March, 2024. The new president, Dr. Solomon Wang and his wife, Lori, are appointed missionaries with the Assemblies of God (USA) and have already served many years in restricted access nations, as well as with Convoy of Hope.

We chose to celebrate this memorable occasion by showcasing the work of authors who are all affiliated with APTS in one way or another, hopefully demonstrating a part of our contribution to the work of publishing within the Pentecostal-Charismatic traditions in Asia.

Since training Bible school teachers has been one of the core goals of APTS from the beginning, therefore, we lead off this edition with two articles about theological education by two alumni and resident APTS faculty members, Drs. William Toh and Darin R. Clements. Toh's article, Leadership Formation and Theological Education: Assessing the Efficacy of Leadership Formation in Undergraduate Programs at Bible Schools, opens with several questions regarding whether the Church is losing its impact in the world or in fact becoming healthier and more robust in fulfilling the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. If the Church is losing its effectiveness, is it tied to leadership? If so, what role may theological institutions have played in this demise and what should be done? His purpose, then, is to answer these questions within the context of undergraduate theological education.

Darin R. Clements' article is entitled Creating a Dynamic Balance between Theory, Practice, and Calling: A Pedagogical Model for Pentecostal Theological Education in Asia Pacific. He begins by noting a well-known problem that theological education has always struggled with the balance between academic and practical training. He then discusses the challenge of creating a dynamic balance for Pentecostal schools in the Asia Pacific and Oceana regions.

The third article comes from Lora Angeline E. Timenia, another APTS faculty member, regarding Deborah, the prophetess spoken of in Judges 4:4-5:31. In this thought-provoking study, Timenia asks if the Spirit of Yahweh empowered a woman to lead. She also deals with what the significance of Deborah's story for the leadership crisis in her context might mean and if the story is significant for women in Christian leadership today. To answer these questions, she uses a narrative-theological analysis of Deborah's story, beginning with the proposal that the Spirit of Yahweh did indeed anoint Deborah as a leader, prophet, and judge and that her inclusion in the book of Judges reflects Yahweh's sovereignty in choosing his leaders, including women.

APTS faculty member Joel Tejedo's article reflects another excellent contribution by this author, along with that of Timenia, to the developing field of Filipino Pentecostal studies, in which he is already a leading scholar. This article comes from his long term research on megachurches in Metro Manila, a study underwritten by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation.

Noting that many of the megachurches in the Philippines are shaped by different religious traditions and theological orientations, his focus here is on Victory Christian Fellowship (VCF), a church that fits the description of indigenous Third Wave Pentecostals, even though it does not make this claim. He claims that with astute leadership and stewardship, VCF has catered to the needs of different groups and has been innovative in its worship services, especially during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, using social media and technology as well as in-person services. Undergirding it all is their passion for ministry, focused on discipleship to mobilize their people for global mission.

Frank D. Macchia's article is drawn from one of his lectures given at 32nd William W. Menzies Annual Lectureship Series, held on our Baguio City, Philippines, campus from January 29 to February 2, 2024, with the theme of Unity in Diversity: Theology in Light of Pentecost. We have retained his lecture style here.

Macchia's concept of the unity in the diversity of communion of the Body of Christ is deeply rooted in the theology of the Trinity. He goes on to claim that "exploring this concept of Triune communion opens up the doctrine of God as a delightful mystery that allows us to view God as a revolutionary concept, utterly unique in the history of religious thought." How he argues this point and comes to his conclusion is worthy of serious consideration by scholars and others alike.

Last but certainly not least, we have included the Lutheran-Pentecostal 2016–2022 Dialogue Statement: "The Spirit of the Lord Is Upon Me," which summarizes the last round of this dialogue. Our former president, Dr. Tham Wan Yee and two of our adjunct faculty members, Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss and Dr. Olga Zaprometova, were among the participants. We participated in the dialogue and have included it here as part of our efforts in walking out John 17:21 with other members of the Body of Christ.

As always, I welcome your feedback and constructive criticism. You can reach me through www.aptspress.edu or through our office, apts.press@apts.edu.

Warmly,

Dave Johnson, D.Miss.
Managing Editor

[AJPS 27.2 (August 2024), pp. 159-176]

Leadership Formation and Theological Education: Assessing the Efficacy of Leadership Formation in Undergraduate Programs at Bible Schools

William Toh

Introduction

Many may have heard of Howard Hendrick's quote: "The greatest crisis in the world today is a crisis of leadership, and the greatest crisis of leadership is a crisis of character."[1] Numerous individuals share this sentiment, having witnessed and experienced the detrimental effects of poor leadership in secular, church and Christian ministry contexts. John Maxwell echoes sentiments similar to Hendrick's, emphasizing the importance of effective leadership and asserting that "everything rises and falls on leadership."[2] If we agree with these statements, we must honestly ask ourselves: 1) Is the Church ascending or declining in its impact on the world? 2) Is the church becoming healthier and more robust in fulfilling the Great Commandment and the Great Commission? 3) If the Church is losing her effectiveness, could this be attributed to poor church leadership, as suggested by Hendricks and Maxwell? 4) If theological institutions are tasked with producing Christian leaders, could the lack of effective leadership be a contributing factor to their output? 5) If so, what steps can they take to address this issue?

This paper aims to explore these questions and offer some insights from a holistic perspective on the effectiveness of leadership formation within undergraduate programs at Bible schools to foster ongoing reflection and the enhancement of educational practices for equipping Christian leaders in ministry. However, due to page limitations, this article cannot cover all aspects deeply.

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[1]Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 18.

[2]John Maxwell*, Developing the Leaders Within You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), ii.

The Effectiveness of the Church

The purpose of the Church's existence is *Missio Dei*. The mission is to continue Jesus' work on earth and fulfill the task given by God. The question is: Is the Church carrying out this task effectively? The answer is "no" according to Mike Ayers. In the first chapter of his book, *Power to Lead*, Ayers points out that the church in America is declining in attendance and influence.[3] He shows the same statistics to prove his point:

- One-fifth of USA today—and a third of adults under thirty—are religiously unaffiliated - Pew Research Center
- The number of unchurched (anyone who hasn't been to church in the last six months, excluding weddings and funerals) has jumped from 30 percent in 1990 to 43 percent today - George Barna and David Kinneman[4]

He also states the statistics on divorce, out–of–wedlock births, abuse of drugs, pornography, etc., have indicated the church has declined her moral influence on the country.[5]

This phenomenon is not limited to America but is also observed in other parts of the world. Perry Shaw asserts, "In reality, the church across the globe struggles to fulfil the mandate. Both internal and external challenges to the church blur its vision and stifle its effectiveness."[6]

George Barna highlights poor leadership as the primary reason for the church's loss of influence and effectiveness.[7] Dominic Yeo emphasizes the importance of good leadership when he states, "Leadership is essential in every arena of the world we live in . . . .whatever scope and realm, the great leadership is a critical contributor to its success."[8] The church requires effective leaders to lead and guide the church in fulfilling its mandate. Shaw writes, "The church is in desperate need of faithful men and women who can guide the people of God to confront

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[3]Mike Ayers, *Power to Lead: Five Essentials for the Practice of Biblical Leadership* (Spring, TX: RBK Publishing Group, 2018), 1.

[4]Ibid., 2.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education: A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2014), 20.

[7]Ayers, *Power to Lead*, 2.

[8]Dominic Yeo, "Ingredients of Leadership" in *The Pastor and Theological Education: Essays in Memory of Rev. Derek Tan,* eds. Siga Arles, Lily Lim, Tan-Chow MayLing, Brian Wintle (India, Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007), 72.

and overcome the challenges they face, and courageously and clearly fulfil their mission mandate."[9]

Theological Education and Leadership Training

The church is in desperate need of effective leaders and effective leaders are in desperate need of effective equipping. Ayers laments the reason why the church is not as effective as it should be is because the church leaders are "ill equipped to address the problems at hand."[10] Leadership training is greatly needed for all ministers whether lay leaders or clergy. The responsibility of theological education is to create training strategies for leaders to meet the needs of the church. Shaw recognizes the important role of theological education in training the church leaders and he states, "The mission of the Church on earth is to serve the mission of God, and the mission of theological education is to strengthen and accompany the mission of the Church."[11] He further comments:

> A missional-ecclesial foundation for theological education suggests that our schools exist in order to prepare men and women who are capable of guiding the church to be effective in fulfilling the mission of having Christ acknowledged as Lord throughout the earth. Note the preparation of men and women is not the ultimate goal, but a significant means towards the accomplishment of the greater goal of seeing empowered churches which significantly impact their communities, such that the marks of the kingdom of God are evident in the world.[12]

However, some studies show that theological education is not training leaders effectively. In the twenties, a study of over one thousand churches in thirty-two countries by Natural Church Development (NCD) was conducted. The study shows "there is a direct inverse correlation between denominational growth and educational expectation: the more education a denomination expects of its pastors and educators, the more that denomination evidences decline."[13] The research team found that "only 42 percent of pastors in high-quality, high-growth churches had seminary training, while in low-quality, low-growth churches 85

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[9]Shaw, *Transforming*, 20.
[10]Ayers, *Power*, 2.
[11]Shaw, *Transforming*, 20.
[12]Ibid.
[13]Ibid., 17.

percent had graduated from seminary."[14] This study showed that formal theological leadership training did not produce the desired "product" since it had a negative correlation to both quality and growth of churches.

Derek Tan, former president of TCA College, Singapore, also recognizes the inadequate training for the students, and he states, "there are a number of graduates who strongly feel that their training did not adequately prepare them for the ministry. . . . The failure of our graduates to function effectively in ministry in churches has prompted a number of churches to conduct their own training programs for their workers and pastors."[15] This sentiment aligns with R. H. Welch's findings from his survey of seminary graduates entering church ministries, who face the reality of church ministry and wish they had received more leadership training in their theological education.[16]

To investigate the validity of Welch's statement, I reviewed the websites of several theological seminaries in Singapore and found a notable lack of comprehensive leadership courses within their curricula. Specifically, there is a scarcity of courses that focus on topics such as Personal Leadership Development, Team Leadership, Pastoral Leadership, Organizational Leadership, Cross-Cultural Leadership, Change and Conflict Management, Ethical Leadership, Leadership Development through Mentoring and Coaching, and Contemporary Issues in Leadership.

These critical areas of leadership are underrepresented in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs, suggesting a potential gap in the formation of well-rounded and effective leaders for contemporary ministry contexts.

Some Possible Reasons

Theological institutions fall short in training leaders for several possible reasons. First, the institution may not be sure of the purpose of its existence or may have lost sight of the purpose. According to Hardy: "The primary task of theological education is to shape the lives of those who are followers of Jesus so that they can be used by God as leaders

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[14]Ibid.

[15]Derek Tan, "Theological Education in Asia: Present Issues, Challenges and Future Opportunities," in *The Pastor and Theological Education: Essays in Memory of Rev. Derek Tan.* eds. Siga Arles, Lily Lim, Tan-Chow MayLing, Brian Wintle (India, Bangalore: Centre for Contemporary Christianity, 2007), 86.

[16]R. H. Welch, *Church Administration: Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), vii.

and influencers for the good of his kingdom."[17] However, theological education may have become more focused on knowledge and academics like a university. Ferris, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr. state that there is a difference between the mission of theological education and the university:

Research universities exist to preserve and advance cultural and scientific knowledge; Seminaries exists to equip leaders who, in turn, "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12-13). When seminaries orient to the university and the scholarly guild, they equip graduates for the guild rather than for ministry in the church. The seminary can be successful only by orienting to the church.[18]

The institution may have been isolated and separated from the church. Tan questions how relevant theological education is to meeting the needs of the church and he states, "We must not forget that theological institutions are responsible and accountable to the end-users: the church, ministries, and mission agencies with whom their graduates will serve. Our products (graduates) must fulfil their intended reason for being."[19]

Second, the curriculum may be not ministry competent. Tan questions,

> Is our curriculum designed by scholars and for scholars? The challenge in our curriculum is not a question of academic or scholastic competency but contextual relevancy. . . . The design of theological education cannot be institution or academic oriented only but to incorporate church or mission oriented elements in the curricula.[20]

To develop church leaders in the theological institution, the institution needs to understand the nature and function of church leadership. The graduates are ill-equipped for leadership functions such "as inspiring vision in the church, aligning and empowering members in places of service, recruiting and equipping leaders, resolving conflict, building church cultures, bringing changes, and structuring the church for greater effectiveness."[21]

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[17]Steven A. Hardy, *Excellence in Theological Education: Effective Training for Church Leaders*, ICETE Series, edited by Riad Kassis (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2016), 20.

[18]Robert W. Ferris, John R. Lillis, and Ralph E. Enlow, Jr, *Ministry Education That Transforms.* ICETE Series, edited by Riad Kassis. (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2018), 5.

[19]Tan, "Theological Education," 88.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ayers, *Power*, 3.

Third, Tan pointed out that: "It could be the curriculum used is outdated and does not reflect the concerns of the ministry done in today's context."[22] Hardy has received much feedback that theological education does not effectively equip its graduates and questions, "Is a traditional curriculum capable of imparting the practical pastoral and leadership skills that people need for ministry?"[23] Ayers also adds:

> These institutions convey the message that simply knowing about the nature of God and the doctrine of faith is sufficient for a leader in the church. Pastors rely upon teaching, doctrine, and theology to mature the church and impact the people. Many ministers first coming out of seminary see their primary role as that of "teaching." Teaching is not the chief activity they fulfill in day-to-day work. . . .Those who go into ministry end up discovering that the greatest needs of their congregations and the greatest demands upon their time concern functions of leaders.[24]

Fourth, Tan commented that the theological educational institution's philosophy should be re-examined. As the world is getting more complex, re-engineering theological training is needed, the transmission of cognitive knowledge is no more the only mode of training and Tan suggests: "We need to be innovative in searching for a variety of educational processes that seek to bridge the gap between theory and practice."[25]

Curricular Questions for the Theological Education

Churches are in desperate need of leadership, not managers or administrators (although managing and administrating are important), and leadership is in desperate need of effective educational formation. To develop a leader, theological educators need to understand what church leadership is and how they can learn to think and act theologically. Robert K. Martin states:

> When approaches to church leadership are multiplying exponentially and when congregations and denominations are grasping frantically for the next best thing in leadership

[22]Tan, "Theological Education," 87.
[23]Hardy, *Excellence*, 85.
[24]Ayers, *Power*, 2.
[25]Tan, "Theological Education," 87.

> development, is it not the responsibility of reflective practitioners and teachers to boldly commit the socially unpardonable and ask a question of theological method and education: how do we understand what church leadership is and does; and perhaps more importantly, how might we best come to know and describe the process by which church leaders (including ourselves) investigate, reflect, and act theologically?[26]

Curriculum development in Leadership Formation begins with an understanding of what a Christian leader is, the qualifications of a Christian leader, and what leadership skillsets a leader needs to lead and pastor a church.

What is a Christian leader? Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini define a Christian leader as "a servant who uses his or her credibility and capabilities to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given purpose."[27] Expanding upon this, my definition is: "a Christian Leader in the Christian Organization is God's servant, shepherd, and steward with Christlike character and capability, called by God to influence His people to accomplish God's mission by the power of the Holy Spirit."[28]

The above definitions indicate that a Christian leader is someone with godly character and competence, called by God to influence his people to accomplish God's mission. While good character is essential, it is not sufficient on its own to be an effective leader. Psalm 78:72 (NIV 2011) illustrates this balance: "And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them." David exemplified leadership with both godly character and competency. Malphurs and Mancini highlight a significant shortfall in leadership training in the theological institutions, stating, "Competency is based to a great degree on knowing what to do. . . . This is where seminarians come up short far too often. They are trained in crucial areas, such as language, theology, and church history, but receive little training if-any-in [sic] leadership."[29] They stress the importance of leadership development, defining it as "the intentional process of helping established and emerging leaders at every

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[26]Robert K. Martin, "'Mind the Gap': Closing the Distance between Theological Method, Theological Education, and Practical Theology for Religious Leadership," *Journal of Religious Leadership* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 2.

[27]Audrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 20.

[28]William Toh, *Leading and Following: The Effective Subordinate Leaders in Christian Ministry* (Baguio City, Philippines: Sambayanihan Publishers, 2021), 136.

[29]Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 148.

level of ministry to assess and develop their Christian character and acquire, reinforce, and refine their ministry knowledge and skills."[30]

In addition to understanding what defines leaders and their role, theological educators also need to identify the specific leadership knowledge and skill sets required for an effective church leader. They should consistently evaluate whether they are indeed producing leaders who are godly, competent, and relevant.

When designing the curriculum for theological education, it's crucial to include elements that can shape students into effective leaders. Shaw proposes three curricular questions that are valuable for every theological educator to consider. The first question is "What an ideal church might look like, a church that serves the *Missio Dei* faithfully and effectively in the local context, particularly in the sort of context where our students are likely to serve."[31] The second question is about identifying contextual challenges and Shaw states, "It is only as we have a clear articulation of the internal and external challenges to the church that we are in a position to build a curriculum that prepares our students to help the church address these challenges."[32] The third question pertains to the characteristics of an ideal Christian leader, which may be asked as follows:

- What knowledge and thinking skills are necessary for the faithful Christian to connect text with context and context with text, and to continue growing and learning throughout the years ahead?
- What character and attitude traits are needed in the leader so that others will follow?
- What skills are necessary so that the eternal message can be incarnated in word and deed in the leader and those who led?[33]

The Leadership Formation in Theological Education

Leadership formation in the theological institution should be holistic, going beyond mere knowledge. For undergraduates, leadership formation should encompass the holistic development of students' S.E.C.K.S. – spirituality, emotion, character, knowledge, and skills. While theological education may not cover all aspects comprehensively in a short period, it remains an excellent platform for shaping the S.E.C.K.S. of future leaders.

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[30]Ibid. 23.
[31]Shaw, *Transforming*, 21.
[32]Ibid., 22.
[33]Ibid., 23.

Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation in theological education is pivotal as it will affect the students' effectiveness in ministry. Ferries, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr. comment, "Ministry effectiveness flows out of familiarity with God's Word and personal intimacy with God. If the graduates of our seminaries are to bring transformational change to the churches and communities in which they minister, they must be men and women who know God intimately."[34] They further add, "If the ministries of our graduates are to bring the transforming power of the gospel into the lives of those in their communities, we must provide an environment that cultivates spiritual discipline."[35]

Spiritual disciplines are "the means by which we become more like Jesus."[36] Yan and Gregg add, "They help us see how we can become, by the power of the Holy Spirit, an effective, love-filled community of believers growing into the heart of God."[37] Theological education should include teaching undergraduates about spiritual disciplines such as prayer, reading and listening to the word of God, fasting, and service, and fostering spiritual habits among the undergraduates. This approach enables the Holy Spirit to work in transforming their hearts.

Emotional Maturity Development

Emotional maturity cannot be separated from spiritual maturity.[38] Emotions can affect people in ministry. Malphurs and Mancini see the importance of having emotional health and state, "to develop emotional well-being and establish a spiritually healthy climate for ministry, leaders must cultivate their own emotions and those of the people with whom they minister."[39] According to Godwin, emotionally mature and differentiated leaders possess the following "reason muscles" which can be better described as interpersonal muscles:

1. Awareness (the "ability to [notice] actual personal [shortcomings]")

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[34]Robert W Ferries, John R. Lillis, and Ralph E. Enlow, Jr., *Ministry Education*, 71.

[35]Ibid., 71.

[36]Tan Siang Yan and Douglas H. Gregg, *Disciplines of the Holy Spirit: How to Connect to the Spirit's Power and Presence* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997), 31.

[37]Ibid., 31.

[38]Peter Scazzero, *The Emotional Healthy Leader* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 16.

[39]Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 150.

2. Empathy ("the ability to be bothered if your personal [shortcomings] hurt others")
3. Humility (the "ability to acknowledge potential personal [shortcomings]")
4. Responsibility (the ability to admit personal [shortcomings]")
5. Reliability (the "ability to correct personal [shortcomings]")[40]

In my book, I state, "Thriving subordinate leaders learn to lead and manage themselves before they lead and manage others."[41] One of the areas they need to manage is emotions. They must know about their emotions and take charge of them instead of letting their emotions control them"[42] There are four steps to understanding and managing a leader's emotions:

1. Learn to recognize what emotions they are feeling.
2. Identify the emotions, for example, anger, anxiety, sadness, fear, shame, discouragement, surprise, joy, love.
3. Begin to manage the emotion.
4. Explore why they are experiencing certain emotions.[43]

A leader's mood can significantly impact an organization and its followers. Leaders must pay close attention to the emotional signals that they send. It is crucial for them to develop and manage a high degree of positive emotional intelligence for their well-being enabling them to thrive in their ministry. In Daniel Goleman's study of leadership effectiveness, he concludes, "only one-third of a leader's effectiveness lies in the areas of raw intelligence and technical expertise."[44] The other two-thirds comprise the dimensions of emotional intelligence, which includes "qualities such as self-awareness, impulse control, persistence, zeal, self-motivation and empathy."[45]

Emotional intelligence goes beyond self-awareness and managing a leader's own emotions; it also involves recognizing and working with others' emotions. This means that a theological institution could be an excellent place to develop the undergraduates' emotional intelligence as

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[40]Alan Godwin, *How to Solve your People Problems: Dealing with Your Difficult Relationships* (Eugene: Harvest House, 2008), 83.

[41]Toh, *Leading and Following*, 185. A subordinate leader is both a leader and a follower at the same time.

[42]Ibid., 186.

[43]Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 150.

[44]Taken from Reggie McNeal, *Practice Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 55. See D. Goleman, R. Boyatzis, and McKee, *A Primal Leadership*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

[45]Ibid.

the undergraduates will experience different emotions as they study, and as they relate to their faculty members and classmates. It would be a place to help the undergraduates grow in emotional maturity to become differentiated leaders with the following characteristics:

The capacity to separate oneself from surrounding emotional processes; the capacity to obtain clarity about one's own principles and vision; the willingness to be exposed and to be vulnerable; persistence in the face of inertial resistance; and self-regulation in the face of reactive sabotage.[46]

Character Formation

All Christian leaders should lead and shepherd the people with godly character. What is godly character? Malphurs defines character as "the sum total of a person's distinct qualities, both good and bad, that reflects who he or she is. Godly character encompasses those qualities that Scripture identifies with the Godhead or that God prescribes."[47] He comments, "Godly character is the foundation of Christian leadership. . . . Character is the most crucial factor in all relationships"[48] (see Gal 5:19, 22-23 and 1 Pet 1:13-16). Mannoia and Walkermeyer comment:

> Godly character is more valuable than good ministry skills. Both are important, but lack of godly character has far greater consequences. Godly character without good ministry skills is a slow train headed in a good direction. Good ministry skills without godly character are a fast train headed for a washed-out bridge—people are going to get hurt.[49]

Malphurs and Mancini agree and state, "Leaders must be people of good character," and they lament, "In the circles of theological education, character development in students is often assumed. Educators stress the importance of character development but assume that students are working in this area—a poor assumption that has proved disastrous for some of our top Christian leaders."[50] The theological institution can be an excellent place for character formation.

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[46]Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*. Rev. ed. (New York: Church, 2017), 96-97.

[47]Malphurs, *Being Leaders*, 18.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Kelvin W. Mannoia and Larry Walkermeyer, *15 Characteristics of Effective Pastors* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007), 155.

[50]Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders*, 147-148.

The Scriptures 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Titus 1:6-9; and 1 Pet 5:2 provide us with the characteristics and qualifications of church leaders. George Barna expands further in Table 1:[51]

Table 1.

The Christlike Character of a Leader		
A servant's heart	Even-tempered	Loving
Honesty	Joyful	Wise
Loyalty	Gentle	Discerning
Perseverance	Consistent	Encouraging
Trustworthiness	Spiritual depth	Passionate
Courage	Forgiving	Fair
Humility	Compassionate	Patient
Sensitivity	Energetic	Kind
Teachability	Faithful	Merciful
Values-driven	Self-control	Reliable
Optimistic	Teachable	

Theological education should encompass character development for students, fostering continuous growth in their knowledge of God and their openness to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit within them. Jack Hayford says it well, "My character is not shaped by the sum of my information but by the process of a transformation that is as unceasingly needed in me."[52] Character development cannot be simply taught in the classroom. It also requires transformational teaching and modeling. Ferries, Lillis, and Enlow Jr., comment:

> The goal of ministry training should be obedience to truth, not simply recall of truth. Obedience to truth opens the life of a believer—and most critically, a seminary student—to the transformation of the Holy Spirit. When faculty members teach for obedience to truth, they create environments in which ministry education can be transformative."[53]

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[51]George Barna, "Nothing is More Important Than Leadership," in *Leaders on Leadership: Wisdom, Advice and Encouragement on The Art of Leading God's People*, ed. George Barna (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 23.

[52]Jack Hayford, "The Character of a Leader," in *Leaders on Leadership: Wisdom, Advice and Encouragement on the Art of Leading God's People*, edited by George Barna (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1997), 71.

[53]Ferries, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr, *Ministry Education, 6*.

Knowledge Development

Malphurs and Mancini state, "Knowledge impacts the leader's intellect, emphasizing his or her ability to acquire and process content or information. Whether old or new, knowledge of the ministry area is essential for leaders,"[54] and they further add, "Competency is based to a great degree on knowing what to do."[55]

The key question to theological education is: What foundational knowledge is required for undergraduates to lead and minister effectively? Malphurs and Mancini have given a list of what a leader needs to know which I find applicable to undergraduates:

1. Leaders must know God (Romans 6-8).
2. They must know themselves (their divine design, strengths, and weaknesses).
3. They must know people (this involves the use of tools, such as the Personal Profile and the Kiersey Temperament Sorter for training purposes).
4. They must know how to study the Bible and have a general knowledge of the Bible and theology.
5. They must know how to pray.
6. They must know and agree with the organization's statement (core values, mission, vision, strategy, and beliefs or doctrine).
7. They need to know how to think and plan strategically.
8. Those at higher levels must know how to preach, raise money, develop staff, and perform weddings, funerals, and baptisms.[56]

One area I would like to add to this list is that undergraduates must know how to follow their leaders. Most undergraduates are subordinate leaders who are both leaders to their followers and followers of their leaders. They must practice effective followership. Effective followership is about the follower's willingness and competency to follow their leader.[57] Through my research, I've discovered that for a church or Christian organization to grow and thrive, it requires subordinate leaders who exhibit competent leadership and followership at every level. So, while I appreciate John Maxwell's famous quote, "Everything rises

[54]Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders,* 148.
[55]Ibid.
[56]Ibid., 149.
[57]Toh, *Leading and Following,* 48.

and falls on leadership," I believe it's incomplete. I would add that "Everything rises and falls on leadership and followership."[58]

Skills Development

Malphurs and Mancini state, "The leader's skills affect the leader's actions or behavior. . . . Leaders must be able to put into practice what they learn."[59] This highlights the importance of practical application in leadership development. While knowledge is valuable, effective leadership requires more than just knowing; it involves action and implementation.

Malphurs and Mancini categorize two leadership skills. The first is hard or task skills such as preaching, teaching, values discovery, vision and mission casting, strategizing, reflecting, organizing, etc.[60] The second is soft and relational skills including listening, networking, conflict resolution, decision-making, problem-solving, team building, mentoring, and inspiring/motivating.[61] These are just a few examples of the skills and qualities essential for effective ministry leadership. Continual learning, self-reflection, and mentorship can also contribute significantly to leadership development in a ministry context.

Vehicles for Leadership Formation in Theological Education

Malphurs and Mancini state that there are four training types for leaders – learner-driven training, content-driven training, mentor-driven training, and experience-driven training.[62] I would like to modify their four training types into three empowering vehicles for Leadership Formation in Theological Education and I call it C.M.E Empowerment – Content Empowerment, Mentor Empowerment, Experience Empowerment.

Content Empowerment

Theological education provides formal, in-depth training for students in Bible study skills, languages, theology, preaching, teaching, leadership skills, and more. It emphasizes knowledge transfer, and the curriculum guides the training process which typically occurs in

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[58]Ibid., xxii-xxiii.

[59]Malphurs and Mancini, *Building Leaders,* 149.

[60]Taken from Malphurs and Mancini who listed Task Skill Inventory in their book Appendix D, 262.

[61]Malphurs and Mancini have listed Soft Skill Inventory in their book Appendix E, 263.

[62]Ibid., 155.

a classroom setting, where students engage in learning activities and assignments. Theological education heavily relies on this content-based equipping approach. Malphurs and Mancini comment, "Practically speaking, most leadership training falls into this category, since gaining a basic knowledge of the ministry task at hand is an important starting point for any ministry."[63]

However, theological educators should learn and be trained to teach for transformation, moving from theory to practice. While there are various teaching and learning models and principles, educators must go beyond the transfer of information and collaborate with God "in forming our students for transforming ministries in the places to which he calls them."[64]

Mentoring Empowerment

Leadership is often caught more than taught, meaning that it is not solely acquired through classroom instruction. Mentoring plays a vital role in leadership development, especially for emerging leaders like undergraduates. Hardy states, "The best way to help potential leaders to grow in character and ministry skills is through finding experienced leaders with skills and willingness to serve as mentors."[65] Mentors provide them with guidance, coaching, and real-world insights that go beyond what can be taught in the classroom. This personalized approach helps students develop essential leadership skills and qualities in a practical context, contributing significantly to their growth and development as leaders.

Mentoring can take place in various settings, including the classroom, one-to-one sessions, coaching sessions, small group discussions, project groups, field education, and internship settings.

In theological education, faculty members can serve as mentors alongside their teaching roles. They go beyond mere information transfer, transforming students by modeling the knowledge they impart. This approach bridges theological and theoretical understanding with practical application in students' lives and ministries.

Jesus, the greatest teacher, not only taught the truth but also modeled to his disciples how to live the truth. Faculty members, following Jesus' example, model spiritual disciplines and spiritual life formation. Jesus modeled a life of faith, prayer, humility and servanthood, compassion and

[63]Ibid., 153.
[64]Ferries, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr., *Ministry Education,* 59.
[65]Hardy, *Excellence*, 22.

selfless love, holiness and kingdom priority, and intentional obedience.[66] Ferris states, "Although seminary education too often reflected a Hellenistic pursuit of information and a Pharisaic obsession with detail, we can and must redirect ministry education towards obedience to truth taught and modeled."[67]

Experience Empowerment

This empowerment vehicle provides the students with on-the-job training enabling them to gain hands-on experience in ministry. This aspect of education emphasizes practical application and the doing of ministry work. The content-focused empowerment in theological education can sometimes be overly academic lacking sufficient hands-on-ministry experience for undergraduates. According to Kouzes and Posner's research, formation education and training rated a "distant third" in comparison to hands-on "trial and error" experience.[68] They concluded that "There is just no suitable surrogate for learning by doing. . . . The first prescription, then, for becoming a better leader is to broaden your base of experience."[69] Therefore, theological educators should offer more platforms for students within the school to serve, as well as opportunities to serve in churches and other ministries, to enhance their practical experience and leadership development.

Malphurs and Mancini and agree with them, but they stress the environment also plays an important part of formation and when they state, "The uniqueness of the environment is that it is always influencing people, most don't realize it."[70] Theological education should provide a nurturing environment for leadership formation by creating a good culture that promotes kingdom values, right thoughts and attitudes, and right actions.

Conclusion

Theological education plays a crucial role in shaping godly and effective leaders, especially given the significant leadership crisis highlighted by Howard Hendricks, John Maxwell, and many others. This crisis reveals that theological education is not producing leaders as effectively as it should. As the Church faces spiritual warfare against the

[66]Ferries, Lillis, and Enlow, Jr., Ministry Education, 19-21.
[67]Ibid., 22.
[68]Taken from Malphurs and Mancini, 154.
[69]Ibid., 156.
[70]Ibid.

kingdom of darkness, developing leaders capable of expanding God's kingdom becomes even more critical.

In this paper, I have proposed that leadership formation in undergraduate theological training must address the holistic development of students' S.E.C.K.S.—spirituality, emotion, character, knowledge, and skills. I have also identified three empowering vehicles for leadership formation: C.M.E—Content, Mentor, and Experience. Effective leadership development requires more than mere knowledge transfer; it must be rooted in real-world ministry contexts. Therefore, integrating mentorship and experiential learning is essential.

Theological educators must urgently review and adapt their curriculum and teaching methods to ensure they produce leaders who can effectively lead the Church. By embracing these changes, theological institutions can better equip leaders to make a meaningful impact in fulfilling the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

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Creating a Dynamic Balance between Theory, Practice, and Calling: A Pedagogical Model for Pentecostal Theological Education in Asia Pacific

Darin R. Clements

Introduction

Practitioners of theological education always struggle with the balance between theory and practice, academic training and practical training. Two conversations illustrate this issue and inform my thinking in this article. First, a missionary pastor recently shared the reason he stopped hiring Bible school graduates for his ministry. He said that the graduates were well trained and had excellent knowledge, but they were not interested in doing the hard work of the ministry. He shifted his strategy to raising up ministers from among the laity, specifically, people who were already busy doing the work of ministry. This conversation disturbed me because I knew the school to which he was referring by reputation. This pastor's experience with Bible school graduates highlights how difficult it is for even one of the stronger institutions in the Assemblies of God fellowship to strike a healthy balance between academic training and ministry formation.

The second conversation took place several years ago at Cambodia Bible Institute. I was a new Bible school teacher at that time. The school was led by two excellent ministry educators from the Philippines. We hosted a joint program with an evangelical Bible college in Phnom Penh. Some of our students told me about a conversation with students from the other school. These students asked our students what they planned to do for ministry after graduation. Our students were shocked by this question because they were already serving in ministry and were required to continue to do so every weekend if they wished to remain school. As they related this conversation to me, they wondered aloud about the perspective of the students from the other school. Why were they waiting for graduation to serve in the ministry? The answer lies in two different philosophies of theological education. Our school offered in-service training with a strong emphasis on character and skills formation; their

school was more academically oriented, offering traditional pre-service professional ministry training.

These two typical approaches to theological education both have strengths and weaknesses, as well as historical roots. However, when the dynamic between theory and practice is not properly balanced Bible schools can be perceived as no longer relevant to the needs of churches. This article discusses the challenge of creating that dynamic balance in Pentecostal theological education in Asia Pacific. I begin with a discussion and critique of some approaches to striking a healthy balance between theory and practice. Then I propose a pedagogical model that takes a third element into account—calling. Finally, I offer some practical applications from the proposed model for teaching Pentecostal theological education in Asia Pacific.

Striking a Healthy Balance between Theory and Practice

Accreditation standards work from the assumption that theological education has a healthy balance between theory and practice that equips graduates for effective ministry in their constituent churches. Typical indicator 2A.4 of the Asia Pacific Theological Association accreditation standards states, "There are programs which provide opportunities for all students to develop and demonstrate competence in communication and ministry skills."[1] The question is not whether such opportunities contribute to ministry formation alongside academic studies; the question is how academic studies and practical ministry formation interact and contribute to each other in the practice of theological education.

Bernard Ott: Three Primary Models that Influence Theological Education

Bernard Ott has provided an overview of three models of ministerial training that have strongly influenced modern theological education: the academic university model, the American seminary model, and the Bible school movement that developed as part of the modern missionary movement. Each of these models struggles with the balance between theory and practice in a different way.

First, the academic-university model developed in Europe in the 1800s provides academic training for church leadership in which theology is approached as a science within the university context. Students study

[1]Asia Pacific Theological Association, APTA Accreditation Standards, rev. ed. (Manila: Asia Pacific Theological Association, 2016), 5.

in an environment where they are free to explore ideas and think critically apart from denominational doctrine. Supervised vocational training normally follows graduation.[2] Ott offers the critique that the university model "creates, especially in practical theology, an unresolvable conflict between theory and praxis."[3] In other words, this model privileges theory over practice and separates the two into completely distinct categories.

Second, the American seminary model was developed in response to the (perceived) overly scholastic university model as ministerial training that "aims to combine pastoral training (praxis) and academic study (theory) within the North American academic system."[4] An oversimplification of this model is that at the core of this approach are the fourfold divisions of the academic model described above (Bible, history, theology, praxis[5]) and training that prepares graduates for careers as professional clergy.[6] Ott concludes that this model has not resolved the theory-praxis conflict. Rather, it has exacerbated it by elevating "pastoral technique" (praxis) over theory.[7] The ultimate result can be market driven theological education that has only a pragmatic connection to its theoretical/theological foundations.[8]

To be honest, this summary of the seminary model is an oversimplification for the sake of discussion. Many seminaries in Asia would challenge the assertion above. For example, the traditional slogan of Asia Pacific Theological Seminary (APTS) where I serve is "Zeal with Knowledge," which clearly puts the emphasis on passion and action. Regardless of intentions to create balance, the tension between theory and practice persists. Does APTS exist to produce Asian Pentecostal scholars who will contribute to the knowledge and thinking of the church (theory)? Or does it exist to equip graduates for effective ministry and leadership in Asia (praxis)? Our research papers and reading requirements tend toward the first question, but our constituents measure us by the second (as the first conversation in the introduction illustrates). Either

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[2]Bernard Ott, *Understanding and Developing Theological Education*, ICETE series, edited by Riad Kassis (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2016), 122-125.

[3]Ibid., 135.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Asia Pacific Education Office, *Bible School Administration Manual,* rev. ed. (Manila: Asia Pacific Theological Association, 2010), 254-278. The influence of this fourfold curriculum remains. The Asia Pacific Education Office's manual for Bible school administrators has four curricular divisions: Bible, Theology, Church Ministries, and General Education. Bible and Theology courses are primarily theoretical in focus, while practical training takes place under Church Ministries and General Education (which tends to include only courses that contribute to ministerial training).

[6]Ott, *Understanding*, 127.

[7]Ibid., 128, 135.

[8]Ibid., 128-129.

way, it is a difficult challenge to train practitioners in an environment that is so theoretically saturated.

Third, Ott states that most evangelical theological institutions rose up from the Bible school movement that developed as part of the modern missionary movement.[9] For Pentecostals, the institutions founded by D. L. Moody and A. B. Simpson in the 1880s proved to be key paradigms that missionaries followed well into the 20th century as they established Bible schools all over the world.[10] Ott characterizes these schools with the words "spiritual life and missionary passion,"[11] which seem to indicate a strong emphasis on praxis. However, his assessment of evangelical Bible schools concludes that they are "shaped by an understanding of the supremacy of theory over praxis [with a] tendency toward (apologetic) indoctrination."[12] The same can be said for Pentecostal Bible schools in Asia. Indeed, schools that encourage too much free exploration of ideas (e.g., questioning of denominational doctrine or governance) run the risk of being labeled theologically "liberal" and may face a backlash from their constituents.

The Issue of Terminology

Up to this point, I have considered the historical roots of modern theological education without addressing terminology. Ott's quest in the historical survey above was to arrive at an integration of theory and practice. To achieve that integration, he engages in a discussion of the Aristotelian categories of *theoria*, *poiesis*, and *praxis*. In classical terms, these categories correspond to reasoning that arrives at truth (*theoria*), productive skills or ability (*poiesis*), and a way of life characterized by "wisdom, intelligence, and ethics" (*praxis*).[13] He suggests that *praxis*, as a way of life, encompasses and gives the other two their proper place in theological education.[14] One of his most important conclusions for this discussion is that spirituality is best understood as *praxis,* not *poiesis*. As such, it is "not to be understood as yet another discipline to be integrated with others but rather as an integrative force."[15]

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[9]Ibid., 118.

[10]Paul W. Lewis, "A History and Components of Pentecostal Theological Education," in *Theological Education in a Cross-Cultural Context: Essays in Honor of John and Bea Carter*, ed. A. Kay Fountain (Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, 2016), 184.

[11]Ott, *Understanding*, 118.

[12]Ibid., 135.

[13]Ibid., 202-205.

[14]Ibid., 206-207.

[15]Ibid., 208.

Ott's point is very agreeable to Pentecostal theological education. However, because of its grassroots nature, the Aristotelian categories are somewhat removed from the everyday experience of ministerial training in Asia. What is the meaning of "praxis" in modern usage (not in the Aristotelian sense)? It can be misunderstood as "practice," specifically, the "practice" side of the theory-practice balance. Thus, the word "praxis" can easily become a term for practice that is shaped by theory. Robert Banks sees this as insufficient and offers a way out of this conundrum. Building on Marxian usage instead of Aristotelian, he describes praxis as "reflection on life oriented towards and involved in action."[16] Thus, one of the key purposes of theological education is to equip "reflective practitioners," which Banks describes as ministers who are "thinking about practice and thinking in practice."[17]

In light of the above, I would like to suggest a shift in terminology from these esoteric historical terms to terms that, in my opinion, provide more useful tools for shaping holistic theological education—Head, Heart, and Hands (corresponding to cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of learning). I realize that these terms lack sophistication and that they are open to interpretation, but they have proven to be helpful and effective across educational contexts. Working from three historical approaches to educational psychology, Rick Yount refers to "Head, Heart and Hands" as the "Christian Teacher's Triad" of Thinking, Feeling, and Doing. He argues that all of these elements of human nature need to be in balance in Christian education to support the growth of students toward the goal of Christlikeness.[18] The model I propose below suggests one way to bring these elements into dynamic balance for holistic teaching in Pentecostal theological education.

Paul Lewis: Orthodoxy, Orthopraxy, and Orthopathy

This clarification on the meaning of praxis moves the discussion closer to an integration of theory and practice, but it still lacks a model that brings the pieces together. Paul Lewis offers such a model built from the concepts of "*orthodoxy* (right belief); *orthopraxy* (right action); and *orthopathy* (right experience, affection, or passion)."[19] He brings

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[16]Robert Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 160.

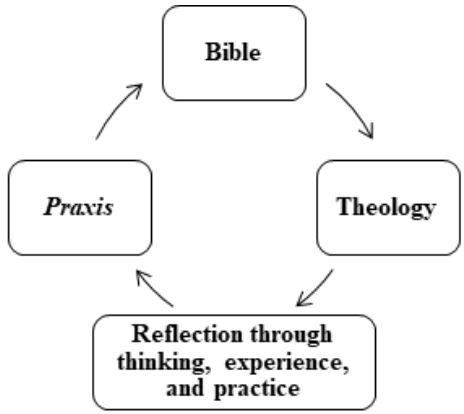
[17]Ibid., 35.

[18]Rick Yount, "The Goal of Christian Education: Christlikeness" in *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*, 2nd ed., ed. William R. Yount (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 185-213.

[19]Lewis, "A History," 188.

these elements into a hermeneutical circle (see Figure 1 below) that begins with the Bible, which leads to theology (*orthodoxy*), which is experienced and reflected upon, which leads to *praxis* (action), and then back to the Bible itself.[20] In this model, *orthodoxy* is primary because it "sets the boundaries for experience and work."[21]

Figure 1. Lewis' hermeneutical circle[22]



This model contains two issues that make it difficult to implement in Pentecostal theological education. First, the model is driven and bounded by *orthodoxy*. This statement is perfectly logical and resonates well with the "people of the book" ethos of Pentecostals. However, reality is not so linear. In my experience, very few students enter Bible school or seminary driven by a desire for *orthodoxy*. Instead, they enrolled out of a sense of calling (*orthopathy*) or a desire to grow in the ministry they were already doing (*orthopraxy*). They bring experiences in life and ministry that shape their understanding of the Bible and their understanding of *orthodoxy*. Even the apostles first experienced the teaching and actions of Jesus for some time before they fully understood his teaching (*orthodoxy*).[23] Notice that Lewis' model, begins with *orthodoxy,* but the hermeneutical circle ultimately makes *praxis* the lens through which *orthodoxy* is understood.[24]

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[20]Ibid., 189.

[21]Ibid., 188.

[22]Ibid., 189.

[23]Luke 9:45 and John 12:16 are two examples of the apostles' inability to fully understand what Jesus was teaching them even after nearly three years as his disciples. They did understand more fully with experience, specifically, the resurrection.

[24]This argument is a cognitive constructivist view of learning, which considers

The second issue with this model is the terminology itself. While Lewis' terms move from esoteric Aristotelian categories to the more concrete notion of "right"-ness, they are still difficult to clarify so as to shape the practice of theological education. Is *orthodoxy* determined by denominational doctrinal statements or discovered through free exploration of ideas? How is "right experience" or "right passion" (*orthopathy*) determined, aside from being bounded by *orthodoxy* (however that is defined)? Even the term *orthopraxy* easily shifts to "right action" in this model, thus losing the holistic nature of the concept of *praxis* (which is also hard to clearly define). The model I present below can alleviate this issue by shifting less constricting terminology and by bringing it into a dynamic rather than hierarchical integration.

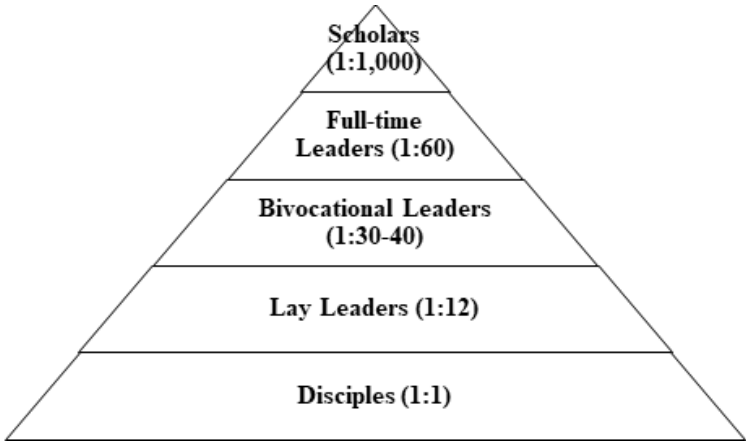
Carl Gibbs: The Training Pyramid

The Training Pyramid as described by Carl Gibbs makes helpful progress in the effort to bring theory and practice into a healthy balance in theological education. The genius of this five-level view of the training work of the church is its emphasis on *intentionality* at all levels and *simultaneous* coordination between the levels.[25] The five levels can be seen in Figure 2 below, which includes ratios suggested by Gibbs for the sake of illustration.

how students construct knowledge from experience and from interaction with the world around them. Jack Snowman, Rick McCown, and Robert Biehler, *Psychology Applied to Teaching,* 12th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2009), 326-327.

[25]Carl B. Gibbs, "The Training Pyramid," in *Theological Education in a Cross-Cultural Context: Essays in Honor of John and Bea Carter*, ed. A. Kay Fountain (Baguio City, Philippines: APTS Press, 2016), 103.

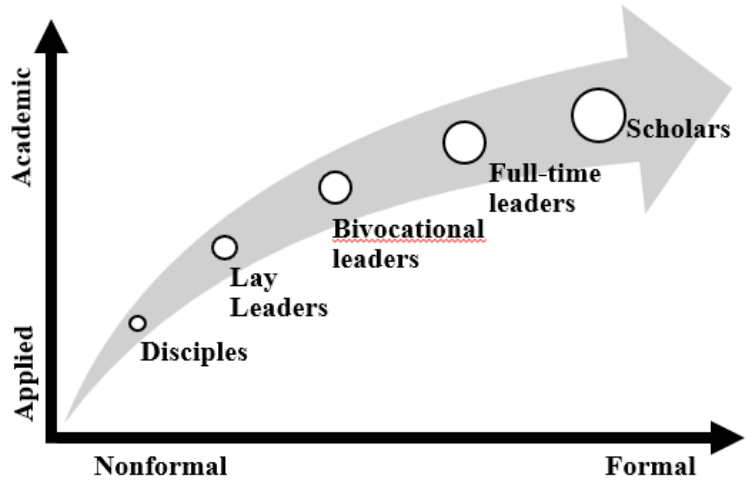
Figure 2. The Training Pyramid[26]



According to Gibbs, the lower three levels of the Training Pyramid drive the growth of a movement, while the top two levels provide organizational and doctrinal stability.[27] The training at the bottom two levels drives local church growth, while training for the middle level (bivocational leaders) drives the growth of the movement, especially through church planting.[28] Each level requires a different balance between theory and practice, as well as a different kind of organizational support structure. Training for the bottom two levels is the responsibility of the local church and includes a strong emphasis on practice supported by the necessary theory. The top two levels require resources beyond that of individual local churches. In order to fulfill their role in the movement, these levels need a strong emphasis on theory that includes a larger perspective of Christianity and theology. Figure 3 illustrates the increasing emphasis on theory and academic learning with each level of the Training Pyramid.

[26]Adapted from Gibbs, 104.
[27]Gibbs, *The Training*, 103-104.
[28]Ibid., 105-107.

Figure 3. Nonformal to formal training[29]



Gibb's presentation of the Training Pyramid helps us avoid two problems. First, the Training Pyramid highlights the types of training that need to be *intentionally* carried out at each level, specifically in terms of the theory-practice balance. One common issue in theological education is that the training offered does not fit the practical training needs of students in their current level of ministry development. When the emphasis on theory is too strong at the Bible school level, graduates are better prepared for ongoing academic studies than for effective service in their local churches.

Second, the Training Pyramid brings the levels into a continuum with each other, which highlights the *simultaneous* contribution of each level (see Figure 3). This insight guards against unbiblical attitudes in which the Bible school says to the seminary, "I have no need of you" (see 1 Cor 12:21), or the scholar looks down on the Bible school teacher as less significant in the kingdom of God. A proper balance between theory and practice at all levels helps theological educators avoid such short-sighted and prideful views of their work. Such views, whether healthy or short-sighted, will be passed on to students through their teaching.

[29]Ibid., 105.

A Pedagogical Model for a Dynamic Balance between Theory, Practice, and Calling

This section proposes an approach to Bible school teaching that creates a dynamic balance between theory, practice, and calling. Before discussing the elements of the approach, we need to consider two differences between theological education and other forms of higher education. First, Pentecostal theological education is in-service training by its nature. Typical higher education institutions provide pre-service training for work that requires externally defined professional skills. Students are not qualified to practice in their field until they have completed the required education and received appropriate certification. In contrast, as the Training Pyramid illustrates, Pentecostal theological education is part of the larger picture of equipping people who already "have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us" (Rom 12:6). Since Bible school students are already gifted by God for service, the pedagogy employed in Pentecostal theological education needs to fit with the biblically described process of growth into Christlikeness and effective service that began before students entered the classroom.[30]

Second, Pentecostal Bible schools should seek to equip as many people as possible for the ministry, unlike higher education institutions that typically have "weed out" classes to ensure that low performing students fail out of their programs.[31] Admissions processes may include entrance interviews, written testimonies, and character references, but once they have been accepted, Bible schools assume the responsibility of helping students grow in knowledge, in ministry skills, in their faith, and in their callings. The "weeding out" process has to do with sanctification (spiritual and character formation), not professional qualifications.

These two differences between Pentecostal theological education and other forms of higher education call for a pedagogical approach that brings students to the historical and biblical content (theory) in a way that is contextually relevant (practice) and that works with their sense of place in the body of Christ (calling). The three elements of this model are developed from the general categories of Head (theory, the cognitive domain), Heart (the affective domain), and Hands (the behavioral domain). In this model, the element of Hands is defined as ministry practice. The element of Heart is narrowed to calling for ministry service, which includes spiritual and character formation.

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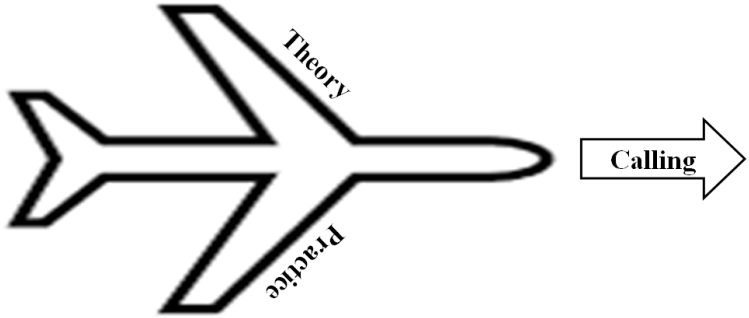
[30]See also Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:1-31; and Eph 4:11-16.

[31]"Weed out" classes are important in many professions. For example, students who fail anatomy class are not qualified to go on to medical school.

The pedagogical model can be conceived of as an airplane in flight. Theory and practice are the wings, while thrust is the force that pulls the airplane forward[32] (see Figure 4 below). Adjustments to the wings determine altitude and flight path. In the same way, adjustments to the balance between theory and practice determine the direction of a Bible school course. Following Ott's argument for theory-practice integration,[33] all Bible school courses should have interaction between theory and practice. This view is an adjustment to curriculum-level thinking that contends some courses exist for gaining knowledge (such as Bible and theology), while other courses build on that knowledge to guide students in forming practical ministry skills.

Figure 4. Model for a dynamic balance between theory, practice, and calling



To state this view of integration in a different way, practical courses need to be supported by theory to help students continue to grow in ministry skills in the future, and theoretical courses need explicit implications for practice to ensure relevance and encourage depth of learning. Some might object to the second part of this statement on the grounds that it would sacrifice course content (especially theory). On the contrary, showing the relevance of theory through practical applications leads to deeper understanding because new information, concepts, or skills connect with what students already know. This argument is supported by John Milton Gregory's fourth law of teaching: "The LESSON to be mastered must be explicable in terms of truth already known by the learner—the UNKNOWN must be explained by means of

[32]I confess that I have a minimal understanding of the principles of flight. I trust that readers will overlook inadequacies in this analogy.

[33]Ott, *Understanding*, 205-206.

the KNOWN."[34] This view holds that, less content could result in a lot more understanding.

The third element in the model is calling, illustrated in Figure 4 as the thrust that pulls the aircraft forward. Calling is the "heart" element of the Head-Heart-Hands triad. It includes student motivation for learning, as well as divine gifting and purpose for their lives. Bible school teachers intuitively understand that their work is part of the Holy Spirit's work in the lives of students as they respond to God's call, develop their Spirit-given gifts, and follow God's direction for their lives and ministries. Calling precedes theological education, animates the learning/growing process, and carries graduates forward in ministry.

Calling is illustrated as thrust that pulls the aircraft forward because, like Ott's conceptualization of *praxis*,[35] it provides the in-service dynamic of theological education by helping students construct a contextual understanding of theory and practice. A pilot can make perfect adjustments to the wings to fly to a certain destination, but the adjustments are meaningless without thrust. In the same way, the best designed course or the most relevant curriculum will not produce effective ministers unless the element of calling is recognized and involved in the process. Paul Lewis raised this point in relation to his model of *orthodoxy*, *orthopathy*, and *orthopraxy*: "It is apparent that, while attitudes are the hardest to train or evaluate, frequently a school's reputation is dependent on the attitudes of its graduates."[36]

In summary, this pedagogical model for Pentecostal theological education in Asia Pacific utilizes a dynamic balance between theory, practice, and calling. There is no need to prioritize one element over the others. Rather, good theological educators are aware of how these elements interact and make use of them to encourage deep learning in their students. Though this article focuses on pedagogy, this model can contribute to holistic theological education as a whole—throughout the curriculum, in every course, in every class period, and in the total experience of students in an institution.

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[34]John Milton Gregory, *The Seven Laws of Teaching* (Boston: Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society, 1886, printed by ReadaClassic.com, San Bernardino, CA, December 12, 2015), 11, emphasis original.

[35]Ott, *Understanding*, 208

[36]Lewis, "A History," 188.

Three Applications of the Model for Pentecostal Theological Education in Asia Pacific

The model described above presents three elements for teaching in Pentecostal theological education that can guide course construction, classroom interaction, and the design of assignments. The interaction between the three is a dynamic balance whether course content is oriented toward theory or designed to support the development of ministry skills. This section suggests three possible applications of this dynamic to teaching and course design.

Begin and End with the Call

In flight, thrust is everything. No thrust, no flight, regardless of the skill of the pilot. In the same way, theological educators are not just transmitting knowledge and skills to a new generation like a tea pot pouring tea into empty cups. They are not experts whose job it is to download as much information as possible into a class period so that students will get maximum value for their time and money. Rather, theological education is part of God's process of formation for women and men so they can serve fruitfully and faithfully in his kingdom. Bible school students walk through the classroom door with this motivation in their hearts. Good teachers recognize this heart element and build up on it.

Bible school teachers are wise to affirm calling over classroom performance. "A" students do not always make "A" pastors. Sometimes, students who struggle the most with academics (and overcome!) serve the most effectively in their communities and even rise to district or national leadership. Most Bible schools give awards for academic excellence and leadership, but we should also value Christian character, servanthood, and growth. At our school, Cambodia Bible Institute, we offered an award for the most academic improvement (which was never available to "A" students).

Beginning and ending with the call applies to assessments like research papers, class presentations, and exams. These are educational tools to be used in the teaching-learning process. Most of them are not meant to develop ministry skills. I am not suggesting that teachers should only give assignments that develop ministry skills. Rather, educators need to remember that course requirements are part of the educational process that should ultimately support the development of ministry skills. This requires keeping the ministry context of the students in mind because that is where their callings will be worked out publicly.

Keep the Ministry Context in View

Returning to Gregory's fourth law of teaching, good teaching builds on what students already know. Students learn more deeply when they can make connections between course content and their ministry context. This is the "so what" question of theological education at the undergraduate level. Moreover, when students make those connections explicit through choice assignments (like research papers and class presentations), they are testing out course content in a controlled environment. When those connections are clear in class presentations, classmates have the opportunity to learn about other ministry contexts and to see how course material could be applied in different ways.

Keeping the ministry context of the students in view does not mean that course content should be rigidly restricted to only what is currently relevant. This "just in time" view of theological education is short-sighted and does not give students a strong foundation for future ministry development. Bernard Ott argues that theological education institutions provide "appropriate distance from church praxis and make possible a dialogue that goes beyond the boundaries of the church (for example in the context of higher education). Nonetheless, the church remains the primary place of responsibility and relationship."[37]

To return to the analogy of an airplane in flight, keeping the ministry context in view in a local Bible school could mean giving students a bird's eye view of the context. The classroom provides a place where students can expand their understanding of the Bible and ministry and think about issues that would be difficult to discuss in a local church setting, but they are still relatively close to the ground (context). Such thinking can prepare them for thoughtful decision-making in the future when they bear the burden of leadership. Graduate level studies, on the other hand, take students up to a view at 30,000 feet. As they read scholars from all over the world, including views which need to be refuted, their view of the context grows. They engage theoretical material that is not needed at the Bible school level (where there is a stronger emphasis on practical ministry development). However, the plane is still flying to a given destination. Keeping that destination context in view helps seminary students remain grounded in their original callings and prepares them for humble service when they disembark for their ministry assignment.

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[37]Ott, *Understanding*, 197.

The 75-25 Rule

I began to develop the concepts presented in this article when I was the academic dean of Cambodia Bible Institute, especially after reading Carl Gibbs' presentation of the Training Pyramid described above. I was responding to two factors. First, we were using the undergraduate program of Global University as a benchmark for curriculum development.[38] Since most of our faculty were not qualified to write their own courses, we used some of the Global University textbooks for course content. Second, many of our teachers taught primarily through lectures. They loved their students, were passionate about the subjects they taught, and wanted to see the church in Cambodia grow strong. However, their teaching approach naturally leaned toward transmission of information.

I developed the 75-25 rule to help our teachers create better theory-practice integration. The rule had two principles. First, as a general rule, covering 75 percent of the material in the textbook was considered sufficient for both practical and theoretical courses. We did not want teachers to feel that they were slaves to textbooks that were not written with Cambodia in mind. Beyond clearly foundational material, teachers were expected to make judgements about what material to prioritize based on the contextual needs of the students. They were also free to add relevant content that was not addressed in the textbook.

Second, I asked that courses which focused on knowledge/theory contain up to 25 percent of class time for the practical application of the material. As I argued above, this approach gives students opportunities to process course content more deeply. For example, the situation did not support traditional research papers. So, knowledge-focused courses often required students to process course content by writing sermons and lessons for use in the ministries where they served every weekend or making class presentations on issues relevant to their ministry contexts.

Conclusion

Steven Hardy rightly asserts that "The primary educational goal of a theological curriculum should be to equip real people for real ministry."[39] Like it or not, theological education institutions are judged by the "real ministry" of their graduates. Church leaders and members will see the

[38]"Undergraduate School of Bible and Theology," Global University, https://globaluniversity.edu/academics/undergraduate/ (accessed December 14, 2023).

[39]Steven A. Hardy, *Excellence in Theological Education: Effective Training for Church Leaders*, ICETE Series, ed. Riad Kassis (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2016), 93.

attitudes and faith of graduates first, then their ministry skills, and after that their knowledge. However, in service to the church, theological education institutions should train graduates in what they truly need, not just what is popular. Many schools were founded with a passion for ministry training, only to be pulled over time into an academic paradigm very different from that original vision, resulting in producing graduates with great knowledge (theory) and little ability to serve (practice).

This article has reflected on the historical tension between theory and practice that has shaped approaches to theological education and fragmented Bible school curriculum. The ideas of Bernard Ott, Paul Lewis, Robert Banks, and Carl Gibbs represent significant efforts to create healthy theory-practice integration in theological education at the institutional and curricular levels. This article has proposed a pedagogical model for teachers at Pentecostal Bible schools in Asia Pacific that can help them strike a dynamic balance between theory, practice, and calling in their classes. Students and teachers in Pentecostal schools bring a powerful sense of calling into the classroom. When properly harnessed, that calling has the potential to create a healthy and dynamic integration of theory and practice that will powerfully equip all God's people for works of service (Eph 4:12).

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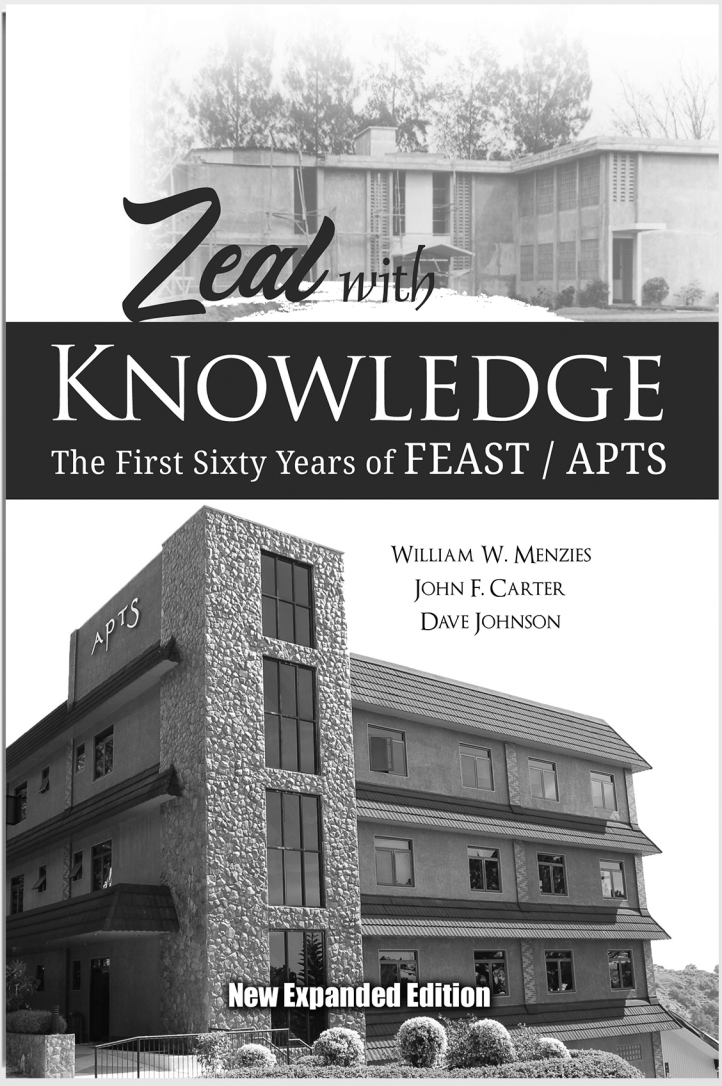

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Did the Spirit of Yahweh Empower a Woman to Lead?

Lora Angeline E. Timenia

Introduction

The book of Judges remains prominent in Old Testament leadership studies because of its narratological presentation of Yahweh's leaders during pre-monarchic Israel. Although polar discussions exist about the book's collective purpose, the need for ideological leadership continues as one of the accepted threads that cohere individual narratives into a unified literature.[1] Yahweh was Israel's sovereign Lord (Judg 8:23), judges were his chosen leaders (Judg 3:9-11, 15-30; 4:4; 6:14), and covenantal faithfulness (or lack thereof) determined the peace of the land (Judg 2:1-5); cf., Deut 28, Josh 23). Lee Roy Martin writes,

> The book begins with the question of leadership, ends with the question of leadership, and concerns itself with the stories of fourteen leaders. God chooses leaders; Gideon refuses monarchic leadership; Abimelech claims leadership, and lack of decisive leadership seems to cause anarchy (Judges 21:25).[2]

Hence, this book undeniably offers a glimpse into Yahweh's stance on choosing and empowering leaders. The world of the judges may not be exactly like today, but for contemporary Christians (spiritual Israelites), the need for ideological leaders endures. Yahweh is still our sovereign Lord. He remains the final arbiter of ideological leadership.

The enduring purposes of the book of Judges come into play most significantly in the ongoing debate about women in Christian leadership. Many still assume that Christian leadership belongs to the sphere of men. In fact, at first glance, the book of Judges may be mistaken as

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[1]Trent C. Butler, "Judges," in *Word Biblical Commentary*, 8, ed. Bruce M. Metzger et al., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), lxiii; Lillian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges*, Bible and Literature Series, 14 (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1989), 18.

[2]Lee Roy Martin, *The Unheard Voice of God: A Pentecostal Hearing of the Book of Judges*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology. Supplement Series 32 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008), 92.

promoting androcentric leadership. Most judges were men; the era itself is presumed patriarchal. Yet, in the litany of pre-monarchic judges, a woman named Deborah was identified as a major judge with better accolades than the other judges. She was a prophetess, a wife, and a major judge of Israel (Judg 4:4-5).[3]

So, this study asks, did the Spirit of Yahweh empower a woman to lead? What is the significance of Deborah's story for the leadership crisis in the Deuteronomic History (DtrH) of Israel? Is her story significant for women in Christian leadership today? To answer these questions, the study presents a narrative-theological analysis of Deborah's story in Judges 4, proceeding from deductive plot analysis to theological synthesis.

In the interim, this study proposes that the Spirit of Yahweh empowered Deborah as a leader, enabling her to be both prophet and judge, for the deliverance of Israel. Her inclusion in the book of Judges highlights Yahweh's sovereignty in choosing his agents and his inclusion of women in leadership.

Prologue

Purpose of the Book of Judges

Famed for its seemingly disjointed and 'ironic' stories,[4] Judges offers a window into pre-monarchic Israel, a period beginning after Joshua's era (Judg 1:1). Martin Noth proposed an Israelite amphictyony during this period, that is, a confederation of twelve tribes, converging around a central 'cult' sanctuary established by Joshua at Shechem (Josh 24).[5] Contra Noth's theory, Yairah Amit argues that the themes of 'cult centralization' and the forming of 'twelve tribes' were still foreign to those in the era of Judges.[6] Instead, she proposes that the book was written based on "pre-existing literature of northern heroes" by Judahite

[3]Butler, *Judges*, 90-91. Butler comments that in Judg 4:4 the author uses the terms woman, prophetess, and wife to emphasize that this judge is a female, not a male.

[4]For a discussion on irony as the book's main literary device see Klein, *The Triumph of Irony*, 11–21.

[5]Martin Noth, *History of Israel*, trans. Stanley Godman, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 53ff, 68ff; A. D. H. Mayes, *Israel in the Period of the Judges*, vol. 29, Studies in Biblical Theology 2nd (Naperville, IL: A.R. Allenson, 1974), 7-14.

[6]Yairah Amit, "The Book of Judges: Fruit of 100 Years of Creativity," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures*, in *Conversation with Thomas Römer, The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction*, ed. Raymond F. Person Jr, (London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 9 (2009): 32-33, https://doi.org/10.5508/jhs.2009.v9.a17.

tribes trying to understand Yahweh's actions in their history.[7] She posits that Judges is a "Judahite indictment against the northern kingdom. . . . It suggests by the use of cyclicity that the northern society was a serial sinner."[8] J. P. U. Lilley, however, advocates that the stories in Judges don't just depict a cyclicity but also a downward progression.[9] The pastiche of narratives concludes with Israel's moral disintegration (Judg 17:6; 21:25), rhetorically advocating for ideological leadership and devotion to Yahweh.

Butler affirms this advocacy of ideological leadership (monarchial, in his theory) as one of the purposes of the book since he posits that Judges presents a historical reversal of all that Joshua established.[10] Ultimately, the book's original recipients are inundated with the irony of "who is king when all is right in my eyes? (17:1-21:25)."[11] Although complex issues in the book linger as subjects of discourse, the need for an ideological leader—one who serves in covenant faithfulness to Yahweh, remains front and center.

The Spirit in the Book of Judges

Directly related to the questions of this paper is a sub-theme in the book of Judges—the Spirit's empowerment. In the book of Judges, one can read the Spirit of Yahweh empowering a person for a special task: for example, to be a judge or prophet. The people of Israel saw the Spirit as the presence and power of Yahweh. Michael L. Brown explained how the biblical authors progressively saw the Spirit from one who was present (even superintending) in creation to the one divinely enabling persons for special tasks.[12] In later Jewish writings, the Spirit is identified as the "spirit of prophecy."[13] For the Jews, the one who speaks divine revelation or inspiration is empowered by the Spirit of Yahweh.

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[7]Ibid., 31.

[8]Ibid., 34.

[9]J. P. U. Lilley, "A Literary Appreciation of the Book of Judges," *TynBul* 18 (1967): 98-99.

[10]Butler, *Judges*, lvii.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Michael L. Brown, "The Spirit in the Pentateuch: From Creation to Supernatural Empowerment," in *The Spirit throughout the Canon: Pentecostal Pneumatology*, ed. Craig S. Keener and L. William Jr. Oliverio, vol. 48, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2022), 6-10.

[13]Ibid., 10; c.f. D. E. Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 200; Robert P. Menzies, *The Development of Early Christian Pneumatology with Special Reference to Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 112.

The book of Judges, however, does not have a formulaic way of describing the empowerment of the Spirit. Since the period of Judges was within what modern scholars called the Deuteronomic History (DtrH) of Israel,[14] the way the Spirit empowered people depended on the situation.[15] Sometimes the Spirit explicitly empowers, as in the case of Gideon being "clothed" with the Spirit (Judg 6:34), or implicitly like Deborah, whose prophecies were fulfilled (Judg 4:9; 4:14-23).[16] The prophecy-fulfillment motif, as in Deborah's case, can be observed in the entire DtrH, indicating the acceptance of prophecy as evidence of the Spirit's empowerment.[17]

Interestingly, Brian Neil Peterson states that "none of the specific prophets noted in the DtrH are explicitly said to have had the Spirit enter into them in the way the Spirit enters, for example Ezekiel (Ezek 2:2; 3:24). Instead, it is assumed in the DtrH that the prophets have the Spirit working within them when they speak the words of God (cf. Deut 18:18)." [18] Hence, in books within DtrH, the Spirit's empowerment may be both explicitly and implicitly described, and the prophecy-fulfillment motif is used as evidence of divine endowment. This important aspect of DtrH pneumatology must be taken into consideration in the analysis of Deborah's story.

Plot Analysis of Judges 4

Deborah's epic comes into play from the backdrop of Israel's pre-monarchic history. The plot of the narrative can be traced in Judges 4,[19]

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[14]The Deuteronomistic History (DtrH) mentioned here refers to the period between Israel's settlement in the land to the destruction and exile of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. It spans roughly 820 years. Brian Neil Peterson, "The Spirit in the DtrH/Former Prophets: 'And the Spirit Came Upon Him,'" in *The Spirit throughout the Canon: Pentecostal Pneumatology*, ed. Craig S. Keener and L. William Oliverio, Jr., vol. 48, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 16; c. f. Amit, "The Book of Judges," 2009, 32-33.

[15]Peterson, "The Spirit in the DtrH/Former Prophets," 16-17.

[16]Ibid., 18, 21.

[17]Ibid., 21.

[18]Ibid., 17.

[19]Judges 4 and 5 are, respectively, a prose and a poetic version of the same story within pre-monarchic Israel's history. Since the current study is narrative-theological, the paper will limit its analysis on Judges 4 (the prose version). Although, the study will also refer to Judges 5 for theological analysis. See Butler, *Judges*, 82.

the prose portion of the pericope.[20] The story communicates a "change"[21] that depicts repercussions not just for the isolated epic but also for the metanarrative of the book of Judges. Klein proposes that the protagonist in the book of Judges is the people of Israel, and each judge represents the potential nation.[22] In line with her position, this study posits that Deborah and Barak are the protagonists in Judges 4; both were judges, albeit with different functions.[23]

Deborah is directly described as a prophet and a judge in Judges 4:4-5. Jewish tradition described her as a teacher of the Torah, and one of the seven prophetesses of Israel (*BT Megillah* 14a).[24] Moreover, the Hebrew term *hi'shophtah* used to describe Deborah as judging Israel (v. 4) "broadly denotes governing and can refer to administration of kings, judges, and chiefs."[25] Hence, most Jewish tradition recognized her as an extraordinary leader of the community at that time.[26]

Barak, on the other hand, was supposed to be a leader like Joshua, a military deliverer. This contention is supported by Susan Ackerman, who notes that in Judges 5 Deborah is depicted as the military commander while Barak appears as her second-in-command.[27] However, The Jewish Midrash notes that Barak was initially the chief character but he assigned himself a secondary role due to lack of faith.[28] In representing the people of Israel, Deborah and Barak represent two kinds of people in a covenant

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[20]A full discussion on biblical narratives' plot and pediment structure can be read in Amit's book. Yairah Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives: Literary Criticisms and the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 46–48.

[21]A "change" in the story indicates something significant has happened. Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives,* 46.

[22]Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges*, 17.

[23]Deborah was identified as a prophet-judge in Judg 4. Barak, on the other hand, was mentioned in 1 Sam 12:11 and Heb 11:32 as a judge (military deliverer) like Gideon, Jephthah and Samson. See Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen : Women in Judges and Biblical Israel*, 1st ed., Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 30.

[24]Tamar Kadari, "Deborah 2: Midrash and Aggadah," in *The Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women* (March 20, 2009), Jewish Women's Archive, https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/deborah-2-midrash-and-aggadah.

[25]Gafney, *Daughters of Miriam*, 89; c.f. Nili Sacher Fox, *In the Service of the King: Officialdom in Ancient Israel and Judah* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2000), 164.

[26]There is a midrashim tradition criticizing Deborah and Huldah's haughtiness, but these accounts are attributed to some rabbinic traditions' criticism against women transgressing gender norms. Most rabbinic traditions still laud Deborah as one of the extremely righteous and praiseworthy women in the Bible. See Kadari, "Deborah 2: Midrash and Aggadah."

[27]Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, 31.

[28]Kadari, "Deborah 2: Midrash and Aggadah."

relationship with Yahweh, one with complete obedience and the other with conditional obedience.

An analysis of the plot structure may further elucidate these characterizations. Butler proposes a division of Judges 4 using Amit's categories in the following manner:

Table 1. Trent Butler's Plot Tracing of Judges 4

Narrative Element	*Function*	*Passage*	*Signal of Change*
Exposition	Introducing the main characters	vv. 1-5	Disjunctive sentence opening
Complication	Conditional acceptance of the call to arms	vv. 6-8	Change of characters
Change	Search for a woman's glory	vv. 9-11	Conditional sentence
Unraveling	Man's victory without glory	vv. 12-15	Change of place
Climax	Woman gaining glory in unmanning generals	vv. 16-21	Two disjunctive sentences
Ending or denouement	Glory revealed	v. 22	"just then"

Source: Trent C. Butler, "Judges," in *Word Biblical Commentary 8*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and et al (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 83-84.

Butler adds verses 23-24 in his proffered outline as editorial interpretations of the entire prose narrative.[29] Most scholars further comment that Judges 4 and 5 are the same story in different genres (prose and poetry).[30]

Although Butler's proposition is well-thought-out, there is notable androcentrism in his interpretation. For instance, he identifies the story's climax as a woman gaining glory in unmanning generals. Hidden in this categorization is the assumption that a woman's glory affects the

[29]Butler, *Judges*, lxxxv.

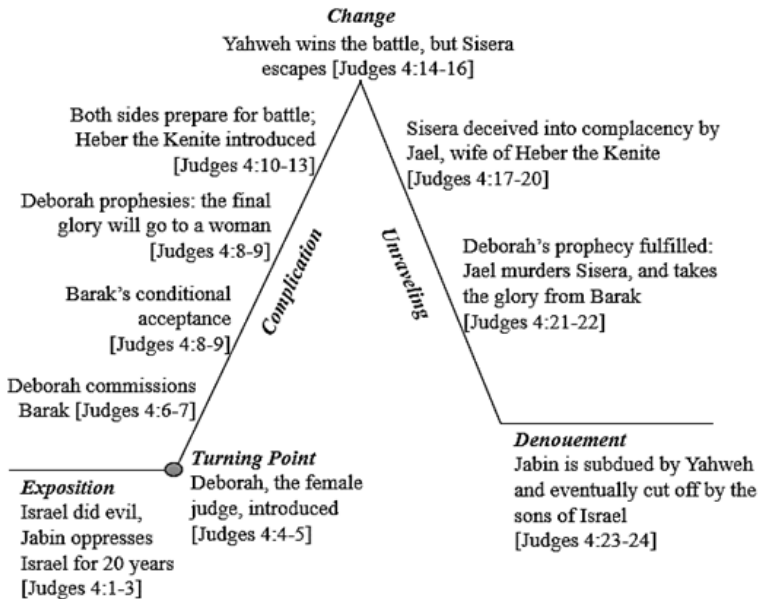
[30]Ibid., 82; Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, 30; Barry G. Webb, *The Book of the Judges: An Integrated Reading*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 46 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 138-39.

ontology of manhood. The idea that being defeated by a woman makes one less of a man seems like a gender-sensitive interpretation of a historical narrative. Perhaps the story has a deeper meaning than just which gender claimed glory.

With this skepticism in mind, the current study proposes an alternative interpretation of the story using another form of narrative criticism—a deductive plot analysis.[31] Applying Amit's concept of a pediment structure,[32] the current study proposes that the battle narrative reaches its climax and demonstrates a 'change' in the atypical battle victory between Israel's army and Jabin's army, as foretold by Deborah. Unlike the previous judge narrative, where Yahweh's victory was straightforward and complete, the victory in this narrative is incomplete and offers an ironic twist.

An alternative plot tracing of Judges 4 can be as follows:

Figure 1. Proposed Pediment Plot Structure of Judges 4



[31]Since Judges 4 is a battle narrative, analyzing its content and literary presentation may help unfold the story's meaning. Lilley, "A Literary Appreciation of the Book of Judges," 99.

[32]Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, 47.

With the plot traced above, one can see that the "change" reflects an incomplete win for the people of Israel due to Barak, a protagonist's self-determination. Instead of complete obedience and faith in Yahweh's directive, his conditional acceptance of Yahweh's command led to Israel's incomplete (and ironic) victory.

This deviation in pattern from previous major judge narratives is significant because it implies a possible divergence in Israel's covenantal relation with Yahweh. The narrative of Deborah and Barak represents a growing tension that may have presaged a future degeneration or breakage of their covenant relationship. Klein explains that in Israel's eagerness to win the battle and claim the land, they were willing to compromise the ethics of their covenant.[33]

Plot Explained

Exposition

The narrative starts with a two-unit exposition: first, a description of Israel's negative situation, that is, foreign oppression due to divine punishment (Judg 4:1-3). Second is a description of Yahweh's elected judge (Judg 4:4-5), identified by the narrator as Israel's leader-deliverer. Both units reflect two levels of perception—the human perception of their situation (dire) and Yahweh's perception of their situation (redemptive).

In unit one, the situation is dire. A foreign oppressor, Jabin, the king of Canaan, torments the sons of Israel. This oppression came about because of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness. Their acts of unfaithfulness are narrated as "again they did evil in the eyes of Yahweh" (4:1a). As a repercussion, Yahweh sold them into enemy hands. Ehud, the previous judge, was already gone. So, Israel was left leaderless under the oppression of a nation with more advanced wartime equipment (Judg 4:3).

Though the situation seemed hopeless in human eyes, Yahweh did not leave them without recourse. A positive turning point is presented: Yahweh prepares an empowered leader, a judge, for their time. She is introduced as Deborah, a prophetess and the wife of Lappidoth (Judg 4:4a). Though the narrator does not inform us when she started judging,

[33]Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges*, 47.

her status as the appointed judge is hard to rebut.[34] As verse 4b succinctly informs, "She [Deborah] judged Israel at that time." By clearly identifying her as a judge, the narrator includes Deborah in the list of deliverers that Yahweh would raise for Israel (see Judg 2:16; 4:4-5).

The emphasis on her womanhood (woman, prophetess, and wife) includes her in the list of unlikely individuals chosen by Yahweh to deliver his people. The assumption that Deborah was an atypical choice stems from the gender norms of the time.[35] During the era of pre-monarchic Israel, female leaders were rare.[36] Although prophetesses existed, a woman functioning as both prophet and judge was considered extraordinary.

Complication

The people of Israel asked for deliverance from foreign oppression, and Yahweh assigned Deborah, a prophet-judge, to lead his people toward this deliverance. In a committal formula, Deborah commissioned Barak, Yahweh's chosen military deliverer, to lead Israel's army in the fight against the army led by Sisera, Jabin's viceroy.[37] A complication, however, arises as Barak, amid assurance of Yahweh's victory, refuses to go to battle without Deborah's presence. Osborne argues that Barak's response was neither reluctant nor humble; instead, it was "self-serving and searching for honor (תראפת)."[38] Deborah's response indicates that she recognized Barak's request for what it was: Barak's desire for glory and failure to trust Yahweh's assurance of victory. A crucial event followed: as punishment for Barak's failure to fully obey, Deborah prophesies that Yahweh will sell Sisera into a woman's hand (Judg 4:9b).

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[34]Although a few modern scholars propose that Deborah's judging or leading was the work of a late redactor, the majority of Old Testament scholars still uphold Deborah as one of the major judges in pre-monarchic Israel. For the dispute on Deborah's function as a judge, see B. Lindars, "A Commentary on the Greek Judges?" in *VI Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies, Jerusalem 1986*, ed. C. E. Cox, SCS 23 (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1987), 182.

[35]Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges,* 37, 41.

[36]William R. Osborne, "A Biblical Reconstruction of the Prophetess Deborah in Judges 4," *Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament* 2, no. 2 (2013): 203–6, 213.

[37]Butler, *Judges*, 86.

[38]Osborne, "A Biblical Reconstruction," 211.

Change

The complication reaches a climax, wherein a significant change occurs in the narrative. Amit calls this "change" the heart of the story.[39] In Judges 4, this change occurs during battle, when after Deborah's prophetic command (Judg 4:14), Barak and Israel's army fight Sisera and his army. The former overpowers the latter by Yahweh's orchestration (Judg 4:15), but Sisera, the enemy's captain, escapes on foot. Yahweh is the battle's winner; however, he allows for a remnant enemy to escape and be vanquished not by an Israelite judge but by an unexpected hero.[40]

The current study proposes this as the pinnacle of Deborah's narrative because it potentially demonstrates a double-layered significance. At the micronarrative level, Yahweh wins the battle but allows Sisera to escape the grasp of Barak, his chosen military deliverer. This change signifies that Barak was not given complete victory as punishment for his conditional obedience. In a sense, Barak fails to "personally" complete his mission. The story's denouement cannot occur until Sisera is defeated.

At the metanarrative level, although Yahweh wins the war, he allows an enemy to escape. This signals a deviation from previous judges' battle outcomes and possibly foreshadows more deviations from battle outcomes between Israel and foreign enemies. The people of Israel (as represented by Barak) may consider this event a foretaste of future ironical wins. The people of Israel are deprived of completely vanquishing their enemy (and thus gaining long-term peace), as their disobedience and fledgling allegiance results in Yahweh's displeasure.

The double-layered significance of the climax indicates that beyond the usual androcentric interpretation lies a more profound significance to the battle result. The irony of winning a battle but not being completely free from an enemy's oppression may foreshadow a future that the people of Israel can expect because of their failure to remain completely faithful to Yahweh.

Unraveling

Amit explains that the unraveling is where "the consequences of the change are revealed."[41] The change is revealed when Yahweh wins the

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[39]Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, 47.

[40]Butler, *Judges*, 57. Although this study does not agree with Butler's assumption that Barak was unmanned by Jael, the current author agrees with his premise that the story demonstrates how Yahweh's glory departs from the expected judge and falls onto an unlikely hero.

[41]Amit, *Reading Biblical Narratives*, 47.

battle but allows Sisera to escape the hands of Barak. The consequences of this change include the following:

1. Sisera escapes into the tent of Heber the Kenite, and meets Jael, Heber's wife.
2. Jael, the woman prophesied by Deborah in Judg 4:9, lures Sisera into complacency and then later kills him with a tent peg.
3. The ironic juxtaposition of Jael being the victor over Sisera being the vanquished and Barak's incomplete victory informs readers that Yahweh can choose whomever he wills to deliver his people, especially in the face of faltering obedience.

Sisera's death in the hands of a woman with undisclosed ancestry signified that Barak (and the people of Israel) had fallen short of the expectations of Yahweh and, thereby, was denied the glory of victory. Barak remained the military leader of Israel's army, but Jael was deemed "most blessed among women" (Judg 5:24) because she became the agent to complete Yahweh's deliverance.

Denouement

The narrative ends with describing how Israel cleaned up Jabin's army and destroyed his oppressive rule. The song of Deborah and Barak in Chapter Five recounts the story in lyrical poetry and ends with the statement: "and the land had rest for forty years" (Judg 5:31). The song highlights Yahweh as the ultimate deliverer who deserves all the praise.[42] It also mentions Deborah as the mother of Israel, Barak as the judge alongside her, Jael as the blessed woman who defeated Sisera, and Sisera's mother who waits in vain for his son. In the end, through the agency of his chosen instruments, Yahweh enforced his will, the people of Israel were delivered, and the land had peace for forty years.

Theological Synthesis

With the plot analysis completed, the study now deduces three theological themes from the story. First is the theme of Yahweh's deliverance vis-à-vis Israel's faltering obedience. Second is the

[42]Amit rightly concludes that in the book of Judges, Yahweh is the main hero. Yairah Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing*, First English Language Edition, vol. 38, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 214–18.

theme of women's roles in Yahweh's deliverance history. Third is the Spirit's empowerment of leaders. Though these three themes do not comprehensively explain all that the narrative implies, they answer the questions of the current study.

First, the narrative of Deborah records the deliverance of Yahweh during her time as judge. The narrative is replete with ironic juxtapositions due to a chosen person's faltering obedience. The story could have been straightforward: Israel cries out for deliverance from oppression (oppression brought about by their evil acts), and a positive turning point occurs with the introduction of Deborah and the subsequent commissioning of Barak. However, a 'plot twist' surprises its audience: amid prophetic assurance, Barak refuses to go to battle without Deborah. This refusal indicates a lack of faith, conditional obedience, and, most importantly, self-determination over Yahweh's way of deliverance. With this twist, Yahweh provides an alternate way of achieving his deliverance—the glory of victory falls not on Barak but on a woman.

Yahweh's indictment of Barak is implied by the consequence of his conditional obedience. In the final analysis, Yahweh is highlighted as the ultimate deliverer of the people. Yahweh's spiritual authority behind the prophet-judge Deborah, his divine orchestration of military victory, and Sisera's demise at Jael's hands (as foretold), were the ultimate reasons for the deliverance of Israel.

Secondly, the battle narrative reveals that Yahweh included women in his deliverance history. Although Deborah is the only female judge in the book, the emphasis on her gender, her numerous accolades, and the highlight of women in the story imply Yahweh's willingness to elevate women's status. Deborah was lauded as the mother of Israel. She was a leader fully obedient to Yahweh. Jael, on the other hand, though with undisclosed ancestry, was faithful to Yahweh. Her cunning and bravery vanquished an enemy, humbling Barak and effecting the glory of Yahweh's victory. Together, these two women represent heroic women in Israel's history.

Hence, it is Yahweh's providential design, not gender, that qualifies leaders. As David Firth states, "the starting point for any valid expression of leadership is, therefore, that the leader's authority must derive in some way from Yahweh."[43] It is Yahweh's authority that qualifies a person. Deborah was empowered by the Spirit of Yahweh to be a prophet and judge, while Jael was declared (by divine prophecy) as the one

[43]David G. Firth, "The Spirit and Leadership: Testimony, Empowerment and Purpose," in *Presence, Power and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 260.

who would claim the glory of victory. One can deduce that Yahweh's providential design can overturn human expectations.

Thirdly, the Spirit empowers leaders, though not in a proverbial manner. The Spirit's empowerment of Deborah was not as explicit as his empowerment of other major judges like Othniel. Deborah was a recognized leader before and even during the battle. She was already judging (case-hearing, governing) and was identified as a prophetess (one with the Spirit of prophecy). She functioned as a divine emissary, ably appointing a military commander (Judg 4:6-7) and representing Yahweh's presence in the battle (Judg 4:8).[44] Although her victory song in Judges 5 reminds us of the prophetess Miriam,[45] the entirety of her accolades makes her more comparable to Moses.

Bruce Herzberg affirms the under-appreciated similarities between Deborah and Moses, noting that these two leaders share the most extensive matchups in the Old Testament.[46] For instance, both were prophets and judges offering decisions for those who came to them in their regular place of judging; for example, Moses in his tent, Deborah in the Palm of Deborah (Judg 4:5).[47] Both also did not fight in battle; instead, they appointed commanders, inspired the troops and acted as Yahweh's emissaries (Exod 17; Judg 4). Both also sang post-battle songs of victory (Exod 15 and Judg 5). Wilda Gafney, agreeing with Irmtraud Fischer, notes that Deborah "represents a unification of the Mosaic prophetic tradition that was divided between Miriam and Moses, and by some reckoning also Aaron."[48] One can surmise that Deborah's leadership was distinctive in the book of Judges, not just for her gender representation but also for her characterization as a leader like Moses.[49]

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study offers the following answers to the previously asked questions. First, Yahweh did empower a woman to

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[44]Tikvah Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories* (New York: Schoken, 2002), 48; Gafney, *Daughters of Miriam*, 14.

[45]Gafney, *Daughters of Miriam*, 15.

[46]Bruce Herzberg, "Deborah and Moses," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 38, no. 1 (2013): 16.

[47]See also Ibid., 18.

[48]Gafney, *Daughters of Miriam*, 15; c. f. Irmtraud Fischer, *Gotteskünderinnen: Zu einer geschlechterfairen Deutung der Prophetie in der Hebräischen Bibel* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2022), 122.

[49]Gafney also notes that there were only three judges who were also identified as prophets in the Old Testament: Moses, Deborah and Samuel. Gafney, *Daughters of Miriam*, 33.

lead. Her name was recorded in the annals of Israel's pre-monarchic history as Deborah, wife of Lappidoth. As a prophetess and judge, the narrative describes her as having Yahweh's Spirit. Although there is no direct statement of the Spirit coming upon her, the prophecy-fulfillment motif in her story provides implicit evidence of her Spirit empowerment. Her role as Israel's judge served the deliverance purposes of Yahweh, indicating that Yahweh's providential design determines leadership authority.

Second, Deborah's leadership signified not only the role women played in DtrH but the irony in Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh. The entire story seems like a satire on Israel's faltering faithfulness. Deborah was an Israelite committed to Yahweh's directive, while Barak was an Israelite with faltering obedience. Both leaders represented the people of Israel; both also demonstrated the existing tensions among the people. Women who were socially deemed unsuited to leadership emerged as the faithful ones, while men who were expected to lead did not get the glory of victory. This ironic juxtaposition serves Yahweh's purpose of reminding Israel to forgo socio-religious nuances and focus on what is essential: covenant faithfulness.

Finally, Deborah's story implies Yahweh's inclusion of women in leadership. In this narrative, one sees the sovereignty of Yahweh in choosing his leaders and the empowerment of the Spirit in enabling those leaders. Yahweh himself chose Deborah. There is no denying that "Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging[50] Israel at that time" (Judg 4:4). A woman was declared as the leader of Israel at that time, and Yahweh's Spirit enabled her to fulfill a prophetic role as well. There was both appointment and enabling, revealing that Yahweh does not exclude women in leadership. He appoints and empowers those whom he calls regardless of their being male or female.

Concerning the contemporary issue of women in leadership, one cannot deny that the choosing of leaders depends on Yahweh's providential design and the affirmation of the Spirit's empowerment. One can use Deborah's story as a point of reference in recognizing women leaders. What qualifies a leader is not being male or female, but the providential design of Yahweh and the evidence of the Spirit's enabling.

Further Implications

The need for biblical scholarship on women's empowered leadership is necessary. The view that God cannot empower women to lead still

[50]The New International Version of Judg 4:4 directly translates judging as *leading.*

dominates some sectors of the Christian community. For instance, in the Philippines, the author's home country, the gender parity index is at 79.1 percent.[51] This index has landed the Philippines a top rank in terms of gender equality; in fact, the country is considered today as the most gender-equal nation in Asia.[52] However, this level of equality remains low in the country's religious sectors.

Androcentrism still prevails among Christian churches in the Philippines. The Roman Catholic church, which makes up around 80 percent of the country's religious population, only ordains male clergy, followed by the majority of Protestant denominations that refuse to recognize or appoint female leaders. The idea that the Apostle Paul prohibited women to lead (1 Tim 2) remains prevalent even in a gender-equal nation like the Philippines. However, one must note that Paul's occasional teaching is not equivalent to Yahweh's providence.[53]

As noted in the above analysis, Deborah is a prime example of a woman empowered for leadership. The authoritative source of her leadership was Yahweh himself, whose Scripture recognized her as a judge, while evidence of her anointing was encapsulated in a prophetic-fulfilment motif. It was in the providence of Yahweh to assign a woman to lead at that time. This implies that Yahweh does not universally prohibit women from leadership. Instead, he assigns and empowers people, like Deborah, according to his purposes.

Once again, the Christian church in the Philippines (and other nations) is reminded that ideological leadership finds its source and authority in Yahweh. The choosing of Christian ministry leaders ought to be according to divine providence and anointing, for Yahweh empowers whom he wills for his purposes (1 Cor 12:11). If the Philippines (or other nations) has already accepted the capacity of women to lead, the religious sector can also follow suit by allowing called and empowered women to lead and minister in the Christian church. Both the proven capacity of

[51]Michelle Abad, "Philippines Improves in 2023 World Gender Equality Ranking," *Rappler*, June 24, 2023, https://www.pids.gov.ph/details/news/in-the-news/philippines-improves-in-2023-world-gender-equality-ranking.

[52]Johnny Wood, "Asia's 10 Most Gender Equal Countries," *World Economic Forum,* September 4, 2018, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/09/asia-gender-equal-countries/.

[53]See discourses contra Pauline prohibition against women in ministry: Janelle L. Harrison, "Female Roles in Leadership and the Ideological Texture of 1 Timothy 2: 9-15," *Inner Resources for Leaders* 3, no. 1 (2011), https://www.regent.edu/journal/inner-resources-for-leaders/female-leadership-1-timothy-2/.; Waldemar Kowalski, "The Role of Women in Ministry: Is There a Disconnect between Pauline Practice and Pauline Instruction?," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 20, no. 2 (2017): 147–70; Waldemar Kowalski, "Does Paul Really Want All Women to Be Silent? 1 Corinthians 14:34-35," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 20, no. 2 (2017): 171–81.

women in society and the biblical record of Yahweh empowering women to lead support such a claim.

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The Victory Christian Fellowship: A Mother Megachurch that Daughtered Multi-Site Megachurches

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Keywords: Megachurches, Victory Christian Fellowship, Historical Development, Discipleship

Introduction

This study analyzes the historical development of various megachurches in the Philippines with special reference to Victory Christian Fellowship (VCF) and how VCF engages its Christian witness in the business hub centers of Metro Manila. We used an extensive review of literature, series of field visits, and interviews of its leadership to investigate what makes a megachurch mega and how they replicate themselves as a megachurch in the metropolitan cities. This study presents qualitative evidences of the secrets of their growth manifested in the historical evolution, model of discipleship, belief and culture, leadership development, social engagement, and passion for global missions. We assert that Christian individuals attending megachurches are shaped and energized to act in the public sphere due to the strengthening and enhancement of their deep-seated belief system and moral values. Affirming the findings of Hong that megachurches enhance individual inner meaning that boosts the private and public morality of individuals (Hong 2000, 106), megachurches like VCF will continue to attract religious individuals because they offer a new form of Christian spiritual capital that contributes to the overall well-being and happiness of an individual. Furthermore, megachurches like VCF also provide knowledge, networks and technology, public spaces to translate that spiritual capital for civic engagement, and the production of the common good. Because it increases volunteerism and engagement of faith in public life, VCF mobilizes their congregants to increasingly participate in the global mission of Jesus.

The Historical Development of Megachurches in the Philippines

While most scholars observe that the phenomenal increase of megachurches can be traced back to the 1970s and 1980s, social scientists like David Eagle argue that this contention is inconclusive. Eagle contends that megachurches have a long historical evolution from the early church (Acts 2), through the Reformation period, and up to the present. For instance, there is historical evidence of megachurches among the protestant reformers like Martin Bucer, Jacques Perret, and George Whitefield, as well as Charles Finney and Broadway Tabernacle (Eagle 2015, 589-90). The Angelus Temple of Aimee Semple McPherson is an example of a megachurch built by the early pioneers of the Pentecostal movement in the 19th century (Eagle 2015, 592-597). This sociological observation is more evident in Southeast Asia, as in the case of Korea and the Philippines (Hong 2000, 102; Tejedo 2018). Based on the definition of Bird and Thumma that a megachurch has at least two thousand adult members and children (Bird and Thumma, 2020, 1), this study classifies five observations of megachurches that arose from Catholic and Protestant organizations in the 20th century.

The first observation of a megachurch could be called classical. While it is not the locus of this study to examine large churches outside of the Protestant movement, we cannot simply overlook these large churches planted and built within Metro Manila. We have a few prominent examples among the Catholic churches, like the Manila Cathedral in Intramuros Manila, the Christ the King Church in Quezon City, and the Aglipayan Church formed at the dawn of the 20th century. One could also consider the Iglesia Ni Cristo (indigenous Church of Christ), although it denies the deity of Christ and the Trinity.

The second observation of megachurches that are prominent in Metro Manila are megachurches started by Western missionaries who arrived in the Philippines in the 1950s, 1970s, and 1980s. The Pentecostal movement in the Philippines was a product of various missionary efforts of western Pentecostal missionaries and Filipino Pentecostal *balikbayans* (Filipinos living abroad who come home) who arrived in the 1920s up to the mid-1930s (Suico 2004, 223-224; Ma 1997, 324-342). However, Pentecostal megachurches did not spring up until the 1950s when Lester Sumrall, a well-known Pentecostal revivalist, pastored what became known as the Manila Bethel Temple (now Cathedral of Praise, "COP"), because of the healing of Clarita Villanueva from demon possession (Oconer 2009, 66-84). Oconer observes that the revival under the ministry of Lester Sumrall paved the way for healing evangelists who brought thousands of members to Pentecostalism (Oconer 2009, 66). COP made a significant

contribution to this "Manila Healing Revival" and became one of the early megachurches in the Philippines. It was the center for healing and revival in Metro Manila and nearby cities in the 1950s. COP was initially affiliated with the Philippine General Council of the Assemblies of God. However, the church became a Pentecostal independent congregation after a leadership crisis in the 1970s. In doctrine, the church adheres to the fundamental beliefs of the classical Pentecostals and claims to have eight thousand members with ten different campuses in Metro Manila, fourteen satellite churches in various provinces in the Philippines, and six overseas churches (https://cathedralofpraisemanila.com.ph/locations/).

Another megachurch considered one of the fastest-growing Evangelical churches attractive to the middle class and Filipino celebrities is the Victory Christian Fellowship (VCF). It was started by Steve Murrell in 1984 and has 110,000 members all over the Philippines (Tejedo 2024, 89-90). Based in Taguig City, the VCF managed to position its fellowship meetings at different business centers in Metro Manila and other major cities in the Philippines.

Alabang New Life Christian Center (NLCC) is a Spirit-filled megachurch founded by Paul and Shoddy Chase in 1991 after serving as missionaries in the Philippines in Kalibo, Aklan for eight years. The church is built on Don Manolo Boulevard, Alabang, Metro Manila. Its members come from the middle class and are affluent business people in Metro Manila. The church has five thousand regular worshippers, but it is also known for its satellite congregations in different cities and towns in the Philippines. With its passion to evangelize the Philippines, the church aims to be an agent of change in the country stricken by tremendous poverty. The ministries of NLCC take seriously the various needs of individuals and groups in society. Thus, its ministries are focused on connecting and building individual lives by integrating their members into various cell groups and ministries. Sermon messages are highly publicized to make them available to their adherents. NLCC has three satellite churches in Metro Manila, seven in Luzon, twelve in Visayas, and three in Mindanao.

Third, another type is megachurches that are a by-product and are influenced by the mother organizations. Among the Catholic charismatic churches in the Philippines, the most notable megachurch that became an influential charismatic organization within the Catholic tradition is the *El Shaddai* Movement founded by Mariano "Mike" S. Velarde, a former real estate developer in Parañaque and Las Pinas, Metro Manila, who experienced what he called an "angelic visit" when he was confined to a hospital because of heart enlargement in 1978. After his "born again" experience, he organized and started the El Shaddai Movement through

his radio station in 1981 and propagated his personal experience of God's miracle of provision in his business that attracted thousands of Filipinos. Velarde, influenced by prosperity preachers in the West, popularized his prosperity doctrine to Catholic members who sympathized with the charismatic renewals. During the formative stage El Shaddai held its weekly services in public places in Metro Manila, like the Quirino Grandstand. In August 2009, El Shaddai inaugurated the one-billion-peso House of Prayer on a ten-hectare property at Amvil Business Park in Parañaque, Metro Manila. El Shaddai, a local charismatic lay movement, is now recognized as an influential religious organization with eight million members. However, this figure needs to be corroborated. The El Shaddai Movement interweaves Catholic and charismatic spirituality, advocating a prosperity gospel that promises material blessing to those who confess faith in the saving grace of Jesus (U.S. Department of State Diplomacy in Action, 2005, n.p.).

The Word of Hope Christian Church (WOH) is a Pentecostal megachurch that claims to have 40,000 members and 4,744 cell groups from 41 satellite churches in Metro Manila and its suburbs. It has a 6,500-seat auditorium in its main sanctuary, across the street from two large shopping malls in Quezon City, Metro Manila. David Sobrepeña established WOH with three members at the Paramount Theatre along the EDSA highway in 1989. Two years later, the church increased in number and recorded an average attendance of 8,000 at its Sunday services, which have since increased from three to five services (https://www.wordofhope.ph/copy-of-about-us).

Fourth, some megachurches are independent and indigenous, and consider themselves Evangelical and Pentecostal. The Jesus Is Lord Church Worldwide, better known as Jesus Is Lord (JIL), is another significant indigenous and independent Pentecostal megachurch. This church has vast social capital in the religious and political landscape. Eddie Villanueva, a former professor at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines and later an atheist-activist during the Marcos regime, accepted Christ with his wife in 1973. Known for his bold and charismatic preaching, he and his family were targets of religious persecution, even surviving an assassination attempt in 1983 when a grenade exploded in his house in Bulacan. JIL is a Bible-centered church with a charismatic congregation that desires to evangelize and disciple Filipinos. Villanueva is also a vital part of the Philippine for Jesus Movement (PJM), an alliance of churches and ministries engaged in a prophetic ministry bringing spiritual and socio-political transformation to all spheres of society. JIL started as a Bible study group at Polytechnic University with fifteen students in 1978 until it became a prominent Pentecostal

congregation with four million adherents worldwide. JIL is known for its bold calls for the spiritual and political transformation of the Philippines. Aside from the weekly services scattered throughout the Philippines and overseas ministries, JIL started a multi-media ministry in 1982, a TV program called Jesus the Healer. After fourteen years of spiritual battle, JIL acquired Channel 11 from a committed Christian businessman. JIL's primary services are located in Bocaue, Bulacan, Sta. Mesa, Greenhills and Ortigas Center. While its headquarters is in Bocaue, Bulacan, its congregations are scattered in Metro Manila and various towns and cities in the Philippines.

Another significant megachurch established during the 1980s is the Bread of Life International Ministries (BOL), a Pentecostal, nondenominational church founded by Caesar "Butch" Conde. The BOL Church, which used to be a halfway house for prostitutes in Olongapo City in 1980, grew to become a megachurch that claims to have 30,000 members attending their local and international services. During its formative stage, BOL transferred its weekly church services from the Philippine Heart Center to Celebrity Sports Plaza in 1984 to accommodate 1,200 members. BOL is steadfast in its conviction that the God of American Christians is the same God who can provide for Filipino churches. Thus, BOL did not seek support from foreign missionaries during its formation but sought to be a self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating church.

Megachurches in the Philippines are also found among nondenominational and Evangelical churches. One such megachurch is the Christian Commissioned Fellowship (CCF), founded by Peter Tan-Chi in 1982 in Cainta, Rizal. CCF is considered one of the fastest-growing evangelical megachurches and claims to have 100,000 members, with a ten-story building with a seating capacity of 10,000 on 2.3 hectares. It has thirty-eight satellite outreaches within the Philippines, eight international outreaches, and forty-six congregations. The Day By Day Christian Ministries (DBD), also a nondenominational megachurch, was founded on June 6, 1985, by Pastor Ed Lapiz. DBD claims to have 6,000 members in its main sanctuary with different satellite outreaches in the country and overseas. DBD is known for advocating cultural redemption, using Filipino arts, music, and indigenous dances as a form of Christian worship and spirituality. DBD operates radio programs around the Philippines, such as "Day by Day." DBD produces and publishes Lapiz's sermons in Tagalog and English through Kaloob Publishers to reach out to ordinary Filipinos.

Fifth, megachurches are daughtered by a mother megachurch. While Victory Christian Fellowship is distinguished as one among the eleven

megachurches planted by Western missionaries, VCF satellite churches within Metro Manila are forming and growing as VCF megachurches within the mother church. Winston Reyes, one of the pastors and educators of VCF, in 2011 identified five VCF satellite churches with an average attendance of 2,000 members. These churches are thriving and growing congregations of VCF within the Metro Manila area (Reyes 2012, 75-76). These churches are the following:

Table 1. Daughter megachurches of Victory Christian Fellowship

Names	Discipleship Groups	Group Leaders	Weekly Attendance at Discipleship Group	Weekly Attendance at Weekend Ministries	Number of Volunteers	Weekly Attendance at their Worship Services
1. VCF Pioneer	340	334	2,000 or 34% of weekly attendance	421	981	4,437
2. VCF Nova	172	141	1,032	269	405	1,863
3. VCF Ortigas	375	520	1,717	611	680	7,000
4. VCF Fort	734	688	----	1,045	1,200	11,400
5. VCF QC	461	417	Minimum four pax per group	270	528	2,373

What is striking from the empirical study of Reyes is that these megachurches consist of people from "restaurants, malls, college, and high school campuses, offices, and homes" with the leadership of laymen who are discipled through VCF leadership training. Reyes observed that the causes of growth within VCF churches in Metro Manila include "Spirit-anointed preaching, discipleship, leadership training, intercessory prayer, and passionate worship" (Reyes 2012, 75, 77). Members of these megachurches come primarily from middle-class families; they are multi-sectoral and multi-generational members with toddlers, kids, youth, and adults. The largest congregation among the five is VCF Fort with 11,400 members and a 1,200-seat auditorium. While VCF Fort rents the VCF headquarter in Taguig, the other four megachurches are conducting their worship services in malls, huge business centers, and facilities (76). All these megachurches of VCF have penetrated various university campuses and businesses in Metro Manila.

History of Victory Christian Fellowship

Victory Christian Fellowship was founded in Manila in June 1984 through the ministry of short-term missionaries Al Manamtam, Rice Broocks, and Steve and Deborah Murrell, who visited Metro Manila when the Philippines was experiencing political turmoil, and students protested because of the assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino in Tarmac Airport in Metro Manila. The Philippines during those times was in a state of collapse as investors pulled back their capital because of political instability that was caused by the assassination. These short-term missionaries, who arrived at University Belt in Metro Manila and started a church for the nearby college and high school students, conducted a two-week evangelistic work that produced 150 members as they met in the basement of the Tandem Theater in Recto Avenue (Murrell 2019, 20).

Before coming to the Philippines, Steve and Deborah Murrell met at the University of Georgia as courageous and bold disciples of Jesus Christ. They used to call themselves accidental missionaries and reluctant leaders. However, even before they were students at the University of Georgia, they were known as life preservers and known as soul-winning Christians. The couple served as campus ministry volunteer pastors at Mississippi State University before and after launching a mission team of American students in the Philippines. After much prayer and conversation with the senior leaders, Steve and Deborah were sent again to the Philippines for a six-month mission trip to develop the leadership team of the newly planted Victory church. The couple's strong passion for discipleship has transmitted this value and culture to VCF, which has caused phenomenal growth of the church (Murrell 2011, xix-xx, 23).

The formation of VCF resulted from the collective ministry of Western missionaries and local Filipino Christians who participated in its development and growth as a megachurch. Murrell often admitted that without the faithful and active contribution of local Christians like Manny Carlos, Juray Mura, Jun Escosar, Luther Mancao, and Ferdie Cabiling, some of the original members of VCF, the work of evangelism and discipleship would not have been made possible (Murrell 2011 xiv, 1). Murrell recalled:

> It was never my intention to become a missionary or a leader. I had never met a Filipino, and I did not know anything about the Philippines except that it is an island nation on the other side of the world. Rice was excited about taking a team there. He is an extraordinarily persuasive person, especially when it

> comes to evangelism, campus ministry, and church planting. It was May 1984, and the departure date was only six weeks away. We would need five thousand dollars for the two-month trip—a fortune. I told Rice, "Sounds good, but we do not have any money. I guess if God provides, then we will go with you." God provided, and we went (Murrell 2011, 13).

Murrell believes in "empowering volunteers and imperfect people to spread the most important message worldwide. Murrell takes seriously the "Same Ole Boring Strokes" principle of sports coaching that patiently teaches people "every day, over and over," until they master how to "engage, establish, equip, and empower" other people to become disciplers too. Murrell pointed out that "if we simply focus on making disciples who are equipped and empowered to make disciples, then health, strength and growth happen naturally" (Murrell 2011, 6, 7, 8). Murrell pointed out:

> We have not grown in size, depth, and influence due to revival meetings, supernatural manifestations, healing miracles, or celebrity endorsements. Sure, miracles occur periodically, people encounter God's presence regularly, and now and then a celebrity will decide to follow Christ. None of these, however, has anything to do with Victory's character, size, or "flywheel momentum." (Murrell 2011, 4).

Victory church was born through prayer meetings of university students and a strong discipleship program of the newly organized church. However, these prayer meetings and the passion to evangelize and disciple the Filipinos were compelled by a deep compassion in the heart of Steve Murrell. Murrell recalled:

> Kneeling by my chair, the Holy Spirit was putting a supernatural compassion in my heart for the Filipino people that was greater than any vision or dream I could have conjured up on my own. It was as if God had switched something inside of me. My involvement in the church that would become Victory-Manila was birthed in that moment, not out of great vision or some sense of destiny. From the beginning, we were motivated or "compelled" by compassion for lost people. Vision gradually grew out of that (Murrell 2011, 19).

Ten years after its first inception, in 1994, Rice Broocks, Phil Bonasso, and Steve Murrell began to visualize turning their church into a powerhouse for campus ministry, church planting, and world missions. For this purpose, a worldwide church planting movement named Every Nation was born, and one of its founding members was VCF. VCF's main church is located in Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City, surrounded by universities and schools. Taguig City is ranked the thirteenth largest city in the Philippines, with a population of 804,915 (https://cmci.dti.gov.ph/lgu-profile.php?lgu=Taguig&year=2019).

In 2009, Murrell recalled that from fifteen locations of VCF in Metro Manila, there were eighty weekend services that they were conducting, in addition to forty-five VCF churches they planted throughout the Philippines and VCF overseas churches in Thailand, Bangladesh, China, and Dubai, with overall members of fifty-two thousand. Most attendees are younger-generation Christians, mostly young professionals or college students. These young professionals are responsible for their "weekly discipleship groups in coffee shops, dorm rooms, living rooms, and board rooms all over Metro Manila" (Murrell 2011, 2, 4). It was reported in 2015 that VCF has 110,000 members attending their weekly services. In 2019, VCF claimed to have one hundred-two provincial local churches in the Philippines and fifty satellite campuses around Metro Manila. VCF also successfully planted local churches overseas in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Iran, Laos, Spain, and Vietnam (Murrell 2019, 30).

Over the years, VCF has committed to mastering a single move: to develop a simple, biblical, transferable discipleship process for its members. VCF perceives itself as a discipleship-based church rather than a cell-based church. Their goal as a church is not to bring "church people into cells, but rather to bring nonchurch people to Christ" (Murrell 2011, 28-29). Because of this approach, VCF grew from 165 members to 2000 members after six years of its founding (Murrell 2011, 34). While churches struggle with whether they can grow quantitatively, Murrell believes that regardless of the small number of church congregants, they have the potential to grow qualitatively and quantitatively. Although it is not easy to control growth, churches are meant to grow when they are properly organized. This conviction is theological and depends on how churches cultivate and process their people to become disciples (Murrell 2011, 36-39). VCF mobilizes efficient small groups that make disciples through retreat training to teach fundamental Christian doctrines and training like an intentional equipping track to teach how the ministry operates, and a ten-week training that prepares anyone to make disciples

by starting, leading, and participating in a church-based small group (Murrell 2011, 50).

Beliefs, Values, and Culture of Victory Christian Fellowship

VCF Every Nation's doctrinal confession adheres to the World Evangelical Alliance Statement of Faith. However, their doctrinal statement of faith is comprised of only seven important theological themes that profess their faith in the Scriptures, God, Jesus Christ, Salvation, the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Church as the Body of Christ, and the Resurrection of the Dead.

VCF exists as a religious group in the Philippines to honor God and to make disciples. Members of VCF are trained and equipped to honor God wherever God has called them. At their place of calling or workplace, VCF members are mandated to follow Jesus and help others follow Jesus.

VCF recognizes and acknowledges the Lordship of Jesus as the foundation and starting point of Christian life and growth. Obeying and submitting to the Lordship of Jesus is paramount for every member of VCF. VCF believes that God loves every human being; therefore, VCF spirituality is compelled to reach the lost and plant local churches where they are most needed. While they value places of worship, programs, and projects, VCF believes they are called to minister and make disciples, bringing people to spiritual growth and development. VCF believes that after they bring people to Christ and make them good disciples, they must help these new disciples to discover and enhance their spiritual gifts, giving them opportunities to develop as future leaders through identification, instruction, impartation, and internship. However, the heart of these values and cultures in the church is the daily exercise of fond, loving, and positive relationships within family, church, and community (Tejedo 2024, 100-102, 105-107, 119).

VCF is a member of Every Nation Movement, a mother organization of VCF that is organized to plant and establish churches and campus ministries in every nation. Every Nation Philippines has three primary purposes: to plant new local churches in various people groups and cultures, establish campus organizations to develop and empower campus students to become new generations of leaders, and plant seeds of transformation in every nation.

Steve Murrell, the founding pastor of VCF and Every Nation Movement, directs VCF. VCF is supervised by five distinguished

members of the Advisory Council, which consists of the founder, chairman, bishop, and two pastors of VCF.

VCF of Every Nation Philippines has its headquarters in Taguig City. Three important leadership offices describe the existence of VCF Every Nation as a movement and missionary force globally. First, VCF Every Nation is a movement of local churches scattered in the Philippines, Asia, and other parts of the globe. Manny Carlos, a bishop, and Gilbert Foliente, the pastor, are the two important leaders overseeing the ministries of local churches of VCF Every Nation. Manny Carlos serves as the Chairman of Victory Philippines, and Gilbert Foliente serves as president of Victory and Every Nation Philippines. Ferdie Cabiling, a bishop, oversees the churches of the Metro Manila Area.

VCF, as a religious body in the Philippines, is registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR). VCF is a distinguished member of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC) and the Philippine for Jesus Movement (PJM), a religious body of Evangelical and Pentecostal churches in the Philippines.

Discipleship Model of Victory Christian Fellowship

The discipleship model of VCF originated and developed even when Steve Murrell was still becoming a Christian. He inherited two important Christian traditions: the power of the Holy Spirit and Christ-centered, Word-based, systematic small-group discipleship from his Presbyterian and Pentecostal Charismatic heritage (Murrell 2011, 79, 80). According to Murrell, these two critical components of discipleship that became VCF essentials can be traced back to the methodical approach of the Wesleyan Revival Movement and to the influence of other megachurches thriving around the globe (Murrell 2011, 81, 84). According to Murrell, effective discipleship is leading by example, and it requires commitment and consistency in integrating the good programs of the church with the singular aim of making disciples (Murrell 2011, 89).

While there are many models of discipleship, Steve Murrell and the VCF leadership have developed a relational, spiritual, intentional, and missional culture of the church based on four principles: engage, establish, equip, and empower. These cultures and principles aim to share the gospel with unbelievers, establish a strong foundation, and equip their skills for ministry, so that they become confident and competent in their practice of ministry and mission (Murrell 2011, 91). A discipleship journey is patterned by VCF this way:

Figure 1. Discipleship journey

Murrell's concept of discipleship has developed over time. Discipleship is a call to follow Jesus, not to separate oneself from nonbelievers, but to "fish" people and to fellowship with others (Murrell 2011, 58, 60, 64; Bonifacio 2012, 3). Discipleship has nothing to do with spiritual authority or human accountability. Rather, it is about a relationship with God (follow), then with nonbelievers (fish), and finally with God's people (fellowship) (Murrell 2011, 65, 67, 69). VCF pastor and author Joey Bonifacio, in his book, *The LEGO Principle: The Power of Connecting to God and One Another,* explained further the model of discipleship at VCF by arguing that discipleship should not be understood only in terms of a pupil or student, but the word "ship" added in the word "discipleship" carries the idea of a journey. A disciple is not made overnight; rather, one becomes a disciple. Bonifacio argued that he journeys and is immersed in a personal relationship with God and fellowship with others (Bonifacio 2012, 4-6).

Theological Education and Leadership Development

Over the years, VCF has developed a leadership institute that serves as a think tank to train future church leaders to actualize and fulfill the mission of VCF Every Nation. Through the Every Nation Leadership Institute (ENLI), they arm young leaders of VCF to plant local churches, campus ministries, and cross-cultural missionaries through practical ministry. VCF Every Nation has designed ENLI to engage young leaders

in a holistic lifestyle and spirituality in the ministry. The school runs an integral program to equip leaders to become theology-informed and ministerially-engaged in personal encounters with God. Faithful to the vision and mission statement to honor God and disciple others, ENLI interweaves innovative learning instructions with impartations of spiritual skills from their well-rounded leaders (Ng, Every Nation Leadership Institute, n.d.).

Run and managed by the Board of Advisors, ENLI is a theological and ministerial institution of VCF. It is comprised of four schools. First, the School of Campus Ministry is designed to prepare incoming students for the principles and practices of campus missionaries. Equipped with various teaching methodologies, the school arms students with the necessary skills to start and manage a campus ministry that disciples students. Second, the School of Church Leadership is designed to train and equip incoming full-time pastors for church ministry. This school acquaints students with the principles and challenges of the multifaceted nature of church ministries and enables them to develop a ministry template and strategic planning, and to gain tools and skills. Third, the School of Church Planters was designed by ENLI to prepare students to engage in church planting and vocational ministry. This school motivates church planters to develop a strategic model for doing church planting in potential cities and towns. Fourth, the School for World Missions integrates the three schools to engage students to plant local churches, campus ministries, and pastors of VCF churches overseas in every nation. The program aims to raise missionaries who are passionate about discipling and training God's people in a cross-cultural context (Ng et al. Institute, n.d.).

Contextual and Integral Preaching

What characterizes effective preaching among megachurches in Metro Manila? Studies by Reyes, an educator and one of the pastors of VCF, who examined the preaching models of VCF through the lens of qualitative multi-design research, show some interesting observations. In general, preaching in megachurches by senior pastors varies. According to Reyes's observations, David Sumrall of the Cathedral of Praise is passionate and skillful, especially in teaching the Bible. Peter Tan-chi of CCF is direct, prompt, and does primarily expository preaching. Eddie Villanueva of Jesus is Lord Fellowship, however, is passionate and nationalistic, yet scriptural and evangelistic. For the Greenhills Christian Fellowship in Ortigas, the preaching of the senior pastor is an interplay of theologically rich, God-centered, scripturally sound, and didactic

preaching. For Mike Velarde of El Shaddai, a Catholic Charismatic megachurch claiming to have eight million members in the Philippines and overseas, it is a combination of a charismatic style and down-to-earth preaching that brings the message into the people's language. However, it has an element of the prosperity gospel (Reyes 2012, 64-68).

Studying the preaching of VCF pastors of five VCF megachurches within Metro Manila, Reyes finds three interrelated frameworks: 1). Pastors are challenged by different issues of preaching ministry like time preparation, contextualization, short attention span of listeners, time management, and communication skills for a multi-sectoral and multi-cultural audience; however, 2). Reyes found that VCF pastors advocate an honest and careful biblical exegesis and exposition of the scripture. 3). VCF pastors acknowledge that they struggle to relate the text to their context, but there is growing evidence from the study that this is the heart and direction of the pastors of megachurches within VCF (Reyes 2012, 90-102). It appears in Reyes's study that VCF pastors believe that preaching ministry should be engaging, creative, and innovative. That is to say, pastors must be clear and illustrative. However, preachers must be digitally skillful and preach in a way that defines a tension or problem that leads to resolution, identifying the bright spot for the audience to agree with to establish a rapport with the audience (Reyes 2012, 101-102). VCF also advocates preaching that is transformative, changing one's attitude and ways of thinking, a sermon that builds up one's faith and provides wisdom that enables the listeners to please God (Reyes 2012, 109).

VCF Campus Ministries

VCF Campus Ministries is an embodiment of local churches and campus ministries established in major universities in Metro Manila and other major cities in the Philippines. Beginning in 1984, the VCF Campus Ministry envisioned changing the university campuses through the gospel of Jesus so that, eventually, they could change the nation. VCF believes that university campuses are the locations of talented university students who will become future leaders who shape the moral fabric of society. Major movements, whether good or bad, have originated from campus ministries. VCF also believes that the majority of those who become Christians when they are students will in turn influence national or international students and will consequently impact nations. Students also can be instruments for reaching their families. They are the most trainable group that adds positive values to the campuses and the society. The belief in students' potential was born from the biblical conviction of

VCF that "in the last days, the sons and daughters will prophesy" based on Joel 2:28-29. Joseph Bonifacio, the pastor, is currently directing the campus ministries of Every Nation Philippines with seven leadership team members under him. Since they started the ministry, they have grown to 102 local churches nationwide, with 400 campus missionaries in over 700 campuses.

VCF Global Mission

VCF Every Nation as a missionary force is also active in sending and training Filipinos to establish mission frontiers in other parts of the globe. Michael Paderes, a pastor, supervises this ministry with three missionary leaders under him. The foreign mission department of VCF enshrines three principles: pray, give, and go. VCF believes that VCF local churches nationwide and overseas are the launching pads of Christian missions, where Christian discipleship should be released and deployed for mission and ministry. VCF missionary engagement with other nations is engagement in different cultures. Gio Saynes, a pastor of VCF Every Nation in Macau, recalls:

> Macau is known as the Las Vegas of Asia. People come here to work in the casinos and hotels. Way back in 2010, when we arrived here, there were already existing small groups; even though we were still small, we decided that we would continue what we were supposed to be doing, bringing people into the discipleship journey, and through that, one by one, as people began to understand the importance of discipleship, they started to reach out to others. They brought their colleagues and friends, which is why the church is growing (Saynes, Mission Update, n.d.).

According to Escosar and Walker, mission strategists and resident missiologists, VCF in the Philippines now has "185 long-term cross-cultural missionaries serving in forty-five nations and an average of 650 short-term missionaries serving in twenty-three nations each year" (Escosar and Walker 2019, xviii). Existing as a movement to honor God, VCF is committed to the work of evangelism, discipleship, and leadership development in every nation. Escosar adds that most of the engagement of these VCF missionaries is stationed in "restricted countries" like Vietnam, China, and Bangladesh. VCF in Vietnam has five mission centers as of 2019, and its aim was to plant four more by 2024. The missionary drives of VCF to plant churches and campuses in

every nation was born in obedience to the mandate of Jesus to go into all the nations, fueled by their experiences as a church and individuals who participated earlier in missionary visits to other nations. VCF also armed themselves with knowledge and skills from the prominent trailblazers of Christian missions in the church's history (Escosar and Walker 2019, 1-10). Backed up by the modern statistics of the presence of Christianity, VCF challenges and trains its people to participate in the ongoing mission of the Kingdom of God to every nation (Escosar and Walker 2018, 207.)

The Use of Digital Technology

VCF is keen to maximize the potential of social media to promote their religious activities. Congregants are encouraged to visit the Facebook page of their local churches for updates, new information, and promotional activities. Steve Murrell and the pastors of VCF are innovative and excellent communicators who utilize the power of social media to publish their teaching instructions through livestreams, YouTube, and podcasts. With the attack of COVID-19, all VCF churches in the entire Philippines placed all their worship services online through social media.

Fallaria's excellent study about mobile apps for the Millenials of VCF Ortigas finds that Millenials, on a personal level, are leaning to "use mobile apps for Bible reading, devotions, and in-depth study." For their engagement with the ministry and others, they utilize the power of mobile apps "to evangelize, disciple, and equip themselves for the ministry." While there are risks involved in using mobile apps for religious practices—like distraction, technical errors, and the tendency to decrease traditional use of the Bible—Fallaria pointed out that the Millenials of VCF continue to use mobile apps because "it satisfies their needs and expectations" (Fallaria 2019, iv). Fallaria's descriptive and qualitative research also shows that in 2014, VCF launched Victory Apps for sermon podcasts, materials for discipleship groups, and links to social media accounts with 50,000 downloads, all available in iOS and Android Operating Systems. This was followed by One to One Discipleship Apps, a discipleship guide that contains seven lessons for new Christians attending Victory (Fallaria 2019, 24-25).

Our observations as research staff during our visit to VCF Fort show an excellent use of media communication. They borrow cutting-edge communication models and contextualize them in the church context. For instance, when they give announcements, they use the newscasting model to announce important information, events, and other items.

Worship songs produced by the worship teams are digitally promoted on YouTube and other media outlets.

Discipleship and Sunday school lessons taught by pastors and Christian workers are published in Tagalog and English and electronically cataloged and posted on their websites. Teachings on how to make disciples and how to start and manage a cell group are all available in videos that can be easily watched on their website. In the leadership section of their websites, essential doctrines and teachings on servant leadership, spiritual disciplines, relational unity, service, etc, are all available in podcasts. Bible study lessons by series are all available in PDF files or ebooks that members can download for their weekly home or campus Bible studies (Victory Resources, n.d).

Worship Services

Worship services at VCF Fort are pattered like cinema schedules. VCF Fort has branded and tailored their worship services for two hours every service. Victory Fort is comprised of two big halls that can accommodate one thousand people. At their Assembly Hall, the English services are scheduled at 10:00 am, 12:00 pm, 6:00 pm, and 8:00 pm. In the same hall they host their Tagalog/English worship services at 4:00 pm on Saturdays, and on Sundays at 8:00 am, 2:00 pm, and 4:00 pm. Overall, the Assembly Hall hosts eight English and Tagalog services every Saturday and Sunday.

The Function Hall hosts three English worship services at 11:00 am, 5:00 pm, and 7:00 pm. The Tagalog/English Services are scheduled during Sunday worship services at 9:00 am and 3:00 pm. There are thirteen adult worship services from the two halls in their English and Tagalog/English services.

Youth worship services are scheduled and spread out to different time schedules and locations. At their Assembly Hall, there are two services at 6:00 pm on Fridays and 6:00 pm on Saturdays, and another at 4:00 pm on Saturdays. Victory Fort can no longer contain their people, so they also schedule a youth worship service at 3:00 pm on Saturdays at Cinema 6 of Market Mall in front of VCF's main campus. Worship services are all watched via livestreams in two venues during weekends. Metro Manila has fifty worship services in different locations with one hundred congregations all over the Philippines.

Social Engagement & Public Theology

One of the most important demonstrations of the social concern and engagement of VCF Every Nation is the Real LIFE Foundation Inc., a charitable non-government organization of VCF that exists to honor God and provide educational scholarship, character formation, and leadership development to under-privileged students, mostly coming from the context of urban poverty. The foundation was the initiative of Joey Castro, a physician and a pastor of VCF, who with his wife, Tess, financially assisted some high school and university students in Victory Pasig. This humble beginning grew in number and required more funding. Thus, in March 2007, it was formally incorporated into the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to attract more donors, then the program opened up to provinces like Batangas, Bacolod, and Negros Oriental. Through the National Scholars Conference they launched in 2011, the foundation spread its program to VCF local churches to prepare their students for a life of integrity, faith, and excellence (Real LIFE Foundation, n.d.).

The foundation has sponsored 616 students and has a track record of 482 alumni from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao since it was started in 2003. Mae Perez, an executive, pointed out that the Real LIFE Foundation's goal is for Christians to become the hands and feet of Jesus on earth and to empower younger generations of Filipino youth to become change agents and productive citizens in society (Real LIFE Foundation, n.d.). The foundation is comprised of three integrated programs. First, they provide financial assistance and scholarships like tuition fees, allowances, and other miscellaneous fees for their students so that they can get out of the poverty trap and have a brighter future by educating them. Second, it is a firm conviction of the Real LIFE Foundation of VCF that character formation is what shapes them to become change agents in the future, so it is integral in their program to coach students concerning moral leadership integrity, faith, and excellence. Third, the foundation aims to mature these students into future leaders who will shape society's moral fabric and make them powerful witnesses in different sectors of society (Real LIFE Foundation n.d.). Trisha Tadle, one of the scholars of the foundation, recalls:

> My father was the only one working in our family, and his income was only enough to pay our bills. What made things more difficult was his recovery stage after getting hospitalized and undergoing a series of physical therapy sessions. However, praise God for opening doors! In 2016, my leader from church,

> *Ate* [elder 'sister'] Rachelle, then a Real LIFE scholar [student], introduced the scholarship to me. She encouraged me to apply since we were unsure if I could finish my studies. By the grace of God, I was accepted. Real LIFE Foundation taught me to trust that God is always able and in control. I now work as an admin coordinator for a technology company and can help with the expenses at home. God is so faithful to provide for Mama's hospitalization and her medicines for recovery. He provides for us in many ways beyond my income, beyond what we can imagine (Tadle 2018).

On September 5, 2015, Ferdie before celebrating his 50th birthday, Ferdie Cabiling, a pastor of VCF, launched the project RUN50 and set out to run 2,180 km—the whole length of the Philippines islands—with a decision to run 50 km a day in 44 stages in 44 days from General Santos City as the starting point in the southern Philippines to Aparri in the north as the final point. Accompanied by 500 volunteers representing government and non-government organizations, he started running the race at 2:00 am. With 415 donors, Cabiling and the whole VCF had fundraised an amount of PHP 2,885,482 for the foundation (Cabiling and Walker 2018, 2-6). The foundation is organized and managed by the executive boards and some pastors of VCF, and it is fully staffed by the organization. Internal and external auditors audit the foundation's financial statements, and financial reports can be downloaded on their website (Real LIFE Foundation, n.d.).

Response to COVID-19

After President Rodrigo Duterte proclaimed an Executive Order mandating the government to enforce an Enhanced Community Quarantine in Metro Manila and the entire island of Luzon in March 16, 2020, Victory Every Nation, with all their satellite churches, transformed their worship services into online and internet churches providing spiritual and moral encouragement to their adherents locally and globally. The church also provides online prayer meetings using Zoom Conference Meeting as an online platform (Murrell, YouTube, March 29, at 12:30 pm; Fort Bonifacio).

Victory Fort Bonifacio is one of the first local churches in Metro Manila that re-purposed their facilities to provide food and shelter for medical doctors and nurses at St. Luke Medical Center and Pasig Medical Center. In collaboration with the hospitals, Victory provided

other amenities such as pillows, blankets, and slippers. The official statement of the church said:

> As a church, we are joining our community to support our frontline workers in this crisis. One of the ways we can serve and do our small part is to provide them with food and shelter. Starting March 31, we are opening our building in Bonifacio Global City as a temporary housing facility for frontline workers in St. Luke Medical Center-Global City and Rizal Medical Center. We are collaborating with these hospitals to make room for those who need it most. Despite what we are facing globally, we are in faith that God will give us the grace to serve one another in love (Every Nation, Facebook, April 1, 2020).

Addressing the VCF churches during the global pandemic, Steve Murrell provided spiritual direction and encouraged their churches to become signposts of hope amid the crisis. He believes that the task of the church during a crisis is not to provide updates about COVID-19 or advisories, but rather, the church should provide spiritual leadership—guidance and prayer for those people who are suffering. Murrell said:

> "Our job is to ensure that this health and financial crisis does not turn into a faith crisis. On every leadership call this week, our discussions centered on spiritual leadership and crisis leadership. There are so many places where people can get coronavirus updates and travel advisories. However, there is only one place they can get spiritual guidance. Moreover, there is only one place they can strengthen their faith, and that one place is the church." (Murrell, March 17, 2020; 1:00-8:53; Carlos, March 12, 2020; 1:5:24).

Conclusion

While we recognize that there are many competing theological and sociological voices speaking about the growth of megachurches around the globe, we argued at the outset of this study that there are many characteristics of megachurches in the Philippines that are shaped by different religious traditions and theological orientations. We have made particular reference to VCF, a megachurch that started small but thinks big because of its strong discipleship program manifested in its cell groups in homes, campuses, and public spaces. This megachurch

will continue to attract and boost individuals because it provides belief, meaning, morale, and social spaces for volunteerism that actualizes Jesus' mission on earth. With astute leadership and proper stewardship of various resources, VCF caters to the needs of different groups and ages and is bold in innovating its worship services through social media and technology. VCF knows well how to use technology to teach theology. As the years unfold, VCF will continue to engage its Christian witness to its people's painful yet multi-faceted socio-economic challenges. The visible and laudable Christian witness during the global pandemic will fuel the church to become more responsive to the challenges that confront the church. In addition, VCF's passion for ministry and discipleship will continue to mobilize its people for the global mission of Jesus.

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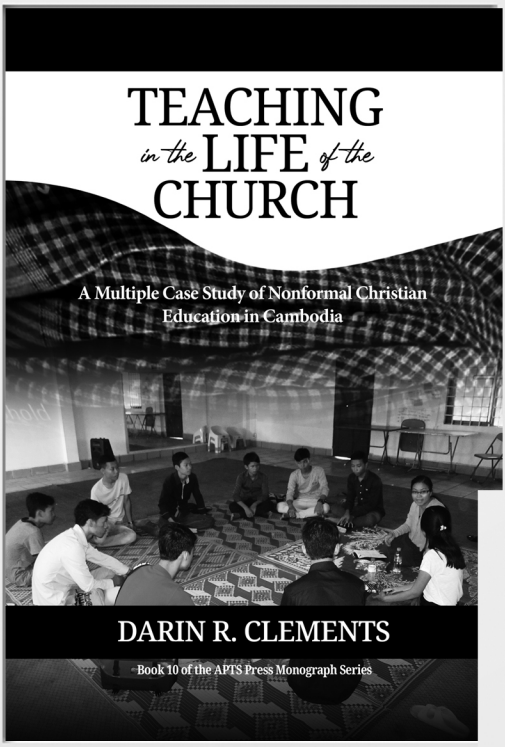

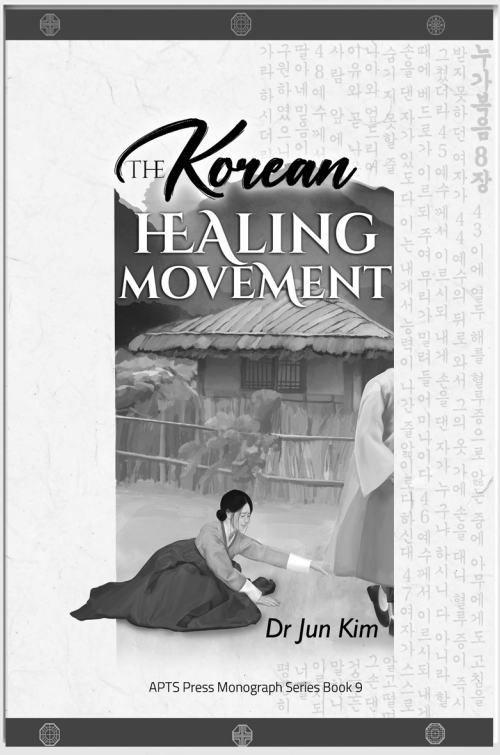

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The Doctrine of the Trinity: The Revolution of Christian Thought

Frank D. Macchia

The unity in diversity of communion among people has its anchor in the life of the Triune God. The Triune God, the one God who is eternally three, makes both the unity and diversity of divine persons absolute. The diversity of Triune persons is not to be dissolved into divine unity (as with modalism, which denies the relations of persons in God). Neither is the unity of persons to be dissolved for the sake of diversity (as with Subordinationism which views the Father alone as divine and the Son and the Spirit as separate natures not "truly" divine). Communion in fact requires both unity and diversity and embraces both as essential to personal existence. As John Zizioulas noted, to "be" is to "be in communion."[1] No one is an island. Alienation is how we define sin. Communion is salvation, having its source and end in the Triune God. Of course, unity and diversity in the Triune life is unique; our communion (unity and diversity) is at best analogous. Exploring this concept of Triune communion opens up the doctrine of God as a delightful mystery that allows us to view God as a revolutionary concept, utterly unique in the history of religious thought.

The Great Revolution of Christian Thought

Take note of John 17:21: ". . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (NIV 2011). This prayer of Jesus to his Father refers to his being in the Father and the Father's being in him in an intimate sharing of life. John tells us elsewhere that the Spirit is the Spirit of communion that causes God to be "in us" and "we in God" (1 John 4:13). In this larger context of Johannine theology, the simple prayer of John 17:21 signals what may be called the great revolution in Christian thought. The doctrine of the Trinity is the astounding idea

[1]John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 1997), 17.

that God is an intimate *communion of love*. There is nothing quite like it anywhere else in religious thought.

The idea that God is a communion of love that creates and then opens up the divine communion to creation contextualizes all of the divine mysteries in an excitingly new way. Juan Luis Segundo rightly calls this idea of Triune communion the "omega point" or ultimate destiny intended by God for humanity, for the Triune God created humanity to share in the timeless communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He writes, "God opened up the mystery of his being to us in order to show us a total and intimate collaboration in a history of love that is our own history."[2]

John Zizioulas even provocatively maintains that communion is essential to existence itself, for no one is an island, noting, "it is communion that makes beings 'be;' nothing exists without it, not even God."[3] It is from the Triune communion that all things were created in the context of John's Gospel, for it is through the Word of the Father, who was with the Father already at the beginning, through whom all things were made (John 1:1-4). John tells us later that the Father loved the Son (the Word) since before the worlds were made (17:24). In the hovering Spirit, the creation comes to be as a gift of the love shared between the Father and the Son (see also Gen 1:1-2 in the light of John 1:1-4).

The doctrine of the Trinity as a communion of love in fact sets forth the trajectory for the entirety of Christian thought and practice. Where would Christian prayer and liturgy be without the insight into God as Father, Son, and Spirit? Humanity was made for this communion. This is why sin is viewed as isolation and alienation from the manifold blessings opened up by this communion, not only with God, but in God with one another.

Jesus spoke the words of John 17:21 to his heavenly Father near the time when Jesus offered his life on the cross out of devotion to the Father's love for humanity. John tells us earlier that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son to save it (3:16). In this Johannine context, John 17:21 grants us an open window into that divine love that sent the divine Son into the world from the heavenly Father, and, through the Son, the Holy Spirit. This text depicts an intimate sharing of life between him and his Father: "You are in me and I am in you." This intimate sharing of life becomes available to humanity through Christ's death and resurrection and his impartation of the Spirit on all flesh. The Spirit incorporates

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[2]Juan Luis Segundo, *Our Idea of God: A Theology for Artisans of a New Humanity*, 3, trans. John Drury (New York: Orbis, 1974), 63.

[3]Zizioulas, *Being as Communion,* 17.

believers into the embrace of Triune communion: "May they also be in us." In other words, Jesus is asking that his followers inhabit the wide-open space of the communion shared between the Father and the Son in the circle of the Spirit.

The Spirit's role in this intimate sharing of life between the Father and the Son requires elaboration. Let us take a closer look at 1 John 4:13 (ESV): "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit." The Spirit may be described as the Spirit of communion who opens the divine communion to us ("we abide in him and he in us") by causing God to be in us and us to be in God. For good reason, theologians have suggested that the same Spirit who is the principle of communion between us and God plays an analogous role within the Triune life. He encircles the love between the Father and the Son as its delight and witness, overflowing that love (from the Father and through the Son) to draw us into it. In this light, it is no coincidence that the Father's declaration of his love for Christ as his beloved Son at his baptism is accompanied by the outpouring of the Spirit from the Father upon the Son (Matt 3:16-17).

The Spirit is essential to the love of the Father for the Son and the other way around (the Son's return devotion to the Father). So also with us! Romans 5:5 thus tells us that the love of God is poured into us through the Holy Spirit given to us so as to unite us to Christ and draw us into his communion with the Father. Indeed, we belong to Christ in belonging to the Spirit (Rom 8:9). And we will be raised one day from the dead by the Father as Christ was, if we have the Spirit within (Rom 8:11). The Spirit is the "down payment" and "guarantee" of the fullness of life to come in the embrace of the Triune God (Eph 1:13-14).

John 17:21 NIV 2011 ("… just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us") is thus also the key to understanding our eternal life in God, sharing communion in him with one another (the communion of saints). John 14:1-3 begins with Christ telling his disciples that he will go to prepare a place for them in his Father's "house" so that they can be where Christ is when they leave this earth as he will soon leave it. It is obvious from the context that Christ is referring to heaven, where he is going after he leaves to rejoin his Father. He will indeed prepare a place for his followers there, presumably by giving his life for them. Interestingly, Christ adds: "In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." (John 14:20 ESV) Here again that intimate sharing of life in God is described as a major Johannine theme. The earlier wish for the believer to be with Christ in his Father's "house" (14:3) becomes the Father and Christ making *their shared home* with the believer: "We will come to him and make our home with him" (14:23

ESV). The Father's "home" that we will share with Christ one day is referred to as the home Christ shares with the Father!

Can this shared "home" between the Father and the Son refer essentially to anything else than their shared love and communion in the circle of the Spirit? It seems that our eternal life in God will occur in the wide-open space of the love shared between the Father and the Son in the Spirit. *This will indeed be the essence of heaven as well as the new creation yet to come!*

As Segundo said, this destiny is willed by the Triune God for all of humanity—and for the entire creation! In the Spirit of communion, it is the Father in the Son, the Son in the Father, and we in them! They are in us and we in them; the communion of saints is in the embrace of the Triune God! Everything else about heaven is secondary. This is the communion that we currently inhabit by faith. In eternity, we will experience it "face to face" and directly, in a way that we could not now currently imagine (1 Cor 13:12).

Only God Can Save: The Deity of the Son and the Spirit Revealed

The doctrine of the Trinity assumes that not only the Father but also the Son and the Spirit are divine. Naturally, unless these three, Father, Son, and Spirit, share equally and eternally in the one divine nature, there is no Trinity. Early in the history of the church, some denied the deity of Christ by regarding him as nothing more than an anointed prophet. They thought that Christ was "adopted" as the Son of God at his baptism when he received the Spirit (much like we are adopted into the family of God by receiving the Spirit). This heresy, which came to be called "Adoptionism," denied that the Son of God was divine. If this idea were true, there would be no Trinity, even if we believe that the Father and the Spirit are divine. It would then be possible to view the "Father" as referring to God as transcendent and the "Spirit" as God near to us. No communion of love within God would necessarily exist. *One needs a divine Son who relates differently to the Father and to the Spirit to understand the necessity of relationality in God!*

Another heresy early in the history of the church came to be called "Subordinationism." It held that the Son of God (the Logos or Word of the Father, John 1:1) was not of the same nature as the Father. Thus, though Christ could be regarded as "semi-divine" or God-like, he was not to be referred to as the "True God," who was the Father alone. The Spirit was also thought to be of a different nature from the Father, and like the Son of God, a lesser deity. Arius, a presbyter from Alexandria, Egypt, was an extreme Subordinationist. He taught that the Son of God –

before his incarnation in flesh and before the creation of the world – was created by the Father "out of nothing."

The great Council of Nicea in 325 CE refuted Arius and the entirety of Subordinationism by calling Christ: "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father." Notice that Christ is called "true God" (not just a god or God-like) who was not created (but rather eternally begotten without beginning) and, most importantly, is of the same nature (*homoousios*) as the Father. The end of the Nicene Creed adds that they believe also in the Holy Spirit as they believe in Christ, implying that the Spirit is equally divine as well. This point was clarified at the Council of Constantinople nearly fifty years later, with an addition to further identify the Spirit: "the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.

There is indeed in the eternal, Triune communion one divine being (nature or life) but three persons in intimate communion. In other words, the Son and the Spirit are regarded as essential to the deity of the Father and essential to the divine communion that is extended to us and that saves us. But is this idea biblical?

The New Testament shows us that Christ and the Spirit are essential to the deity of the Father. The Gospels record how the disciples of Jesus came to understand that Jesus and the Holy Spirit reveal themselves as essential to God's self-giving to the world in salvation. Only God can save: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12); cf. "You shall acknowledge no Savior but me" (Hos 13:4). God does not save us from a distance but by imparting himself to us and opening his life to us. So, if it can be shown that the Son and the Spirit are absolutely essential to God's self-impartation to save us, they must also be regarded as essential to God. We learn from the New Testament that salvation rescues us from alienation in sin and death. It also incorporates us into the embrace of God, who is not a solitary figure but rather a communion of love!

Thus, in our key text in John 17:21, salvation comes by being incorporated into the love shared between the Father and the Son: "… as you are in me and I am in you; may they be in us." Christ is irreplaceable in the love that saves us and absolutely essential to it. No one can access the Father's love without him: "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). We thus believe in God *and* believe in the Son for salvation: "You believe in God, believe also in me" (John 14:1). 1 John 4:13 makes the Spirit equally necessary to the divine love that saves us.

That love is eternally shared among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All three are essential to the divine self-giving of the God who alone can save us. Little wonder that John's Gospel starts (1:1) by referring to the Word of the Father (who is named the Son in 1:18) as the "God" who is distinct from God the Father. The Son shared glory with the Father before the worlds were made (17:5), was loved by the Father from eternity (17:24), and is addressed by Thomas with the words, "My Lord and my God" (20:28).

As noted above, the initial revelation of the Triune God occurs at Jesus' baptism. Matthew records: "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased' (Matthew 3:16-17 NIV 2011)." Here the Father declares his love for the Son, a love that was shared between them from before the time the world began (as in John 17:24). At this declaration of the Father's love for the Son, the Spirit is poured forth from the Father upon the Son. The timing of the Spirit's outpouring in this text is not coincidental. The gift of the Spirit upon the Son as the Father declares his love for the Son functions to express and reveal the love shared between them.

The Spirit in this event may be said to deepen Christ's human awareness of his sonship as well as empower him to move forward to fulfill the mission of the Father's love for the world. He shares this love with the Father in the Spirit and will open it to those who believe. Indeed, John tells us that the Father sent the Son in the power of the Spirit out of this very love to save humanity (John 3:16). The Son goes forth in the Spirit out of devotion to the Father as well as to the leading of the Spirit.

To reprise: the Triune love for humanity is a shared love among the three, a communion opening up to the world through their cooperative work. Only God can save (Isa 43:11; Hos 13:4). The fact that the Son and the Spirit are essential to this salvation and the Father's gift of love for the world shows that the Son and the Spirit are essential to the Father's deity. God saves by opening himself to us and bringing us into his Triune embrace. Therefore, if Son and the Spirit are shown to be essential to the salvific opening up of the divine communion to us, they are shown to be essential to God.

Note that Jesus refers to his heavenly Father as "Lord of heaven and earth (Matt 11:25). Two verses later, Jesus teaches that the only way to know the Father is through him as the Son (v. 27). In other words, Christ is essential to salvation. There is no salvation, no gift of love from the Father, without *him*. He is thus essential to God and God's self-giving.

This point is abundantly clear in Matt 28:18, where the risen Christ tells his disciples, "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me." The Son shares fully in the Father's sovereignty and reign over all. Bear in mind that the Son in Matt 11:25 referred to his *Father* as Lord of heaven and earth. Now, the *Son* is to be viewed as Lord of heaven and earth too (28:18). Christ shares fully in the Father's divine Lordship.

The Triune love that saves us also frees us for joyous self-giving in the power of the Spirit and in the image of Christ. The loving God reigns, and commands us to serve in this love. Christ says that his disciples will follow all that he has commanded them (Matt 28:20). This admonition recalls Deut 4:39-40 (NIV 2011), "that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. Keep his decrees and commands." Matt 28:18 declares that *Christ* is this Lord in heaven and earth, and it is *his* commands that we follow! The Triune God who loves and reigns liberates us to serve and *commands* us to serve! This shared Lordship mean the commands are ultimately granted by the three (from the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit). No wonder Christ claims that disciples are to baptize believers in the "name" (authority or sovereignty) of "Father, Son, and Spirit" (v. 19). The Triune God, who appeared at Christ's baptism in Matthew 3:16-17, is now the reality into which believers are to be baptized by faith.

John 5:26 and the Divine Processions

The Father is never sent. The Son and the Spirit are sent into the world from the Father (John 15:26; 20:21-22). Christ moves forth in the power of the Spirit sharing fully in the authority or Lordship given to him from the Father (Matt 28:18). How are we to understand this? We cannot assume that the Son and the Spirit become divine after not having been before. God is by nature eternal: "From everlasting to everlasting, you are God" (Ps 90:2). So how are we to understand the biblical implication that the deity of the Triune God has its eternal source in the *Father*?

The key text in answering the above question is John 5:26 (ESV): "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself." The Son as the "Word" of the Father (John 1:1-4) has the life of God in himself. That qualifies him to two divine prerogatives: to mediate creation on behalf of the Father and to be the light that the darkness cannot overcome on behalf of creation (John 1:3-5).

So, in interpreting John 5:26, if the Son is granted to have "life in himself" as the Father does, how does the Father have "life in himself?" The Father's possession of the divine life is eternal, sovereign, and the

only hope for salvation. John 5:26 says that the Father grants that the Son has this life in himself *as the Father does*. This can only mean union eternally (without beginning or end), sovereignly (having a full share in the Father's Lordship), and redemptively (having the divine life so as to be essential to the divine self-giving that saves us, mediating it to the world). Thus, Jesus says "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live" (John 11:25). The life that will raise us up is shared equally between the Father and the Son; thus, we believe in both.

We believe in the one God as Father, Son, and Spirit to be saved. The Spirit also is granted to have life in himself as the Father and the Son do by proceeding from the Father through the Son (John 15:26) to give us life (John 4:13-14). Indeed, Jesus said that if he casts out demons *by the Spirit of God*, the liberating reign or Kingdom of God has come upon the people (Matt 12:28). Jesus and the Spirit do not just bear witness to the coming of the Kingdom or reign of God that saves us, they bring it! Thus the Son and the Spirit share fully in the sovereign love of the Father that is overthrowing the darkness and opening up salvific love to creation.

In interpreting John 5:26, how do we describe the Father's "granting" the Son (and the Spirit) to have life in himself as the Father does? We have life in ourselves if the Spirit dwells within, but we do not have life in ourselves as the Father does. The Son and the Spirit have divine life in themselves *as the Father does*, eternally and sovereignly in a way essential to their very being.

How has the Father granted this to the Son and the Spirit? The early church Fathers wrote of the eternal divine "processions:" the Father is the eternal source of deity for the Son and the Spirit. Specifically, the Son is eternally "begotten" or generated from the Father, coming forth without beginning from the Father in a way that makes him analogous to a "Son" or to one who is beloved of the Father. The fathers said the Spirit "proceeds" eternally from the Father in a way that is analogous to a "breathing forth" or a spiration (as the overflowing power, delight, and witness of the shared love between the Father and the Son, participating fully in that love).[4] These "processions" make God an eternally flowing fountain of divine love that has no beginning and no end. The Father must have determined from all eternity to be a communion of love, to be the Father of a beloved Son, breathing forth the Spirit of communion that will encircle their love and be its overflowing delight. So, this

[4]For an excellent treatment of the significance of John 5:26 for understanding of the eternal generation of the Son and eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father, see Kevin Giles, *The Eternal Generation of the Son: Maintaining Orthodoxy in Trinitarian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012).

communion of love is an intimate sharing or communion among the three divine persons. It overflows the Triune life to create and to open this communion to creation.

To examine further, why is the Son's participation in the reign of divine love not revealed until his resurrection? Not until then does Christ announce he is Lord as the Father is Lord (of heaven and earth) and that we now follow Christ's commands (Matt 28:18). First, we recognize that the Son who took on flesh in the power of the Spirit for our salvation always shared the Lordship of the Father. In Matthew 3:1-3, John the Baptist is the messenger who prepares the way for the coming of the "Lord," which in this text is clearly *Christ*. But Matt 3:3 (about the coming of the "Lord") is taken from Isa 40:3, which makes *God* the coming of the Lord! The meaning is clear. The coming of Christ is the coming of God's very Lordship into the world. The Son of the Father enters the world as the coming Lord!

So, why does Jesus imply in Matt 28:18 that he is "granted" Lordship in the victory of his resurrection? In his resurrection, Christ attains or wins that Lordship over creation *in his flesh* for all flesh, or to save all flesh from bondage to sin, death, and the devil. The Father's sovereign love that the divine Son already shared eternally is exercised in time by Christ as our representative. He wins the Lordship of divine love *for us* as our Redeemer. Similarly, in John 17:5, Jesus asks the Father to give him the glory that he always had with the Father before the worlds were made. Why would Jesus ask for a glory that he always had? He asks for that eternal glory to be won and revealed in his flesh *for us*. The Son bore the poverty of flesh so as to glorify it on our behalf. But he had to win that glory in his flesh for us first. To use technical language, the divine Lordship and glory that was shared fully by the Son from the Father in eternity (in the divine *processions*) is to be revealed in time and in Christ's flesh (in the divine missions) for our salvation. His resurrection is that climatic point.

We need to probe the divine processions in eternity more fully. The Triune God is one because deity comes from one source, the *Father*. As Colin Gunton wrote: ". . . the Father unifies the Godhead by virtue of the fact that he is Father of the Son and breather of the Spirit, and is therefore eternally the 'cause' of the *being* of the Son and the Spirit. One particular person is the principle being of the other two; but because he is not himself without them, it is not an individualistic conception."[5]

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[5]Colin Gunton, "Personhood and Personality," in *The Theology of John Zizioulas: Personhood and Church*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), (97-107), 100.

The Father is the source of deity in the Triune life but the Father is not alone. The term *Father* is a *relational* term. The Father is the Father of something, like a Son. How can the Father be the *Father* without his *Son*? In a sense, the Son (and the Spirit for that matter) are as necessary to the personhood of the Father as his personhood is to theirs. As John Zizioulas showed us so wonderfully in his book, *Being as Communion*, the source of deity we know as the Father in the Bible determines from eternity past to be a *Father* precisely by eternally generating a *Son* as his beloved who in the Spirit of communion would fully share in divine Lordship and glory throughout eternity, but also in time, in the context of the poverty and alienation of creation, so as to incorporate creation into the embrace of the Triune God.[6]

One may ask, why would the Father need the divine Son to be a Father? Why couldn't the Father be the Father fundamentally in relation to creation? If the he were only the Father in relation to creation, he would need to create to be the Father. God would be dependent on creation for the fulfillment of his very deity. But if he is the Father in relation to the eternally divine Son and Spirit, God's fundamental identity would be dependent on the divine sufficiency alone. God remains sovereign and self-determining as God even apart from creation. God's fundamental identity as God would not be dependent on the creation.

God ends up creating out of divine freedom and not necessity. God does not *need* us to be God, though he delights in being God with us. The oneness of God, anchored in the Father but involving the communion of the three, is a beautiful concept. God as one is indeed the "one and only" Lord, the incomparable one who alone is Lord of creation and of salvation and loves unconditionally and eternally. "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God; the Lord is one!" (Deut 6:4).

God is *one* in essence because deity proceeds from one source, the *Father*. The Father's deity is shared fully and eternally with the Son and the Spirit. The *Father grants* the Son to have life in himself eternally as the Father does (John 5:26).

But the God who is one in essence is also *three* in *person*, because the three are involved in the eternal processions *differently*: the Father as source, the Son as generated, and the Spirit as breathed forth. The Father is eternally the source of divine love, the Son is eternally the beloved, and the Spirit is eternally the ecstatic delight and overflowing fullness of divine love. So, God is one and three in different ways, one being or essence and three persons and relations. The two concepts define each other inseparably because God is *one* in essence *diversely*,

[6]John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, especially 27-65.

and in *communion*. God is one as three and three as one, for the deity that proceeds from the Father proceeds differently in the cases of the Son and the Spirit. The one divine life is shared in communion.

Both subordinationism (that rejects the oneness of God, claiming instead that the three persons are of different natures) and modalism (that affirms the oneness of the divine nature but denies differences of persons and relations in God) are to be rejected. There is no threeness of persons without the unity of life that proceeds from the Father diversely. There is no oneness of divine essence or life without the difference involved in how the Son and the Spirit proceed from the Father in communion.

A debate that divided the churches of the East (Eastern Orthodox) and the West (Catholic and Protestant) is the filioque controversy. Briefly put, the term "filioque" means "and the Son" and refers to the procession of the Spirit from both the Father *and the Son*. This clause ("and the Son" or filioque) was added to the Nicene Creed. From the Council of Constantinople (381 CE) forward, it said that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father" (following John 15:26). Eventually, as an effort to bolster the belief in the Son's deity against the Subordinationists, the churches of the West added "and the Son" (filioque) to the clause: the Spirit is said to proceed from the Father *and the Son*.

The churches of the East rejected the addition of the "filioque" to the creed, not only because an ecumenical council is required for such additions but also because of the justifiable belief that the Father *alone* is the source of deity in the Godhead. This exclusive role of the Father as source of deity explains why God is *one*.

There is also the danger that the Spirit can be viewed as in "third place" beneath the Son in significance, causing an emphasis on Christology that towers over pneumatology. This is ironic since the "Christ" (meaning anointed one) is not the Christ without the Spirit! As a compromise, I like what the early church fathers were prone to say, namely, that the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father *through the Son* (the Father alone still being the only source).

In the fifth century, St. Cyril (and recently Thomas Weinandy) proposed that the Spirit proceeds eternally from the Father alone but also *through* the Son (and back to the Father in a circle of love). The Spirit ends up eternally the Spirit of the Father and the Son! But it may also be said according to Weinandy that the Son is generated eternally from the Father alone *through the Spirit* so that the Son is begotten eternally from

the Father alone *in the Spirit* unto communion! In a sense, the eternal Son was always in eternity the anointed *Christ!*[7]

The division between East and West over the filioque can be exaggerated, since, as Walter Kasper notes, it was typical in the West in accepting the filioque to assume that the Son has the power to spirate the Spirit ultimately from the Father. Consequently, the Spirit proceeds *principaliter* from the Father, the importance of the Father as uniquely the source of the Spirit is preserved.[8]

We have been speaking of the divine processions in eternity—the so-called immanent Trinity. In history, under the conditions of creaturely life, especially human flesh, we speak of the divine missions—the economic Trinity. God always acts from the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. The Father is source in sending the Son and the Spirit. The Son is mediator in incarnation, death, resurrection, and mediating the Spirit. The Spirit is the one who perfects divine love in us in sanctification and glorification.

One may even speak of the Son and the Spirit as the left and right hands of the Father in creation and salvation. But they are these hands in different ways, both in relation to the Father (in communion with their eternal source) and in relation to one another (in mutual communion and work). In relation to us, the Father (as lover) is source, the Son (as the beloved) is redeemer, and the Spirit (as the one who overflows and perfects love in us) is sanctifier and glorifier. We may also reverse this when describing our response to God (especially in praise), so that the Spirit is impetus, the Son the mediator, and the Father the object (if the Son is the object, it is to the ultimate glory of the Father) (Phil 2:11).

The fundamental motion is from God to us. The Father sends the Son and the Spirit into the world. The Son by the Spirit takes on flesh and goes to a cross. He rises in the fullness of the Spirit, so as to pour forth the Spirit on us. Therefore, God willed or elected in eternity not to be a closed circle of divine communion but to create and to self-impart or open the divine embrace to others who are caught in the throes of sin and death. The Triune God always determined not to be God without us and to take into himself our sin, condemnation, and death so as to overcome them in self-giving love. Divine joy overcomes despair on Easter morning. Through the Spirit, such joy will be the final word of history.

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[7]Thomas Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1995).

[8]Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* new ed. (London; New Delhi; New York; Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2012), 297.

The Victory of Triune love

The processions of the Son and the Spirit from the Father are eternal. The missions of the Son and the Spirit from the Father occur in time as divine self-disclosure and self-giving.

What about Trinitarian ends? Where is the Triune communion headed eschatologically? Segundo stated that the Triune communion is the "omega point" or ultimate destiny of humanity and all of creation. Paul approaches this issue concerning Christ: "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Cor 15:24-26 ESV)." The purpose is given at the end of verse 28: "that God may be all in all." The Triune ends consist of the Son delivering the kingdom of God (or the creation liberated by the reign of God) to the Father. Christ conquers all opposing forces ("every rule and every authority and power") to liberate the creation from their destructive grip (see Matt. 12:28). Sin, death, and the devil are overthrown, and death is named as the final enemy eliminated. Then the Son as High Priest offers up the glorified creation to the Father fully liberated and sanctified without blemish. Implied is that the Spirit has sanctified and glorified the creation in Christ's image; then Christ offers this up to the Father's glory.

The Father sent the Son and the Spirit into the world to make all things new. And after the task is completed, the Son offers up the creation to the Father's glory. And the goal? "That God may be all in all" or, that God may indwell the new creation as his temple so that the creation enjoys the liberty of reflecting his glory in the embrace of Triune communion.

At creation, God "stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in" (Isa. 40:22 ESV). In the future, God will dwell in the new heavens and new earth, for all things are made new for this purpose (Rev 21:1-4).

The role of the Father as the source of the deity of the Son and the Spirit has been qualified by so-called "social" Trinitarians. They speak instead of deity as arising in the mutual communion of the three. I have been influenced by both streams and do not view them as mutually exclusive.

Wolfhart Pannenberg, a prominent social Trinitarian, stresses the Trinitarian ends depicted in 1 Cor 15:24-27. It highlights the robust relationality of the Triune communion. The Father grants sovereign love to the Son; the Spirit and the Son and the Spirit offer it back to the Father

with the gift of the glorified creation. Though deity is granted by the Father to the Son and the Spirit, these two also contribute to the deity of the Father by fulfilling the divine love in eternal communion. In other words, the Father in this text is dependent on the Son and the Spirit for the fulfillment of his very deity, as the Son and the Spirit are on the Father as their source.[9]

However, does belief in the mutual dependence of the divine persons on one another undercut their divine sovereignty? After all, divinity is self-sufficient, having no dependence on anything to be divine. Acts 17:25 states that God as God "does not need anything." Yet, Pannenberg is not proposing that God is dependent on anything *besides* God to be God. He maintains that the divine persons are dependent on each other to be God: God is *self-dependent* but not dependent on anything besides God to be God.

God is an eternal communion of love, from the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. However, if God is self-fulfilled in a way that causes him to be "all in all" throughout the creation, is not God dependent on the renewal of creation to be God? This is a potential problem in Pannenberg's theology. But this problem can be fixed by adding that the eschatological destiny of Triune communion in time in renewing creation *reveals* in time the perfect and infinitely fulfilled love and communion of the Triune God in eternity. God as "all in all" in the eschatological victory of God's Kingdom in time mirrors the perfection of divine love as shared within God eternally. Yes, God willed in eternity to be "all in all" in time within the creation he willed to make. In doing so, God was willing that the embrace of his perfect love take in and bear our imperfection and suffering so as to overcome and heal it.

Does talk of mutual dependence of the persons separate them too much from each other? Does it imply three separate consciousnesses and undercutting divine unity? Two issues are worth exploring. The first is "perichoresis" which means interpenetration. In our key text (John 17:21), Jesus refers to his being in the Father and the Father being in him. This implies an intimate sharing of life within the Godhead, an infinite interpenetration of divine life and love among the three divine persons. The diversity of communion among the three divine persons can be described as distinct but certainly not separate.

The three divine persons are in some sense aware of one another in eternal communion. There is a sense in which three eternal

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[9]His entire discussion, which is quite provocative, is found in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology,* Vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 300-327.

consciousnesses are at work in divine communion. It is perhaps better expressed as a three-fold divine consciousness that is distinctly and diversely experienced among the three divine persons—which is still one consciousness. Walter Kasper put it this way: "we are dealing with three subjects who are reciprocally conscious of each other by means of one and the same consciousness which the three subjects 'possess', each in his own proper way."[10]

Talking about the Triune communion certainly stretches our language! How else can it be, when we have at our disposal a language shaped by human relationality and experiences. It is significantly different from the relationality internal to the Triune God.

The good news is that our current involvement in the Triune communion looks with hope for the coming victory of divine love over the forces of sin, death, and darkness. We do not simply hope for this victory. We groan under the burden of sin for the fullness of liberty to come. Not only the creation groans for the liberty that the children of God will show forth in resurrection (Rom 8:18-22), but "we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23).

The Spirit of communion grants us a degree of liberty in the here and now and urges us on towards greater fullness in Christ to the glory of the Father. In this community of love, the Spirit seeks to fashion us more and more in the image of the crucified Christ to the glory of the Father. This communion takes us out of ourselves, conforming ourselves more and more into the cruciform image of Christ. Paul writes that he is crucified with Christ, yet he lives. "And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20 ESV).

The love that we receive from Christ is mediated from the Father and perfected in us by the Spirit. The self-giving communion of the Triune God is indeed the omega point of humanity. It is the most revolutionary idea we can have of God. If we yield to it, it will revolutionize our lives and, in God's eschatological victory, the world.

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[10]Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ,* 289.

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International Lutheran-Pentecostal 2016–2022 Dialogue Statement: "The Spirit of the Lord Is Upon Me"

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
Luke 4:18–19

Part I: Identity

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . ."

Introduction

1. At first glance, one might wonder why the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF) would engage in ecumenical dialogue. On the surface, they appear to be so different that they would have little in common. Lutheran churches are confessional; Pentecostal churches are not. Generally speaking, Pentecostal worship is exuberant while Lutheran worship is more subdued. When we look more closely, however, we can find Lutheran churches such as the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus that are largely charismatic in practice, and we can find Pentecostal churches with a rich liturgical life, an episcopal structure, and a high view of the ordinances, such as the Church of God in Christ.
2. Lutherans and Pentecostals share the same world, which means that they share many of the same problems and opportunities. Ours is a world facing changes and challenges of all kinds: millions migrating from one place to another; the global pandemic of COVID-19 and its aftermath; environmental issues; secularism, religious plurality, and in some places the abandonment of religion altogether; poverty and broken economic and governmental systems.

3. As Pentecostals and Lutherans, together we confess Jesus Christ and his work as his Father's gracious and generous response to our sinfulness. Together we recognize the holy Scripture as the source of Gospel, which we proclaim through word and deed in a compassionate manner by the power of the Holy Spirit.
4. Therefore, recognizing this commonality, we also recognize that greater unity between our Christian families could provide strong hope for a world in crisis. Since both of our church families are concerned for the poor, greater unity could lead to increased cooperation in meeting their needs. Above all, disunity contradicts the desire that Jesus expressed in his prayer in John 17. So it is that we have committed ourselves to this quest to sustained dialogue by exploring together issues that may lead us to deeper unity in Christ.
5. To guide us in this task, we listened together to Luke 4:18–19. When Jesus spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth, he began his sermon with words from the prophet Isaiah (Is. 61:1–2, Lk. 4:18–19). After rolling up the scroll and handing it back to the attendant, Jesus sat down. The people of Jesus' hometown waited expectantly to hear what he might have to say about it. He startled the congregation by announcing, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." During this first official round of the international dialogue between members of the Lutheran World Federation and the Pentecostal World Fellowship, these words spoken by Isaiah and Jesus have shaped our conversations and defined the scope of this dialogue.
6. The foundation for this dialogue began in 1996 when Dr. Gunnar Stålsett, who had just completed his tenure as the General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, invited Dr. Cecil M. Robeck to consider initiating a dialogue between Lutherans and Pentecostals. Due to transitions in leadership and pre-existing commitments, such as the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, fulfillment of that dream had to wait. In the interim, Dr. Sven Oppegaard, then Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Affairs at the LWF, kept the dream alive. In 2004, Dr. Theodor Dieter and Dr. Kenneth Appold of the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg, France, invited a group of Pentecostals to explore the prospect of dialogue. Meeting in December 2004, this group proposed a five-year preliminary dialogue on the theme, "How Do We Encounter Christ?" Under the leadership of Dr. Kenneth Appold (Lutheran) and Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss (Pentecostal), the group met annually between 2005 and 2010, discussing how we encounter Christ (a) when we speak of

the "pure Gospel" (Lutherans) or the "full Gospel" (Pentecostals), in (b) proclamation, (c) in the sacraments and ordinances, and (d) in the charisms. This "proto-dialogue" ultimately published a booklet titled *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue*.[1] The LWF provided official approval of a dialogue with Pentecostals following its 2010 General Assembly.

7. Dr. Walter Altmann (Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil) has served as the Lutheran Co-Chair, and Dr. Jean-Daniel Plüss (Swiss Pentecostal Mission, Switzerland) has served as the Pentecostal Co-Chair, throughout our time together. In 2016 we were hosted by Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio, Philippines, under the rubric of "Sent by the Spirit—Identity in Christ." In honor of the Reformation anniversary, our 2017 meeting took place in Wittenberg, Germany, which focused on the theme "God Has Anointed Me to Proclaim." In 2018 the dialogue met in Santiago, Chile, to discuss "Proclaiming Good News to the Poor." The Malagasy Lutheran Church in Antananarivo, Madagascar, hosted the 2019 dialogue meeting on the theme, "Proclaim Release to the Captives and Recovery of Sight to the Blind, to Let the Oppressed Go Free." Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, participants were unable to meet in person in 2020 and 2021, but through personal correspondence and Zoom meetings we worked to draft this report. Our fifth and final in-person meeting was hosted by Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, USA in 2022 and finalized this Dialogue Statement.

Who We Are

8. From the outset of our dialogue, we did not intend to engage in a basic exchange of information resulting in a comparative theological study. We have understood from the beginning that both Lutherans and Pentecostals find their true identity in Christ. Together we confess that we have a common understanding of the Trinity.[2] Together we confess that Jesus Christ is our Lord

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[1] *Lutherans and Pentecostals in Dialogue* (Strasbourg, France: Institute for Ecumenical Research / Pasadena, CA, USA: The David J. Du Plessis Center for Christian Spirituality / Zürich, Switzerland: The European Pentecostal Charismatic Research Association, 2010).

[2] Although the overwhelming majority of Classical Pentecostals believe and confess the Holy Trinity, some Pentecostals, who share the same historic roots, are known as Oneness or Jesus' Name Pentecostals. They do not hold to

and Savior, which gives all that we say and do a Christocentric orientation. Together we also confess that the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives, in the church, and in the world. We recognize and confess the centrality of the word of God in our churches and in our lives. We both expect Christ's presence in our worship, and we both experience worship in all of its diversity as centrally formative of our Christian lives. We both understand the meaning of the Gospel as salvation that God the Father bestows through Jesus Christ. We understand that we are sent out to serve the world in proclamation, diakonia, and mission. And we both seek to contextualize the Gospel in diverse settings throughout the world. All of these confessions and understandings point to our unity in Christ.

9. Yet with all of these common confessions and understandings, we are different. The church by definition contains diversity. We have different histories. We have different church cultures. We prioritize our commitments in different ways. Sometimes we use words differently or fill them with different meanings. We want to understand one another better than we have in the past. As a result, at certain points in this document, we speak from our respective historical or ecclesial perspectives with the hope that we can grow together in our understanding of one another, as well as in our common life in Christ and in his church.

Lutherans: Identity

10. Lutheranism began as a distinct movement within the Western church in the sixteenth century. Augustinian friar Martin Luther, in no way intending to start a new church, raised questions about late medieval teaching and practice. While he quickly gained supporters in his native Germany and regions of northern and central Europe, he also gained many enemies. His teachings led to his eventual excommunication by the papacy (1521). In the years that followed, Luther translated the Bible into German, composed hymns, model sermons, and devotional materials, and wrote Catechisms that have profoundly shaped Lutheran spirituality ever since. Together with many colleagues, Luther reformed church practices, notably permitting clergy to marry and allowing the laity to receive the cup at communion. Efforts to resolve the conflict

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the Trinitarian doctrine of God of the early church councils. Only Trinitarian Pentecostals are represented in this dialogue.

between Luther's supporters and opponents were also pursued throughout the 1520s and culminated in the presentation of the Augsburg Confession in 1530 at the Diet of Augsburg. However, this effort did not achieve consensus. As a result, the Lutheran confessing movement (at the time simply called *evangelisch* or "evangelical") and those who remained within the papal church developed along different trajectories thereafter. Tragically, this conflict within the church led to a division into multiple mutually exclusive churches, as well as political partisanship and outright war. In the centuries to come, Lutheranism spread throughout Europe and traveled to every other continent by means of immigration and mission.

11. While Lutherans recognized each other and studied with each other across national boundaries, formal efforts toward global fellowship arose only in the twentieth century, first with the Lutheran World Convention (1923–1947) and then in 1947 with the establishment of the Lutheran World Federation. In 1984 at its Budapest Assembly the LWF established full altar and pulpit fellowship among its member churches. In 1990 at the Curitiba Assembly the LWF redefined its status in this way: "The Lutheran World Federation is a communion of churches which confess the triune God, agree in the proclamation of the Word of God and are united in pulpit and altar fellowship" (LWF Constitution III.1). Today the LWF is comprised of 149 churches with a membership of 77 million people from 99 countries.[3]

Lutherans: Doctrine

12. Lutherans self-identify confessionally, meaning that they are not identified by a particular church structure, liturgy, or experience, but rather by their teaching. The Scripture is the *norma normans*—that is, the chief and final judge of all Christian teaching and practice. Lutherans also teach and confess the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds. They ascribe special and binding importance to the Lutheran Confessions of the sixteenth century. LWF member churches accept Martin Luther's Small Catechism (1529) and the Augsburg Confession (1530) as their doctrinal standard; most LWF member churches additionally recognize the entire Book of Concord (1580). Luther's other theological, devotional, and exegetical writings have been tremendously

[3]https://www.lutheranworld.org/content/member-churches.

important as well, along with his hymns. Lutheran churches ever since have continued to engage all these texts, interpreting them for their varied settings around the world and striving to teach according to them.

13. Among typical Lutheran emphases, in the context of this dialogue we wish to highlight in particular the following: confession of God the Holy Trinity; that Jesus Christ, truly human and truly divine, is both Savior and Lord; salvation as a purely gracious gift of God; justification by faith, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit and a "living, busy, active, mighty thing,"[4] and from which good works spring; the gracious and efficacious action of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper; that pure preaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the sacraments are sufficient for the unity of the church; the necessity of an ordered, public ministry; the distinction between Law and Gospel; and the freedom of the Christian.

Lutherans: Experience

14. Although Lutherans identify themselves by their confessional teaching, this does not mean that they reject, deny, or disdain experience. Indeed, there are many and rich experiences that are typical of Lutheran practice: the hearing and reading of Scripture, hearing the Word preached in sermons, the reception of the sacraments, prayer, singing, the forgiveness of sins, koinonia, vocational calling, and faith itself. Furthermore, Pietist and charismatic movements within Lutheranism have particularly sought to enrich spiritual experience.
15. It is true, however, that Lutherans will often approach experience with caution. This itself may be said to be the result of their historical *experience* of the dangers the church runs when it accumulates practices and teachings without sufficient theological discernment. Further, Lutherans seek to test any given experience not only against Scripture, creeds, and confessions, but also against the experience of other persons, the congregation, the synod or national assembly, the global communion of the LWF, and the church throughout its two thousand-year journey. Following Luther's terminology in the Heidelberg Disputation, many

[4]Martin Luther, "Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans," in *Luther's Works* vol. 35 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1960), 370.

Lutherans appeal to "the theology of the cross" as a criterion for spiritual discernment.

16. Luther comments: "This life, therefore, is not godliness but the process of becoming godly, not health but getting well, not being but becoming, not rest but exercise. We are not now what we shall be, but we are on the way. The process is not yet finished, but it is actively going on. This is not the goal but it is the right road. At present, everything does not gleam and sparkle, but everything is being cleansed."[5]

Pentecostals: Identity

17. The Pentecostal team represents Classical Pentecostals, whose roots go back to the beginning of the twentieth century. The best-known revival that gave rise to global Pentecostalism took place in 1906 at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles, California, USA, itself foreshadowed by an experience of the outpouring of the Spirit in Topeka, Kansas, USA, in 1901. Alongside those revivals, there are recorded outpourings of Spirit at the turn of the twentieth century in India and elsewhere. Classical Pentecostals are found in all global contexts and number around 270 million. The diversity among them is considerable, which is why some people prefer to use the plural term "Pentecostalisms." Alongside Classical Pentecostals, scholars identify two other related church groups. The first is the Charismatic Renewal, made up of members of historically older churches whose worship and practice is akin to those of Pentecostals. The second is the Neo-Charismatic movement, which includes all other charismatically-oriented Christian groups and churches that are not part of either Classical Pentecostals or Charismatics in historic churches. The total number of these three groups amounts to more than 600 million worldwide.

Pentecostals: Experience

18. Pentecostal identity, differing from that of churches whose origins lie farther back in history, is not based primarily on confessions, doctrinal formulae, or a united structure, but rather on a particular type of spiritual or charismatic experience, which is accompanied by the bestowal of spiritual gifts or charisms (1 Cor. 12:4–11 and

[5]Martin Luther, "Defense and Explanation of the All the Articles," in Luther's Works vol. 32 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958), 24.

28; Rom. 12:4–8; Eph. 4:11–13). These gifts include healing, exorcism, and prophecy, though to outside observers the most spectacular and controversial gift is speaking in tongues or glossolalia. Accordingly, for Pentecostals, experience came first and doctrine followed, which Pentecostals understand to reflect the reality of the earliest period of the church.

19. Contrary to popular misunderstandings, Pentecostal spirituality has never focused or fixated on the Holy Spirit alone. Rather, it focuses on Jesus Christ. Pentecostals see their own experiences correlating with the narratives of the New Testament, particularly those in the Gospels and Acts in which Jesus Christ figures prominently as savior, healer, and helper in human need. Out of that experience-based, biblically-informed reflection process there has emerged what has been called the "Full Gospel" or "Foursquare Gospel" or "Fivefold Gospel" (depending on how much emphasis is given to sanctification). This means that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is continuing the ministry that he was doing in biblical times in his various roles as:
    a. Savior who pronounces forgiveness of sins and justifies by faith.
    b. Sanctifier who cleanses a justified life on the way toward holiness and purity. Reflecting the legacy of Holiness movements, all Pentecostals affirm holiness in the Christian life.
    c. Healer who delivers from illness, both physical and mental, and liberates from the power of evil spirits.
    d. Baptizer with the Spirit who empowers Christians for witness and service by endowing with diverse spiritual gifts.
    e. Soon-Coming King whose imminent return is a powerful catalyst for urgency in mission, proclamation, and service.

Pentecostals: Doctrine

20. Pentecostal identity is based upon charismatic spirituality rather than formally stated confessions, but that is not to say that doctrine plays no role in the movement. From their earliest days, Pentecostals have drafted various types of statements, reflecting on the meaning, significance, and implications of their experience and faith as they drew inspiration from their ecclesial traditions of origin. There was a need to test, judge, and discern whether proposed teachings were in keeping with the biblical witness and

certain aspects of historical teaching.

21. Even when Pentecostals saw it necessary to give doctrinal form to their beliefs, particularly those that were distinctive—like Spirit baptism, glossolalia, healing, and other charisms—they remained suspicious of doctrinal or theological formulae, lest they become rigid and lifeless. Their apparent neglect of creeds and their arguments against their inclusion rarely had anything to do with the content. What worried Pentecostals was what they perceived as the lack of personal faith among believers in older traditions that retained the creeds. However, there is in principle nothing in Pentecostal doctrine that is not fully compatible with the creeds of the early church and its councils.
22. In keeping with their practically- and biblically-oriented charismatic spirituality and ministry, most Pentecostal pastors and leaders to date have received little or no formal theological education and minimal ministerial training. A number of highly educated academic Pentecostal pastors and theologians is emerging and actively contributing to a growing body of serious Pentecostal theology.

Conclusion

23. We have outlined some aspects of our two church families. The reader may have noticed that the respective ordering of the subsections that cover identity, experience, and doctrine is different. Lutherans usually begin with doctrine before speaking of experience, whereas as Pentecostals usually begin with experience before moving on to doctrine. However, despite this difference in framing, the content of our identities overlaps in many areas. Together we confess God the Holy Trinity. We believe in Jesus Christ, truly human and truly divine, who is our Savior and Lord. We hold that salvation is a purely gracious and free gift of God, and that sinners are justified by faith, which sets us free and sends us out into the world to serve. We interpret our experiences through holy Scripture and with the help of both the local and the global church. It is in the joyful recognition of these convergences in our Christian faith and practice that we can proceed to deeper exploration of the topics that follow.

Part II: Mission and Proclamation
". . . he has anointed me to bring good news . . ."

The Trinitarian Mission of Salvation

24. Together we believe that God has a mission (*missio Dei*). This mission emanates from the heart of God, and the Trinity is a paradigm for a holistic understanding of this mission. This holistic mission includes: a) care for creation, as represented by the Father's command in Genesis 1:28, b) love for others, as represented by the Son's command in John 13:34–35, and c) the proclamation of the Gospel, as represented by the outpouring of the Spirit upon the apostles in Acts 1–2. In the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is called to a transforming and missionary discipleship. The ministry of Jesus on earth is the model for the church as it fulfills the divine mission. Just as Jesus was anointed to proclaim the Good News (Lk. 4:18) on earth, the church has the same mission. It is a proclamation to be carried out through word and deed.
25. As Christians we respond in multiple ways to God's life-giving mission on earth. Equipped by the Holy Spirit, we are encouraged to build a community of hope wherever the Gospel is shared and lived across the globe. Whether presented by direct evangelism or demonstrated in acts of love, the message of the Gospel is always the same. This proclamation is at the very center of what the church is called to do: "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18–19). Our proclamation is therefore Christ-centered and scripturally based. After all, it is Christ who commissions us to proclaim the Gospel and Scripture gives us the content of our proclamation of that Gospel. In proclaiming this message, we always hope that the conversion of human subjects will take place, resulting in their transformation, reconciliation, and empowerment. The church's goal is the salvation of the world to the glory of the triune God.

Proclamation in Word

26. The words of the prophet Isaiah, read and claimed by Jesus for his own ministry (Lk. 4:18), provide a template for the Christian

ministry: we have been called and empowered to bring that Good News to others. This mandate comes through both the words of Jesus (Mt. 28:19–20) and the teaching of the apostles (2 Tim. 2:1–2).

27. The Good News is the Word of God, the incarnate Jesus Christ, as witnessed by the Scripture. Christ himself is the message that God has provided the way of salvation, that sin can be forgiven, and that Jesus is the one through whom salvation is given and received: the power of God unto salvation given without cost to all who receive it (Rom. 1:16). It is God's desire that everyone should be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). The Good News frees us from captivity to sin, death, the devil, and the powers and principalities, and so opens up a new and abundant life for us. God's saving and transforming acts also reach beyond humankind and include all creation (Gen. 2:7; Jn. 3:8, 20:22; Rom. 8:18–22).
28. Proclamation takes place in various ways. Creation declares the glory of God (Ps. 19:1). A primary way we proclaim the Good News is through our lives and actions. We are also encouraged to speak to others of this message (Rom. 10:13–15). Proclamation takes place from the pulpit, in evangelistic meetings, through personal testimony, in Bible studies, in small groups, in songs and music, and in all kinds of personal encounters. All who are part of the church have the joy, the right, and the obligation to share with others the Good News of Jesus Christ. In short, we have been called to be Christ's witnesses before the world (Acts 1:8). Some followers of Jesus have been specially gifted and called to proclaim the Good News (Eph. 4:11), but all who are followers of Jesus Christ have the privilege of sharing the Good News by bearing witness to their encounter with him and its effects upon their lives. The encounter with God transforms our lives, moving us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light (Col. 1:13–14) and giving us an abundance of life (Jn. 10:10).
29. Whenever we celebrate baptism and the Lord's Supper, we live as a community that is called into fellowship with our Lord and Savior. In baptism we die and rise with Christ (Rom. 6:3–11) and in the Lord's Supper, eating the bread and drinking the cup, we proclaim the Lord's death till he comes (1 Cor. 11:26). Any action or deed that is freely offered to others in the light of God's love and in the power of His Spirit may communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ (Mt. 25:34–36). Thus, the message of the Gospel is proclaimed first through the Word of God in Scripture, then in the words of those who follow Jesus and the godly lives that they live

(Mt. 5:13–15), and in the various actions or deeds they perform as they seek the welfare of all human beings and the earth.

Proclamation in Deed

30. We affirm that the biblical mandate of proclamation must be translated into real-time engagement in acts of love and works of mercy within the community, so that the message we proclaim would remain credible and relevant.
31. One way proclamation in action is accomplished is through our lives offered up to God, reflecting the ongoing transformation that takes place in the minds, hearts, and lives of all who place their faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:1–2). What we do is as important as what we say. The proclamation of the Gospel, therefore, requires living our lives consistently with the Good News we have received.
32. Furthermore, in our deeds, the interrelation between God's commandments to care for the world, love our neighbor, and proclaim the Gospel must constantly be kept in mind. Our mission practice must be carried out in solidarity with people who suffer and also address the root causes of injustice and oppression. In this way we are not only hearers of the Word but also doers (Jas. 1:22). Together we affirm that people living in poverty and on the margins across the globe are not only recipients but also agents of mission, whose voices and lives need to be respected and heard in our respective churches.
33. Works of mercy begin with respect for human dignity, based not on generic philosophical tenets but as a call from God: "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed" (Prov. 19:17). As we listen faithfully to Scripture, so also we listen attentively to the cries and struggles of the people around us, all of them created in the image of God. Participation in God's mission calls every community to look beyond its own comfort zones and walls in order to embrace fully its missional commitment in the world. Connecting with the struggles of the community is a vital part of understanding the relevance of the Gospel of Christ and our mandate to proclaim it. For this reason we agree that faith ought to be reflected in actions of mercy practiced within the community and beyond, as in the example of Tabitha in Acts 9:36.
34. Hence, there is always an opportunity waiting for those who want to follow Jesus' example and offer their service in love through actions of mercy. Further, it ought to be noted that the

cross presupposes the fact that the peace that the world receives from Christ cannot be fully enjoyed if some people are still left unhealed and suffering. The pain of the world should therefore connect Christians with all of God's creation. In this way Christian proclamation in word and Christian mercy in deed go hand in hand.

* * *

Case Studies in Proclamation

The Lutheran commitment to proclaiming the Word of God in the vernacular is beautifully exemplified by nineteenth-century evangelist-translators Onesimos Nesib and Aster Ganno of Ethiopia. Both were captured and enslaved in their youth; later, when they were freed, they became Christians and worked with Swedish missions in Ethiopia and Eritrea. While Onesimos had a burning passion to share the Gospel with his compatriots, he had been kidnapped from his homeland at such an early age that his Oromo vocabulary was rather poor. Aster, by contrast, not only had a larger vocabulary but a phenomenal memory, compiling a grammar and a fifteen-thousand word dictionary of Oromo, as well as five hundred songs, tales, riddles, and proverbs from the Oromo. Together, Onesimos and Aster translated the entire Bible into Oromo for the first time, which was published in 1899. They dedicated the rest of their lives to preaching missions and setting up schools for literacy, giving Oromos their written language and the Good News together.

Proclaiming the Good News and teaching the Word of God go together in Pentecostal settings, as an example from Papua New Guinea shows. Especially in the remote areas, evangelism began with telling Gospel stories presenting the message of salvation. Missionaries started schools to teach the Papuans to read and write. Pentecostals were also involved in the translation of the Bible into the many indigenous languages of Papua New Guinea. In 1967, the Assemblies of God established the International Correspondence Institute (now Global University) that within two years rose to an enrollment of 30,000. The program began with an evangelistically-oriented course called *The Great Questions of Life,* which was followed by a catechetical course called *Highlights in the Life of Christ* and *Your Helpful Friend* about the Holy Spirit. *The Christian Life Series* is a discipleship course, and later a leadership program was initiated called *The Christian Service Series.* The basic courses have been administered free of charge. Today Global University continues to offer evangelistic and discipleship courses, and

at the same time it has expanded into college-level and post-graduate education for ministers.

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Common Concerns and Challenges

35. Building on our shared agreement on the Trinitarian mission of God and the nature of proclamation in word and deed, we take up now specific areas of concern or challenge.
36. *Ethics*. The most significant area of concern we share is the ethics of mission. Both of our teams have observed dishonest and dishonorable forms of mission, strategies of "by whatever means necessary" that disregard both the high standard of holiness demanded of apostolic witnesses and the full humanity of all people. We are dismayed when missionaries carry out their programs in total ignorance of the local culture or history. We are frustrated and ashamed when Christians attempt to "evangelize" members of other churches as if those other churches simply did not exist. We agree on the importance of recognizing that the Holy Spirit is the primary agent of mission, both in the church's proclaiming and in the hearers' response to what is proclaimed. This theological insight should make us humble as to our calling, our missional activities, and how we engage others. Proselytism disrespects the potential recipient as a person and violates other Christian communities that seek to proclaim the Good News as well.[6]
37. *Unity of the church*. We are mindful of the fact that the quest for Christian unity has its source in Jesus' high priestly prayer (Jn. 17) and the renewed relevance in the missionary movement, most famously the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, when for the first time Christians faced up to the scandal of their hostility and competition in the mission field. While we deplore "sheep-stealing," we also recognize that Christians may leave a church on account of its failures to carry out the whole mission of God, and we invite all churches to serious self-critical assessment. We also observe that the apparent success of Christian churches in a society can actually drive division, while persecution and minority status can foster close cooperation. We commend complementary partnerships between churches that seek not to "steal" members

[6]*Call to Mission and Perceptions of Proselytism: A Reader for a Global Conversation*, ed. John Baxter Brown (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022).

but to strengthen one another. We also stress the importance of visible aspects of unity alongside spiritual or invisible unity. Our dialogue has shown that trust can be built, expressions of unity can be fostered, and common witness is possible.

38. *Eschatology*. At one time eschatological urgency was a major motivating factor in Pentecostal missions, especially the expectation that Christ would return again soon in glory. While this theme is not as emphasized today as it was at the beginning of the movement, Pentecostals still think of themselves in terms of living in the "last days," which is a key motivation for reaching the lost (Lk. 15). However, with the passage of more than a hundred years since the first revivals, Pentecostals have faced the task of building for the long-term, for example in establishing schools and hospitals, resulting in a more holistic mission. For their part, Lutherans recall that the earliest days of the Reformation were also marked by an eschatological urgency, which over time was transmuted to a principled amillennial stance, leading instead to extensive socioeconomic reforms such as the common chest, poor relief, schools for children and university reform, and health care initiatives, which have continued to the present day. This same dynamic of a developing eschatology is at work in the New Testament itself.
39. *Interfaith and intercultural dialogue*. Together we recognize that mission work often takes place locally, among people who share Christians' own language and culture. While even this requires sensitivity and wisdom, how much more when Christians cross the boundaries of language, culture, ethnicity, and religion. Together we acknowledge that dialogue with peoples of other faiths is complementary to mission work, neither an alternative nor a threat to mission. It is an expression of respect and love for our neighbors and for the work God may be doing among them (Mt. 2:1–12, Jn. 16:5–11, Acts 17:16–34). Likewise, reflecting on the often distressing history of cultural and political imperialism, together we urge respectful and attentive engagement with cultures other than our own, listening well before we attempt to speak, for the upbuilding of just and peaceful societies.
40. *Contextualization of the Gospel*. Together we recognize that the church is required always to explore meaningful ways of interacting with different religions and cultures. Here the church's greatest challenge is the contextualization of the Christian message with a positive yet discerning attitude toward the local culture. Contextualization is the process that attempts to interpret

Scripture with the context of the recipients in mind, in order to make it more understandable to them while respecting their full humanity. Concerns about syncretism and the danger of culture undermining divine truth must not be overlooked. We are both "called out" of the world to worship (1 Pet. 2:5–9) and "sent back" into the world to serve as effective witnesses (Jn. 17:18, 20:21). But such concerns must not dampen or suppress our efforts toward contexutalization. This dialogue between Pentecostals and Lutherans illustrates the benefits of different Christian traditions engaging together to find ways to be a meaningful witness of Christ to all.

Part III: Mission and the Poor
". . . to bring good news to the poor . . ."

Introduction

41. As Christians, we take seriously the call we have received, that in following Jesus we are to carry a message of "good news to the poor," which includes all who are vulnerable, marginalized, living with disability, or otherwise in need. It would be easy to be selective in our readings of the Bible, noting, for instance, that even Jesus observed, "You always have the poor with you" (Mt. 26:11). Anyone hearing these words might conclude that poverty is an intractable problem. But Scripture has much to say about the poor and their care (Deut. 15:11, Prov. 14:31, Is. 58:6–10, Mt. 25:40, 1 Jn. 3:17–18), and above all, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20).
42. Jesus was himself born of a poor woman in humble circumstances. Mary, expecting the child promised by the angel, sings a joyful song (Lk. 1:46–55). This song became known as the Magnificat, because in it Mary exalted God's marvelous mercy towards her. In his explanation of the Magnificat, Luther pointed out that God did not regard Mary's "humility" as a moral virtue, but her "low estate," her being poor, her "nothingness." It was precisely Mary, a poor woman, who was chosen to be God's servant and to be called by all generations a blessed one.[7]
43. In his inaugural sermon, Jesus began with the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed

[7]Martin Luther, "Commentary on the Magnificat," in *Luther's Works* vol. 21 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 297–358.

me to proclaim good news to the poor" (Lk. 4:18). When Jesus was approached by a rich young man inquiring how he might receive eternal life, Jesus instructed him to sell all he had and give the proceeds to the poor (Mt. 19:21) and follow him. When Jesus saw the poor widow giving out of her poverty, he honored her (Mk. 12:42–44). In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus invites his disciples to reflect on neighborly love, both in serving the one in need, and using the despised Samaritan as an example of neighborly love (Lk. 10:29). God has called the followers of Jesus to care for the poor, the marginalized, the migrant and refugee, and especially the widow and orphan, following the tradition of the Old Testament law (Lev. 19:9–10 and 34) and the prophets (Is. 10:1–2, Zech. 7:10). All human beings are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). All are to be regarded with dignity and respect as people who have the opportunity to hear and to share the Good News, to bring hope and the possibility of flourishing through a full and abundant life (Jn. 10:10).

44. Through God's generosity, the earth has the capacity to produce enough to satisfy the needs of every human being in it. This is part of God's good creation that should be proclaimed as good news. Due to sinful human actions and the brokenness of our world, all are not granted equal access to what God has already provided. Wars, oppression, corruption, mismanagement, environmental destruction, selfishness, greed, and unjust social, economic, and political systems result in unequal access, unjust distribution, and unfair vulnerability for some members of the human family. Throughout the world, individuals, organizations, governments, and even churches have quite often acted in ways that participate in structures that support those who would take advantage of the situation, leaving many people vulnerable to their abuse of power. Clearly, such actions contribute to famine and poverty that affect so much of the world and from which it is often difficult to escape. As such, we believe that inescapable poverty is an injustice that we are to work to overcome.

Engagement with the Poor in Our Churches

45. We understand that, as followers of Jesus, we have been called to carry the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world in a holistic mission of word and deed. Just as Jesus instructed his first followers to go to Jerusalem and wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, so we trust that we also, like the followers of Jesus in the

early church, have received the Spirit and are thereby equipped to become his witnesses throughout the world (Acts 1:8). In serving the poor, believers both share Jesus Christ with the poor and also encounter Jesus Christ in the poor, which leads to mutual transformation (Mt. 25:31–46).

46. At the origin of both of our movements, the poor played a significant role. Already in his famous Ninety-Five Theses (1517), Luther made it clear that he was deeply concerned about the exploitation of the poor by certain church practices.[8] The Reformation spread and was taken up in conditions of late medieval poverty, and even centuries later, the LWF had its origins in addressing the refugee crises of two World Wars. Pentecostalism originated among the poor ministering to one another in places like India, Chile, and the USA. Both Lutherans and Pentecostals have seen tremendous growth in the Global South, an area of the world that experiences overall higher levels of poverty than elsewhere.
47. Our communities have always been concerned with serving those in need and showing solidarity with the poor and oppressed. For example, in many countries Lutheran and Pentecostal missions have been active among the most destitute, such as the Dalits in India, which has led to the formation of many churches. Our churches have established and also cooperate with many different institutions offering humanitarian aid, from refugee resettlement to disaster relief to development work, including the Convoy of Hope and LWF World Service.
48. Striving to be faithful to our calling, we teach the depth of God's generosity, as well as the need to trust in God's promises and provision. Even when Pentecostals have moved up socially and economically, they have remained aware of the needs of the poor, and as such, they frequently speak not only to the spiritual needs of others but also to their material needs. They reflect upon and emphasize the importance of stewardship, the giving of tithes, offerings, and other sacrificial gifts to be used to meet the needs of others. Pentecostals frequently emphasize God's promise of faithfulness to supply the needs of those who put their trust in him (Prov. 28:25). They typically view this promise, however, in terms of a sense of well-being, *shalom*, fullness or purposefulness in life. This way of looking at their gifts enables them to rejoice when these gifts bear fruit in the salvation of others. Historically,

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[8]Martin Luther, "The Ninety-Five Theses," #45, in *Luther's Works* vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957), 29.

in response to God's graciousness, Lutherans have shared generously out of their resources to help those in need. Lutherans, too, emphasize the importance of stewardship and offerings to be used to meet the needs of others. They respond individually and communally to God's invitation to participate in the building of just and safe societies for all people, through advocacy, education, and various diaconal projects.

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Case Studies in Mission to the Poor

When Luther wrote to the German nobility in 1520, stressing their responsibility as "secular" authorities nevertheless always acting before God to serve the people, he also advanced a comprehensive list of social and economic reforms.[9] Among other things, Luther advocated for wide educational programs for both boys and girls, the latter of which was highly unusual in his time. He also supported the creation of common chests of public funds to provide for the needs of the poor, widows, the elderly, and the sick. Luther returned to these reforms throughout his career, in addition to harshly criticizing authorities that acted in self-interest only or secured personal privileges for themselves.

A contemporary Lutheran example of holistic service is the expanding diaconal work in and around the Church of St. Clare in Stockholm, Sweden. From the early 1990s onwards, this church has created strong networks of people, private companies, and public institutions mobilizing resources to address urban poverty. Hundreds of people, including asylum seekers, daily receive food and shelter, clothing, pastoral counseling, and legal advice. Over the weekends, teams of clergy and laity assist people in the streets suffering from alcoholism, drug abuse, and prostitution. Sunday worship retains a traditional Lutheran liturgical order combined with many charismatic elements. Proclamation in word and deed go together hand in hand.

Solidarity in proclamation and service may lead to an identification with the life conditions of poor people. As an example, we can mention Roberto Zwetsch and Lori Altmann, Brazilian Lutheran missionaries among an indigenous population in the Amazon region in the state of Acre in northwestern Brazil. In the 1980s they decided to live amidst the indigenous Kulina-Madihá people in a village located seven days by boat upstream from the nearest modern settlement. When the couple was expecting their second child, they faced the difficult dilemma of deciding

[9]Address to the German Nobility.

where to give birth. Should they leave the indigenous community, go to a city, check in to a hospital, and afterwards return to live with the indigenous? They realized that, if they did this, they might lose the confidence of the indigenous people. They decided to stay. And there, without hospital, doctors, nurses, or even a bed, but surrounded by the care, love, and natural knowledge of the indigenous women, Lori safely gave birth, according to local custom, to her second child, a boy, who then received an indigenous name, Binô Mauirá. Later Lori wrote that she would never trade that profoundly human experience for the technical assistance she had had when giving birth to her first child, the daughter Pamalomid, a unique name given by the Paíter-Suruí people, in the state of Rondonia, also in the Amazon region.10

An early example of Pentecostal ministry to the marginalized was that of Lillian Trasher (1887–1955), who in 1912 founded an orphanage in Egypt and became known as the "Nile Mother." Later she also helped to set up a home for widows and a place for the blind. Her work, funded by the Assemblies of God, eventually won support also from Presbyterian churches as well as other Christian, humanitarian, and governmental organizations.[11]

Pentecostal civic engagement has been increasingly recognized as empowering the lives of the poor. For instance, a squatter community moved into a quarry at the edge of Baguio City, Philippines, because farming could no longer sustain their families, and they hoped to support themselves by sorting trash or cleaning houses. A Pentecostal church under the leadership of Pastor Joel Tejedo helped these settlers with a feeding project for the children; skills- and livelihood-training followed. Since many of the couples who already had children were too poor to afford a wedding ceremony, the church organized a wedding for twelve couples. This gave the couples an official status and increased their sense of self-worth. The church also became a hub for finding employment for these people.[12]

In similar fashion, a Pentecostal pastor in Peru organized a program that includes a soup kitchen, a medical office, and educational programs in one of the poorest districts of Lima. In cooperation with doctors, he created free healthcare programs that take place in the church. During

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[10]Lori Altmann and Roberto Zwetsch, *Paíter: o povo Suruí e o compromisso missionário* (Chapecó: Caderno do Povo-PU, 1980). Also: Roberto Zwetsch, *Partejando a esperança* (Brasília, Porantim, 1984, VII, nr. 65/66, July/Aug 1984, p.17).

[11]https://www.handsalongthenile.org/causes/lillian-trasher-orphanage-assiut/

[12]Joel A. Tejedo, "Doing Pentecostal Civic Engagement in the Squatter Area of Lower Rock Quarry, Baguio City, Philippines," *International Review of Mission* 107/1 (2018): 159–178.

the COVID-19 pandemic he moved the soup kitchen outdoors to provide nutritious meals, especially for children and the neediest. Workshops and training are provided to the residents on topics such as nutrition, ecology, feminism, and the prevention of anemia, among others. The pastor's motivation is to serve his community as Christ would, addressing spiritual, social, and bodily needs.

Weaknesses and Challenges

49. Together we critique and condemn the abuses of the biblical idea of prosperity in the teaching of certain Neo-charismatic and Independent churches, and not unknown even in some Classical Pentecostal, Lutheran, and other historic churches.
50. The so-called "prosperity gospel" has its roots in nineteenth-century American "positive thinking" movements, and only later was picked up by certain Christian church leaders. The fundamental idea behind it is that both Christ's atonement and the Christian's faith function like legal contracts, obligating God to reward the believer with material wealth and physical health in return for faith and sacrificial giving. This is based on the notion that on the cross Jesus overcame every instance of poverty, sickness, and death, but it ignores Jesus' call to believers to carry their own cross (Mk. 8:34–35) and suffer with him and one another (Col. 1:24, 1 Cor. 12:26). This teaching is misleading and becomes destructive when continuing poverty and suffering are taken as proof of inadequate faith. It is equally destructive when it convinces the wealthy and successful that their advantages are due to their own flawless faith, and when it licenses church leaders to demand donations from their flocks with the false promise that it will lead to equally great wealth on the part of the donor. This is an unfaithful response to Christians who struggle in poverty hoping for a compassionate intervention from God to release them from their hardships (Ex. 33:19, Is. 49:10).
51. Preachers of the prosperity gospel are not necessarily motivated by personal greed. Sometimes they are responding to the extreme need of their community and hope in this way to inspire the self-confidence that comes from knowing some of the genuine promises of prosperity in Scripture. This teaching may appear attractive to the poor as it promises a way out of misery. But the long-term consequences of prosperity teaching are so destructive on both individuals and communities that it must be opposed and replaced

with a better understanding of the prosperity that God intends for all people.

52. Together we acknowledge in our own histories and practices certain tendencies that may have led to a breach of solidarity with the poor, creating a vacuum filled in by prosperity preachers. For example, Pentecostals are at times guilty of triumphalism, issuing promises of victorious life that may mislead believers regarding what they can expect in this life, as well as an over-spiritualization of faith, leading to neglect of this-worldly concerns. For their part, the early Lutheran commitment to caring for the poor has sometimes turned into a delegation of this responsibility to charitable agencies or the state, absolving individuals of personal engagement with the poor and vulnerable. There have also been occasions when too-rigid distinctions between the "two kingdoms" and a misunderstanding of "passive righteousness" have excused Lutheran neglect of the needy.
53. In addition, together we recognize that the exercise of governmental authority can be an efficient way of serving people in need, but it also presents heavy temptations to use such power to secure unjust advantages and privileges. We believe that it is important for our churches to admit that we have at times become supporters of unjust and even oppressive regimes and systems, or have sought advantages personally or for our own church institutions rather than for the common good. We are reminded that Jesus himself, before starting his public ministry, had to face the temptation of power but resisted it by rebuking the devil with the words: "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve" (Mt. 4:10).

Faithful and Unfaithful Approaches to Prosperity

54. Together we commend to all Christian believers a faithful teaching on the abundance of God's gifts, given so that the whole human family and the earth may flourish. God wishes to bless us, but this is always a free divine gift, never a matter of obligation or coercion. Furthermore, God's promise of blessing does not exclude the possibility of illness, economic hardship, persecution, suffering, and indeed death, as evident in our Savior's own experience.
55. Recognizing the specific false teaching of the prosperity gospel, the Assemblies of God (to give one example) published the document "The Believer and Positive Confession" in 1980, condemning the

false promises associated with that teaching.[13] Both Pentecostals and Lutherans are appreciative of ecumenical Christian statements against false prosperity teaching, such as the Lausanne Theology Working Group's "Statement on the Prosperity Gospel" (2009).[14]

56. To help Christians navigate true from false teachings about the prosperity that God intends for us, we commend these four questions to ask about any promise of prosperity:
    a. *What exactly* is being promised and on what grounds? Does God actually promise such things, or has the text of the Bible been read selectively or dishonestly?
    b. *At what cost?* For example, is the earth exploited or is civic life corrupted by the appeal to a promised prosperity?
    c. *At whose expense?* Is one believer or community being lifted up at the expense of, or in disregard of, another?
    d. *For what motive?* Do preachers or wealthy and healthy people seek their own self-interest, or is love of neighbor paramount? Is one organization or ministry being elevated to the disadvantage or defamation of another? Does it contribute to proselytism?
57. Looking at the issue positively, Christians can affirm the riches they have received in Christ (Eph. 2:5–8, Phil. 4:19), the fact that they are incorporated into a caring and resourceful community that seeks the advancement of God's kingdom and its righteousness (Mt. 6:33, 2 Cor. 9:9–11), and that their new life in Christ, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, empowers them to serve the common good (Jn. 13:12–17, Rom. 12:6, 1 Cor. 12:4–7) to the glory of God (Mt. 5:16).

Conclusion

58. We rejoice that although our churches use terminologies and emphases that at times vary, we are of one mind in our commitment to serving the poor as fellow human beings who are created in the image of God and worthy of dignity and respect. Together we affirm a commitment to a holistic understanding of mission that includes the proclamation of the Good News to the poor along with joining in solidarity with the poor, always keeping in mind that God became poor in Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:5–11).
59. Nonviolent efforts to overcome poverty and the causes that lead to

[13]https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/the-believer-and-positive-confession.
[14]https://www.lausanne.org/content/a-statement-on-the-prosperity-gospel.

it are legitimate and valuable, because the Bible teaches us to come to the defense of the poor. Such engagement with the suffering of others may bring us into situations that lead to our own suffering in the struggle to overcome the suffering of others. This can be understood as an experience of bearing the cross of Jesus Christ, conscious that Jesus Christ suffered for us so that we may receive the fullness of life.

60. Although we reject a theology of prosperity which offers false promises and runs the risk of turning God into an object of our desires, we do affirm an understanding of prosperity as a blessing of God freely given and affirm Jesus' promise to bring abundant life for all people. Those who are so blessed are called to be a blessing to others and to work for the betterment of all society, to overcome injustices, and to care for all of God's creation.

Part IV: Healing and Deliverance

". . . to proclaim release to the captives,
and recovery of sight to the blind,
and let the oppressed go free . . ."

Biblical Foundations

61. As already seen in previous sections of this statement, together we look to the Scriptures to inform and guide our teaching and practice regarding healing and deliverance from evil.
62. As Scripture testifies, God's intention for his good creation has always been its wholeness and flourishing. Even after the broken trust that is human sin, God has cared for the earth and the people created in his image. God has blessed the sick, the suffering, and those afflicted by evil spirits with physical healing, spiritual healing, and communal reconciliation. Healing and deliverance have not been restricted to the people of God but have been extended to those on the "outside," such as Naaman the Syrian (2 Kgs. 5:1–27) and the Syrophoenician woman (Mk. 7:24–30).
63. The ministry of Jesus Christ was especially distinctive for its emphasis on healing and deliverance alongside feeding, teaching, and proclaiming the kingdom of God. He commissioned his disciples to do the same. The apostles healed in Jesus' name throughout the book of Acts (e.g. 3:1–10, 9:32–34, 14:8–10). Paul identifies healing as a spiritual gift (1 Cor. 12:9). James 5:13–15 commends prayer for and anointing of the sick.

64. While healing and deliverance testify to God's good and saving intention for people already now in this life, these things at the same time always point toward the eschatological horizon of the final healing that will take place in the resurrection of the dead (Rev. 22:1–3). Healing in this life does not spare anyone from death. The absence of healing does not indicate inadequate faith or that God does not care.

Healing from Illness

65. Though we pray for the end of the physical illness and the patient's full recovery, we recognize healing as a broader concept. Healing encompasses also spiritual and relational dimensions. Sometimes a person dies of an illness or endures a chronic condition, yet in the process comes to a deeper trust in God, and loves and receives love from others in a profound new way. It is important for the church and its leaders to guide people in their spiritual reckoning with their illness, while always keeping the good news of Jesus Christ at the forefront.
66. Nevertheless, there is a danger in interpreting healing only in a spiritual sense, and even more so in assigning a spiritual causality to all illnesses. Jesus warns sharply against those who simplistically equate illness or other bodily harm with punishment for sin (Jn. 9, Lk. 13:4). It is equally disastrous to reject all forms of medical intervention as the only proper expression of faith in God.
67. Because sickness is not part of the envisioned kingdom of God, Christ has given the church several means by which healing is conveyed to hurting people. Baptism first of all grants us a share in Christ's own death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–4) and washes us in the regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). Prayer is both commanded and commended for the sake of healing of both self and others; fasting is encouraged. The faithful may lay hands on the sick and anoint them with oil.
68. Among our churches we see further development of healing ministries with various kinds of structures, including informal prayer groups and prayer chains, church-run clinics and hospitals, and trained ministers of healing and pastoral care, both lay and ordained.
69. No illness or injury is too mild or too severe to ask for God's intervention. We give thanks to God for all kinds of healing, just

as we grieve when healing is not granted. We trust that God can effect healing when all human means have been exhausted, and we recognize that God in his sovereignty finally takes all the sick, suffering, and dying into his care. We caution against extremes: on the one hand, denying any but scientific means of healing, and, on the other side, denying any but miraculous means of healing.

70. All prayers and interventions for healing are premised on faith in the goodness of God our Creator who desires his creatures to live with him eternally. But faith itself is not the cause of healing and should never be treated as a weapon against God or a guarantee for believers. We have seen people being disappointed and losing faith after being falsely promised a healing that did not come. God desires the healing and wholeness of his people. Yet we are still subject to sin, evil, corruption, illness, vulnerability, and mortality while we await the arrival of the kingdom of God in its fullness. When relief is not granted, we are to turn toward the suffering of Christ on his cross and his call to his followers to take up their own cross. We also take the example of Paul, whose thorn in the flesh was not removed even after earnest prayer (2 Cor. 12:7–9). Suffering remains in this life, and sometimes instead of being spared it we are asked to endure it. We do so in faith and hope for the final restoration.

Pentecostal Commentary

71. On the whole, Pentecostals believe that all of the spiritual gifts, including the so-called miraculous or supernatural gifts, are bestowed by the Holy Spirit as a powerful means of evangelism, and that they continue to operate within the church in the present age. Among these gifts is included the gift of healing, which correlates to Pentecostal Christology acclaiming Jesus as Healer. Divine healing is included in the atoning work of Christ; healing is part of salvation itself. Pentecostals believe that miraculous healing by God, which is carried out through servants of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, can bring many people to faith in the Lord.
72. Some Pentecostals have deduced that if a Christian could only generate enough faith, healing would always occur. However, Classical Pentecostals rightly balance this with other themes pervading the New Testament. For example, sometimes a miracle occurs where there is little or no faith, precisely in order to instill belief in Jesus as the Son of God (Mt. 8:26). In addition, faith was

frequently spoken of as the result rather than the precondition of the healing power of Jesus (Mt. 9:18–22, 15:31). Although the Gospels point out that Jesus "did not do many mighty works" (Mt. 13:58, Mk. 6:5) in his hometown because of unbelief, nowhere is anyone's failure to be healed attributed to the lack of faith on the part of the sick person. This means that while it is essential for us to have faith in God and his ability to heal, healing is solely the sovereign will of God.

Lutheran Commentary

73. Healing as such was not by any means the center of the Lutheran Reformation. However, we do find examples of prayer for healing and thanksgiving when it has been granted. Luther advised believers to "pray to [God] for everything that attacks even our bodily welfare."[15] He prayed for the restoration of the health of his close friends, and allowed that holy communion offers healing to body as well as soul. At the same time, he endured the grief of the death of two of his children, whose lives were not spared despite his and Katharina's prayers.
74. Lutherans bring a Law-Gospel framework to the matter of healing. As Luther writes in the Large Catechism, prayer is "as strictly and solemnly commanded as all the other commandments," and therefore we should pray faithfully and ardently for healing.[16] At the same time, the promise of the Gospel to have fellowship with God now and eternal life with him hereafter is *not* the same as a promise of perfect healing in this life. To believe in the promise of the Gospel means to reject all false promises, including those that guarantee healing to the "truly" faithful, thereby suggesting that those who are not healed did not adequately believe.

* * *

Case Studies in Healing and Deliverance

Lutherans remember the example of Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805–1880), a German pastor and advocate of world mission and spiritual revival. Blumhardt was confronted with a deeply disturbed and suffering young woman named Gottliebin Dittus in his rural Swabian

[15]Martin Luther, "The Lord's Prayer," Large Catechism, in *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 456.

[16]Martin Luther, "The Lord's Prayer," Large Catechism, in *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 441.

congregation. After a year and a half of patient prayer and exhortation by Blumhardt and other congregational leaders, Gottliebin was delivered from her affliction. The news spread throughout the congregation, leading to a spiritual revival, and soon Blumhardt's church became a spontaneous center of healing ministry. In time he moved with his family to an abandoned estate, so as to accommodate the seven hundred or so seekers who arrived every year. Blumhardt's central tenet was: "Jesus is victor." He recognized and commended the power of prayer, the necessity of repentance, and the acceptance of death when healing is not granted. He understood miracles to be ordinary, not extraordinary, events, the regular intervention of God in the lives of his people. But all healings and miracles were ultimately signs of the coming kingdom of God and invitations to place all trust in life and death in God alone.

Pentecostals remember two women who influenced Pentecostal healing practice in the early twentieth century, Maria Beulah Woodworth-Etter and Aimee Semple McPherson, both in North America. A wide swath of Pentecostal churches endorsed their healing ministries. Both held mass meetings and preached the Gospel in the power of the Spirit by laying hands on people and praying for them. The accompanying signs and wonders appealed across denominational lines, and both evangelists ministered ecumenically. Woodworth-Etter's evangelistic and healing ministry was a direct continuation of the Holiness revival of the nineteenth century. She held mass meetings before the onset of the Pentecostal movement, but joined it in 1912 and became a major force in spreading the Pentecostal message. Posters advertising her meetings read: "Jesus heals!" and "Salvation for soul, healing for body." As for McPherson, she proclaimed in her vivid sermons that Jesus is Savior, Healer, Baptizer in the Spirit, and the Soon-Coming King. She was a prolific writer and newscaster who helped consolidate the Pentecostal emphasis on salvation and healing.

Deliverance from Evil

75. In the Lord's Prayer we ask our heavenly Father to deliver us from evil. By evil we mean the "principalities and powers" (Rom. 8:38–39, Eph. 6:12) that grind down and extinguish humanity, break trust in God, and render love among people impossible. Evil is not something with which we should negotiate; we can only be rescued from it. Sin and oppression serve the evil one but are not identical to it.
76. One of the tasks of the church and faithful Christians is to discern the spirits, identifying those that are evil or unclean (1 Cor. 12:10,

1 Jn. 4:1–6). Because the faithful are and remain sinners, liable to the seduction of evil, this is a difficult and dangerous task. Discernment of evil spirits must be undertaken communally, carefully, and with constant prayer for the Holy Spirit's guidance. As part of the discernment process, and the same as in the case of physical healing, we urge the responsible use of such tools as psychology, psychiatry, and medicine to diagnose the suffering person's condition and select appropriate means of restoration. It is also entirely possible that medical intervention and deliverance ministry will work best in concert with one another.

77. Not all experience of evil is possession by evil spirits. People, both believers and non-believers, may be afflicted by the evil one without consenting to evil. One of the tasks of the apostolic ministry is to intercede for deliverance from this kind of affliction. In many parts of the world, such intercession has been an important aspect of evangelical outreach.
78. It is also essential for the church to believe and act in the conviction that the battle is not finally theirs, but God's alone. The victory of Christ is not an excuse for self-indulgent living but the very present action of the crucified and risen Christ now, in our world, for our salvation. The Christian tradition has testified to this power in a variety of ways, from the "Christus Victor" motif of atonement to hymns singing of "Power in the Blood."
79. The church, therefore, seeks to serve God in delivering the afflicted from evil. This happens through proclamation and preaching, through baptism and the Lord's Supper, through prayer and the laying on of hands, and through ministries specifically aiming at deliverance.
80. Scripture exhorts believers to be on their guard against evil, resist the devil, repent of sin, obey God, pray, and bear witness to the salvation offered through Jesus Christ. "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).
81. However, evil must never be used as an excuse for human sinfulness. There is no place in the church for a "devil made me do it" defense. Believers are always to take responsibility for their sins, confess and repent, and undo whatever damage they can.
82. Likewise, leaders of the church may not exploit the notion of "spiritual warfare" for their own personal, financial, or ideological purposes. We encourage strong practices of communal discernment and mutual accountability before any deliverance practice is undertaken.

Pentecostal Commentary

83. From their earliest days, because of their holistic approach to salvation in Christ, Pentecostals paid attention to the reality of Satan's influence, demonic oppression, and the powers of evil. Consequently, they included practices of dealing with these powers through deliverance, breaking curses, exorcism and spiritual warfare, whereas most Protestant churches at the time were less likely to do so. Pentecostals understood this to be a necessary corrective to the omission of such ministries in these churches, though it brought its own problems, such as associating every sort of evil with a corresponding demon, irresponsible interpretations of Bible passages giving rise to wild speculation, and taking away human responsibility for evil. It is not a theology of fear that should dominate Christian views on the reality of evil, but rather the assurance that Christ overcame all evil at the cross and that the children of God can confidently call upon the Holy Spirit to bring them peace and the power to challenge evil in Jesus' name.
84. With regard to the presence of evil in the world, Pentecostals proclaim a theology of victory in Jesus (1 Cor. 15:17, 2 Cor. 2:14). At the same time, however, there is also a biblical emphasis on suffering for Christ's sake (Phil. 1:29, 3:10; Rom. 8:17; 1 Pet. 4:19). They often refer to the exhortation that Christians are called to put on the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10–18) in order to withstand evil.

Lutheran Commentary

85. Luther's sense of the predatory presence of the devil is well known and given voice by Lutherans throughout the world as they sing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" to join themselves in battle against the evil one. Though the battle in the hymn is dramatic, Luther also experienced the chronic, demoralizing sense of *Anfechtung* or anguish of being under spiritual attack. In this as in all other matters, he constantly referred believers to the promises of Christ: "for God himself fights by our side with weapons of the Spirit."
86. Lutherans also recognize, however, the dark side of detecting the presence of evil, namely the temptation to demonize one's enemies. Luther culpably did so, which must be continually rejected. Failure of faith and demonization of other people go hand in hand. The antidote to demonizing others is to trust more fully in God and learn to love our enemies, just as Jesus taught us and God has done (Mt.

5:44, Rom. 5:6).

87. Lutheran approaches to the ministry of deliverance vary widely across the world. Some have well-developed exorcism ministries (see the case study below); some question or doubt the existence of supernatural evil or the devil altogether and regard all such efforts with suspicion. Here again we encourage mutual, communal discernment and the willingness to learn from one another's practices and critiques, both within the Lutheran fold and between Lutherans and other Christian traditions.

* * *

Case Studies in Deliverance Ministry

As one session of our dialogue took place in Madagascar, the Lutherans would particularly like to commend the example of the Malagasy Lutheran Church (MLC). Since its founding in the late nineteenth century, the MLC has experienced four major revival movements, all of which have focused on preaching, repentance, and deliverance from evil. The MLC has developed an office of ministry called *mpiandry* or "shepherds," laypeople who train under a pastor for two years to undertake deliverance ministry. Many of them wear distinctive vestments during their ministry work. Embedded in a traditional Lutheran liturgical order is a time for the *mpiandry* to cite Scripture that exhorts Christ's followers to release the afflicted from their bondage. They then move through the worship space casting out demons and praying specifically over those who ask for it. Often the seekers are given an opportunity to testify to God's healing and liberating work in their lives. Among the best-known of the MLC's shepherds was the prophetess Nenilava (1918–1998). She spent her entire life preaching throughout Madagascar, calling people to repentance, healing them, and delivering them from the grip of evil spirits. All of the revival movements and their *mpiandry* have led to the dramatic growth of the MLC. Other Christian churches have also turned to them to learn the ministry of deliverance, which has done much to foster positive ecumenical relationships.

Pentecostals pray for the sick and afflicted during regular worship services if there is a need or request to do so. In such cases, the sick are oftentimes invited to come forward. Pastors and elders anoint them with oil, lay hands on them, and pray with them. Some Pentecostal churches have established prayer centers where the sick or spiritually oppressed come to stay for an extended period of time. Special services for deliverance and healing are held with the support of deliverance teams and prayer warriors. The Church of Pentecost, with its headquarters in

Ghana, although not actively promoting such prayer centers on its own, has accepted some that have been initiated by individuals. The Executive Council of the Church of Pentecost annually organizes special training sessions for the leaders of such prayer centers.

Conclusion

88. We encourage one another and our churches to continue to pray for the sick, suffering, and afflicted. We encourage one another to seek all holy avenues for healing and wholeness, from the bodily and personal to the communal and institutional. When healing is granted, let us give thanks and recognize the sign of the Kingdom of God in our midst. When healing is withheld or a life is lost, let us commend the person to God and entrust ourselves afresh to his sovereign wisdom and goodness. When we encounter the oppression of evil, let us turn to God in earnest prayer for deliverance. For we are "sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38–39).

Part V: Looking toward the Future

Mutual Learning

89. Together we have been on a journey of mutual learning. Over the years of our dialogue, we spent time with students and professors at theological seminaries, such as Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in the Philippines, and with pastors and parishioners in churches and other religious institutions. We cleared away misunderstandings and discovered a closeness in theology, prayer, and mission. This discovery has been continually broadened and deepened as we have engaged the sources of our faith in Scripture and in the cross and resurrection of Christ. We bear one another's burdens and turn outward to the world in service as disciples of Jesus.
90. Throughout the process, we have been brought together by worship which we have experienced in a diversity of ways but all of them giving glory to God, celebrating the redemption found in Christ, beseeching the Holy Spirit to be with us, guide us, lead us, and empower us as we go out into the world in service and mission.

Worship has been transformative for our work together and for the building up of our community of dialogue over the past years.

91. This process has been marked by asking questions for greater clarification, and listening to the Spirit and to each other, with the purpose of ultimately strengthening the commonalities already present but perhaps not always recognized. We realized that we had different emphases and practices, but what we have in common is much greater, as this dialogue statement has demonstrated at length.
92. Building on what we discussed in Bible study and theological papers, our methodology included engagement with the contexts in which we met that provided the case studies detailed in the preceding pages. Visiting ministries to the poor in Chile and attending deliverance worship in Madagascar, we came to realize how similar our spirituality and mission are in many ways. This insight lays a claim on us to act together so that the world may know God (John 17:23).
93. Both of us witness in a world that is itself characterized by polarization and pluralism. We are often confronted by the same challenges. When we met in Wittenberg, we discussed the impact of secularism on both of our churches. On several occasions we discussed the need to discern the use of power and the prevalence of injustice in a fallen world.
94. This document, finalized at Fuller Theological Seminary in the U.S., has been written from the experience of fellowship in the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:13), a fellowship that is deeply embedded in both of our churches, though in different ways. Theologically, we understand the Spirit's work as one of continual creation, reconciliation, and renewal. We are humbled by the realization that it is God who calls our churches to the same mission (*missio Dei*).
95. This fellowship in Christ is alive and has potential to grow in the many contexts where Lutherans and Pentecostals live and encounter one another. Local and regional ecclesial fellowship may open up rich opportunities for exploring our common theological roots, our diverse forms of worship, and our shared calling from God to be a light to the world.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Lora Angeline Embudo Timenia. *Third Wave Pentecostalism in the Philippines: Understanding Toronto Blessing Revivalism's Signs and Wonders Theology in the Philippines*. Baguio City, Philippines: Asia Pacific Theological Seminary Press, 2020. 188 pp. $13.99 paperback; $37.97 hardcover. ISBN-13: 978-1725294219.

In the past twenty years of academic study of global Pentecostalism, the recent spiritual ferment, for example, North American neo-charismatic revivalism, seems presently unclear and understudied. Against the backdrop of misinformation about North American neo-charismatic revivalism, Lora Angelina Embudo Timenia explores the form of contemporary revivalism connected to the phenomenon dubbed the "Toronto Blessing," which first occurred on January 20, 1994, at Catch the Fire Church in Toronto, Canada (1). Covering the origins of North American neo-charismatic revivalism is far more than just an ambitious academic undertaking. The author, however, shows the substantial challenge and importance of understanding the "Toronto Blessing" as an independent stream of North American neo-charismatic revivalism that has become a synonym for scriptural literalism and esoteric forms of spirituality that have been making inroads in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Philippines (2).

To break it all down, the book is divided into eleven chapters. The first chapter offers the importance and purpose of the subject matter. Using historical data to track the Toronto Blessing revivalist of the movement (TB), the author gives the historical and theological background of the TB revivalist movement, including how its doctrine and spiritual practices, for instance, holy laughter, visions and trances, miraculous healing, odd physical manifestations, and claims of revitalized spirits spearheaded the Philippine islands. Chapters two to five introduce the review literature that will help construct a historical and socio-religious backdrop for understanding TB revivalism's signs and wonders theology from the Filipino perspective. Chapter six presents the methodology, explanations of the research design and approach, the population, sample and sampling procedures, data collection methods, and data analysis used during the study. Chapter seven presents the interview data from research participants. Using historical context in analysis and interpretation, the author follows a stringent pattern focusing on the emergence and dynamics of North American and Filipino revivalist movements in their local and international contexts at a specific time or period. The author is particularly interested in continuity and discontinuity as she examines

the relationship between the North American revivalist movement and the Filipino revivalist movement. The author provides extensive biographies of four chosen ministers who pioneered neo-charismatic revivalist ministries in various parts of the country. In chapter eight the author contributes a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the North American TB revivalist and Filipino TB movements (122-124).

To situate North American TB revivalist and Filipino TB movements in a larger global Pentecostal tradition, chapter eight further develops the emergence of North American TB revivalist and Filipino American revivalist movements, most specifically their theological orientations and ministerial practices. Chapter nine offers a critical evaluation of North American TB revivalist and Filipino American revivalist signs and wonders theology from a classical Pentecostal perspective. The ninth chapter also engages with insights from Evangelical scholars both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal in critical response to the studied neo-charismatic theology of signs and wonders. This chapter is provocative and demonstrates convincingly that this is fertile ground for further study.

Undoubtedly, the book provides crucial insights into the study of contemporary global Pentecostalism, particularly the neo-charismatic movement. In this work, the author examines the importance of the crucial connections between North American TB revivalist and Filipino TB revivalist signs and wonders theologies (118-124). Using qualitative analysis and data gathering, the author attempts to create a guide to the evolution of the North American TB revivalist movement and its influence on the Filipino TB revivalist movement.

Timenia thoroughly demonstrates that Filipino TB revivalists and North American TB revivalists hold the same view of spiritual beliefs and practices. She enables readers to delve deeper into important themes and introduces them to the variety of contemporary global Pentecostalism. The book offers great a reading experience and resources that increase our knowledge of the emerging forms of the contemporary global Pentecostal movement. It sheds light on the dynamics of the simultaneous growth of global Pentecostalism from the local to the global landscape. Timenia has thus sought to avoid some of the hotly debated issues, such as questions of religious fundamentalism, scriptural literalism, backwardness, and esoteric forms of spirituality. Timenia's work is insightful and critical; she pulls no punches in her assessment. She does it with an eloquent passion and resistance to her own prejudice. Critically reflecting the book's primary themes, for instance, she argues: "Recognizing both the positive and precarious implications of this revivalist spirituality leads us now to understand the precarious dilemma

in which the Filipino PC movement is in. . . . Perhaps the way forward is to establish a framework of discernment for manifestations of signs and wonders" (138).

In the end, the book spends its concluding efforts on comprehending the development of the North American TB revivalist movement and its influence in the Filipino TB revivalist movement, which would make it a scholarly work for a local context. However, the discussion in the book is wide-ranging (North America), and the lessons to be learned from the emerging new form of global neo-charismatic/neo-Pentecostalism are useful and applicable on a much wider scale, certainly throughout North America and Southeast Asia. Such a powerful development in a religiously and culturally visible way could, in turn, begin to engage the rest of the Global Pentecostalism studies in a shift towards new concepts of contemporary religious movements, spirituality, revivalism, and Pentecostal eschatology. But the author is also clear in emphasizing the continuity (origins and intersectional approach of themes and issues) and discontinuity (diversity) of the North American TB revivalist movement and its influence on the Filipino TB revivalist movement.

For all these reasons, the book promises to enable new insights and critical scholarship on studying a new emerging form of global Pentecostalism. Despite the critical and scholarly prowess of the author, some things are too quickly taken at face value or ignored. The book can only be considered a first step towards a more profound understanding of emerging new forms of global neo-charismatic/neo-Pentecostalism today. However, more research is needed to fully comprehend the intersections between global Pentecostalism, racial, gender, political, social, cultural, economic, and international issues. These themes remain unclear and understudied among scholars of global Pentecostalism, especially in the Philippines. Nevertheless, the book is well edited and well documented, which all together render it a good work of reference. The chapters are balanced in length and depth, which makes for simple reading, comprehension, and reference. Applying the wide-ranging definitions of neo-charismatic, Pentecostalism, revivalist, signs and wonders, and spirituality, the author can treat these subjects, which are complex and multifaceted, in a credible and intelligible way.

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Daniel D. Isgrigg. *Imagining the Future: The Origin, Development, and Future of Assemblies of God Eschatology*. ORUPMS 1. Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, 2021. 298 pp. $25.99 paperback. ISBN: 9781950971084.

Imagining the Future by Isgrigg is one of the most recent works in understanding the development of the doctrine of eschatology among Pentecostals, particularly in the Assemblies of God (AG). The book covers an essential area of Pentecostal theology and faith from the historical and theological perspective with a clear futuristic vision of its vital role in the doctrine's origin, articulation, and future development. The lucid language, rigorous arguments, and astute analysis of the debate on the doctrinal statements covering a century in AG, with clarity in presentation and theological accuracy, make reading the book an enjoyable experience.

The author carefully investigates the central role and history of AG's teaching on eschatology within its theology. However, the seeming failure in its current development and prevailing general neglect among AG ministers and academics necessitates a careful revisit. AG's overly dispensational premillennialism leniency is often considered to cause neglect towards the doctrine in the current academic and ecclesial discussion. The neglected state of the doctrine in AG's overall thinking seems to weigh on the author's decision to undertake such a vital study. The book is divided into three major parts. The first two parts are a critical historical survey of the origin and debates in the development of the doctrine in the academic and popular dialogue within AG. In the final part, Isgrigg furthers into a grand proposal of Pneumatic imagination of the four Evangelical Fundamental Truths remaining faithful to the past voices of the community (AG's Statement of Fundamental Truths) and the doctrine's future contextual developments and its restoration to the centre of the Pentecostal faith and life. The author expands on Larry McQueen's study, employing the method of doctrinal criticism to analyse the developmental process of AG's doctrine of eschatology and propose ways to develop it in the future.

Part one, "The Origin of Assemblies of God Eschatology," contains five chapters dealing with the origin of premillennialism, its disputed understanding of eschatology, and the formation of the Statement of Fundamental Truths, particularly regarding eschatology in the AG. Historically, the doctrine has formed the core emphasis of Pentecostal preaching since the inception of the AG. However, the author argues that the increasing recognition of the incompatibility between fundamentalist dispensationalism and Pentecostal theology has caused unease among

AG educators and ministers. It reflects well in the constant modifications to the official statement of faith in the AG. The current landscape of Pentecostal discussion of eschatology shows that recent scholars like Amos Yong, Frank Macchia, William Sheppard, and others are critical of the early seemingly uncritical adoption of dispensational eschatology and hermeneutics into Pentecostal faith. It has robbed the Pentecostal theology of robust social concern leading to concrete action. Hence, the number of voices calling for revisioning Pentecostal theology, particularly eschatology, has grown within the Pentecostal academia. The academic unease with the disturbing alliance between fundamentalist eschatology and Pentecostal theology is reflected in the AG's constant struggle with the official statement of the rule of faith regarding eschatology since 1916. The words, titles, and phrases underwent several changes in 1917, 1920, 1921, 1927, 1961, and 1969. However, the interesting point highlighted is that the AG always embraced diverse eschatological views among its ministers on emphasis, events, and details related to Tribulation, Israel, etc., while formulating its official statements of faith. A word on the Holy Spirit, the defining factor for Pentecostal theology and its distinct identity, has gone missing in the later discussions.

Part two, "The Development of Assemblies of God Eschatology," deals with the five phases of doctrinal development from 1914 to the present. Since the establishment of the AG, both in the popular preachings/writings and scholastic discussions, contentious issues like the imminence of Christ's return, question of one or two comings of Christ over against his one coming in two stages, Pre-millennial Tribulation, millennial messianic reign, and final judgement have been widely taught and discussed. AG's dispensational leniency and overwhelming emphasis on the imminent return of Christ yielded neglect of social issues in favour of prayer and waiting upon the Lord. The trend remained the same during the scholastic period (1927-1948) when a greater awareness of world events, including political events related to Israel, led to its interpretation through an eschatological lens. It caused a shift from relying on "the Spirit as the sign to using the Spirit to interpret the signs" (pp. 128-129). The period of institutionalization of the AG and its wider acceptance and rise in evangelical circles led to significant discussion and shift in the theological formulations. Critical issues debated earlier, like Tribulation, took a back burner, and the call for more social engagement began to take shape during the Modern Period of the AG's history. In chapter 11, Isgrigg synthesises the study's findings, arguing that the AG always maintained its Pentecostal distinctive by preserving the centrality of the Holy Spirit in its eschatological discussion. It oscillated between the sign and sigh eschatology, not

falling fully prey to the dispensationalist escapist theology to promote Christian hope coming from the Holy Spirit. AG eschatology, though, stayed closed to dispensational understanding; in essence, it was more like later "progressive dispensationalism," which does not subscribe to the humanistic vision enshrined in postmillennialism. AG's view never neglected social efforts or a responsible attitude towards creation.

While so far, an impressive analysis of the origin and development of the doctrine of eschatology in the AG highlights the prospect and problems inherent in it, the application of doctrinal criticism achieves its sophistication in part three of the book, "The Future of Assemblies of God Eschatology." Isgrigg's creative reimagination of the future simultaneously holds AG's pneumatic emphasis and the necessity of employing pneumatological imagination in discussing God and the last days. In chapter 13, the focus is on the Evangelical Fundamental Truth (ETF) "as a Pneumatological image expressed as an eschatological longing that is a characteristic of Pentecostal spirituality" (p. 213). The goal is to develop each of the ETFs (Hope, Peace, Justice, and Life) with more profound theology by remaining faithful to the past pneumatic voices of the community and in dialogue with contemporary theological discourses. Therefore, the author forwards proposals purportedly to reinvigorate the centrality of the doctrine for future generations of the AG. In chapter 14, a robust attempt is made to propose four restatements of past Statements of Fundamental Truths in a manner rooted in historical fundaments, current pneumatic imaginations, and contextual to the AG today. While these two chapters culminate the entire study to suggest preserving a vital Pentecostal doctrinal interest, the challenge before the AG is to prepare an action plan to implement them for the edification of the church and sustain the proper interest in the doctrine among the young generation.

Finally, Isgrigg's contribution to the AG's doctrine of eschatology in the present to keep it relevant to the Pentecostal theological discussion redefined by its Pneumatic spirituality is significant and timely. His robust proposal is vital to maintaining the unique Pentecostal character of the doctrine while upholding its evangelical theological orientation. The study is a welcome effort to rekindle a new interest in the Pentecostal pastors, preachers and teachers to bring back the eschatological hope at the centre stage of their daily theological reflections and faithful living, anticipating the sooner return of the Bridegroom to take His Bride, the Church, into his Kingdom.

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Paul S. Baker. *Pentecostal Imagination and the Retrieval of Identity: Towards a Pneumatology of History*. Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2023. pp. 237. Paperback $35. ISBN: 978-1-6667-4851-2.

Paul Baker has written one of the most critical constructive contributions to-date regarding how Pentecostals might develop a pneumatology of history that is not another history of pneumatology (45, 204). Taking as primary conversation partner, Amos Yong and Paul Ricoeur, Baker has offered a movement toward developing such a pneumatological history and how one may test and assess such proposals. In the five chapters of this volume, Baker opens with a discussion of "Pentecostalism" (a notoriously difficult term to define) that proposes "a Pentecostal theology as being grounded in Lukan hermeneutics, a pneumatological framework, and experience (45). In the end, Baker follows Amos Yong's "pneumatological imagination" as foundational for his project (38-45).

This is succeeded by a chapter working carefully through the extensive contributions of Amos Yong's philosophical theologizing by noting particularly the influences of Donald Gelpi and Charles Sanders Pierce. Yong has proposed metaphysics and epistemologies that are trinitarian via intentional pneumatological imagination. Chapter three takes up the topic of experience and interpretation. Particularly helpful in this chapter is David Carr's "two main points" concerning how the experience of Acts 2 as an event might be addressed via the "historical nature" with "retentional-protentional characteristics" and engagement of the "we-subject" that is attributed to the communal experience of the event (108-9). Baker defines the retentional as the "just-past" and the protentional as the "not-yet" (210).

The reader is then queued to Paul Ricoeur's theological philosophy of the imagination (chapter 4) wherein the "function" of images is of greater significance than the content of those images themselves (141). In this way, Ricoeur points to the relation rather than "opposition" between "signification and imagination" (144, contra Husserl). Further, it is contended that for Ricoeur "memory is not fact-propositional, and therefore not merely true or false" but is instead concerned with "faithfulness instead of truthfulness" (161, original emphasis). Ricoeur's three stages of moving from "'living in' toward 'thinking from' symbols" concern issues of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and reflectivity (166). In this way, Ricoeur offers an assist to Yong's project as Baker reconstructs both in order to offer further support of the pneumatological imagination.

Finally, Baker concludes with a move toward a pneumatology of history in chapter five (and a brief conclusion chapter following that summarizes the volume). Here Baker discusses notions of the social imagination as ideology and utopia (with deference to the contributions of Karl Marx and David Carr and primarily, again, Paul Ricoeur). He proposes that the social imagination speaks to our understanding and reconstrual of "history" so that a circle of ideological and utopian imaginings play in a constructive and critical manner toward an assessable pneumatological history.

Several comments may be in order in response to Baker's project. It is noteworthy that he does not abandon faith commitments, even while seeking such critical investigation. In fact, he specifically says, "Faith commitments should color our account" (168, original emphasis). However, he seeks to carefully note how such faith commitments are not meant to blind the community to critical self-reflection in the history we tell ourselves. Further, he helpfully notes ways in which remembering/forgetting has a direct bearing on our self-conception today as part of our historical imagination (169). Is it possible that remembering/forgetting may in fact offer ways of faithfulness which might be altered tomorrow and need redressing toward a re/new/ed remembering/forgetting as faithfulness in the future? In what ways might the Spirit be specifically engaging in such acts of forgetting/remembering and its continuous play within the Pentecostal community and individuals of such a community? This further complicates how Pentecostals out to live into the utopian imagination (as they are always in some fashion in flux) in critical conversation with its claimed ideology/ies.

It is appreciated that Baker has taken great care to attempt a proposal for assessment of the ways we remember/forget as the shaping of our identity via history. His project has sought to move beyond the ways Pentecostals have historically isolated events/experiences of the Spirit within the history of Israel and Church as marks of identity by noting that this comes very near to a Dispensationalist notion of punctiliar en-Spirit-ing in history rather than attuned to the ever present, ever active Spirit of Pentecostal confession and expected experience. Instead of seeking punctiliar events or experiences, it points to the ways in which all of our retelling of history may themselves be Spirit-shaped albeit in need of constant critical renewal.

One may hope that the work Baker has offered finds further developments among those seeking to tell the 'history' of Pentecost, Pentecostal, Pentecostalism(s) as part of the telling of history itself. The pneumatological imagination of Amos Yong is bearing fruit in this project and may yet find further avenues for development of specific

instances of such rememberings/forgettings toward the future the Spirit has opened for all creation.

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Alex R. Mayfield. *Kaleidoscopic City: Hong Kong, Mission, and the Evolution of Global Pentecostalism*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2023. v + 265 pp. $45.32 (hardcover). ISBN: 9781481318976.

This book, *Kaleidoscopic City,* is developed from Alex R. Mayfield's Ph.D. dissertation presented at the Boston University School of Theology. The book is a historical account of the modern Pentecostal movement in Hong Kong between 1907 and 1942. The cosmopolitan city of Hong Kong which was "a meeting place for different ideas, peoples, and customs" (21) and the early modern Pentecostal movement that came to Hong Kong, with its "mix of people with competing ideas and practices" (4) are both characterized as multi-faceted kaleidoscopes. The historical account in this book is basically seen as the result of the collision of two increasingly globalized kaleidoscopes.

The historical narrative resulting from that collision is traced through five historical tracks that reflect the changes of modern Pentecostalism in Hong Kong during that period. These tracks describe Hong Kong with creative labels: a "Gateway City," a "Holy City," a "Soul-Saving City," a "Heathen City," and a "Women's City." The labels respectively covered the areas of Pentecostal missions, spiritual Identity, evangelism strategies, spiritual encounters, and women-in-ministry issues. These labels represent various historical facets, allowing Mayfield to weave his story of the modern Pentecostal movement in Hong Kong during those tumultuous early years and the resulting impact on today's global Pentecostalism.

Each of these tracks is a story of its own. They are not necessarily chronologically connected episodes of the overall Hong Kong story. Instead, they are topical episodes. Applying the analogy of a television series, the introductory chapter with Hong Kong as the "Cipher City" could be described as the pilot episode. It introduces Mayfield's methodology and some of the supporting documentation for his historiography.

The concluding chapter is the final episode of the narrative and has Hong Kong as the "Kaleidoscopic City." In this concluding episode,

Mayfield recounts all the previous episodes with updates in light of today's global Pentecostalism. As the "Gateway City," Mayfield contends that with the collapse of the "grand denominational visions of a Christian China," Hong Kong has once again taken up a central role for mainland and overseas Chinese, "albeit in a different denominational form" (228). What was once the "Holy City," welcoming a loose network of faith missions revolving around some common experiences and periodicals have now been restructured around Pentecostal denominational structures. In terms of its "Soul-Saving City" character, Pentecostal mission in Hong Kong was very much identical with evangelical mission, although Pentecostals were insistent that evangelical missionary approaches needed a fresh infilling of Spiritual power. As for the Pentecostal encounter with the "Heathen City" of Hong Kong, Pentecostals wanted to overcome heathen principalities with signs and wonders but were also concerned that they do not end up simply as one more of the "ritual specialists" among the many spiritual choices that still remain in Hong Kong today. The concluding comments about the label of Hong Kong as the "Women's City" described the changing gender roles. Mayfield notes that this change is more perceptible among Chinese women working with Pentecostal missions, although the change has not challenged social conventions in any deep way.

Mayfield claims that the usual historiographies employed by many Pentecostal historians have been limited by the largely North American denominational and anachronistic perspectives. He therefore proposes a new historiographical approach in this book, which he describes as a "discursive-spatial" (13) approach. This approach tries to account for the interconnectedness, or "change and exchange" (4) of the various actors and factors, resulting in this multi-track historical account. As part of the "spatial" element of his approach, he includes geographical diagrams and maps to highlight the expansion of Pentecostalism during those years. However, it seems like most of the geographical spatial element was dealt with in the "Gateway City" chapter.

The multi-track approach has often resulted in overlapping, repetitive accounts; for example, the story of the Garrs' arrival has been described multiple times. Joseph King's brief stay in Hong Kong and his dissatisfaction with the Western missionaries' attitudes towards local workers were also repeated in different parts of the book, as was the issue of women in the Hong Kong missions field. There are no clear human protagonists in the story although Garr, King and Mok Lai Chi are consistently reflected in good light. There are many names listed and repeated in the different tracks of this story and this complicates the narrative further. Perhaps a chart of the names of the people in

the book can be brought together in a diagram to help clarify their relationships with each other. This would probably be more helpful than the geographical maps in the book.

There is no doubt that the significance of Hong Kong (and other global locations) in modern Pentecostal history has yet to be properly studied. Mayfield's effort is therefore commendable. Most of the focus for modern Pentecostal history has been on North America or from North American perspectives. Despite Mayfield's effort at trying to build upon Allan Anderson's global perspectives for Pentecostal studies, this book is still largely based on North American resources. As a case in point, the quotations that Mayfield used to headline every chapter of the book come almost totally from American periodicals and journals. The only exception is Frank Bartleman's quote in chapter one, which is taken from the British Pentecostal periodical, Confidence.

It would be helpful if Mayfield could make more than just the sporadic references to Mok Lai Chi's *Pentecostal Truths*. There might be other non-Western resources like the *Pentecostal Truths* that has yet to be properly referenced by historians of the modern Pentecostal movement, simply because they were not written in English. To properly tell the global story of Pentecostalism, one has to tap non-English resources. The abundance of Western names in the narrative, compared with just a sprinkling of Asian names is a reflection of the reliance on Western sources.

Mayfield's rather complicated historiographical approach is made possible by modern archival and analytical technologies. He describes his process of research for this book with some detail in the appendix (235-240). With the wealth of information available from the various online archives and the technology to sift through these data and information depositories, he was able to do eliminate much of the usual personal interviews and the personal on-site visits. Mayfield recognizes the inevitable, subjective, and interpretative elements in his book, but is hopeful that the methodology employed for his book "has helped, at the very least, to reconstruct the Pentecostal movement in Hong Kong in a responsible and effective way" (240). The hopeful and tentative last lines of this book is perhaps a cryptic invitation for other researchers to pick up from where Mayfield has left off and to further refine the narrative about the modern Pentecostal movement in Hong Kong and other global locations.

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Amos Yong. *Renewing the Church By the Spirit: Theological Education After Pentecost.* Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020. 151+xv pp. $16.99 paperback; $17.49 kindle. ISBN: 9780802878403.

Willie James Jennings' striking inaugural volume for the Theological Education Between the Times series (*After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*) gave strong allusions to the need to retrieve a Pentecostal vision. In many ways, that vision arrives in Amos Yong's contribution, *Renewing the Church By the Spirit*. Well-known as a leading and prolific hermeneut, Yong advances a pneumatological imagination to guide the renewal of theological education in an ecumenically and globally-sensitive Pentecostal perspective. Yong's principal claim is, "The renewal of theological education in a flat, connected, and networked world can be found by reconsidering the primordial Pentecost outpouring of the Spirit. This pneumatic event not only initiated the embryonic church but also catalyzed the church's mission in and to the world" (4). From that primordial outpouring one finds the essential hermeneutical framework for a dialogical and "Spirit-ed" imagination of theological education that strives for the basileia tou theou in a globalized world. Given the richness of Yong's work even in this brief volume, it will be necessary to take a selective approach in this review. One may fruitfully tarry, for example, with Yong's explication of the ecclesiological context (Part 1) of the work, and with key elements of Yong's missiological and pedagogical sections (Parts 2 and 3, respectively).

First, Yong draws attention to context for the "who" and "how" of the church: hearkening to Thomas Friedman's *The World is Flat*, Yong shows that theological education today does not exist in a sociohistorical vacuum. Rather, it reflects and must respond to the realities of a flat, connected, and networked world that is moving beyond the model of Christendom to a more flattened, interconnected, and even religiously messy landscape. In particular, the church today is evangelicalized, charismatized, and pentecostalized. This is not an endorsement of Evangelicalism or renewal movements tout court, but a way of signaling that "ecclesiality in the current moment is being generated less and less through denominational protocol and more and more by relational and democratized charisma, that is, the charismatic activity of leaders and lay members" (16-18). Even if signs point to an evangelicalized church, this dynamic needs to be understood intersectionally in that the surge in evangelical Christianity is also inflected by the dynamics of migration,

which in turn often reflect perspectives that are postcolonial and critical of the hegemony of the West (28-29).

A second contextual dimension for Yong is globalization, which speaks to the "flattening" of Christianity as a global church. This brings about a "gradual decentering of Western (European) normativity in the ongoing theological conversation. Where mainline Protestantism's more postcolonial sensibilities are being inculcated in ecumenical schools and institutions, the Evangelical and Pentecostal movements' cultural diversity and indigenous spiritualities are also manifesting in their churches and appearing in their programs of theological education" (32). What matters here is not necessarily the success story of Pentecostalism, but rather that a "Lukan sense" of Pentecost is gradually realized: the church is truly catholic, reaching to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), and incorporating "many tongues" (Acts 2:4) and "all flesh" in fellowship (Acts 2:17).

Third, in theory and in practice, the church needs to be understood not only as the body of Christ but also as a fellowship in the Spirit. Holding these two major metaphors for the church in tension could facilitate fresh discernment of the "messy" demographic shifts in the religious landscape. As Yong notes, Christianity is transitioning "from a hierarchical, authoritarian, elitist, and structured Christendom to a porous, organic, (digitally) networked, and experientially revitalized church" (37). That porous nature includes "multiple-religious belongers," religious "nones," and those who engage in religion primarily through online means. Rather than simply dismissing those who dabble in different religions or embrace the "spiritual but not religious" paradigm, Yong instead suggests, "[T]he forms of the church considered across the spiritual marketplace are being stretched; just as important is that such religious and spiritual pursuits are occurring in ways that are inevitably generating new expressions of the church as the fellowship of the Spirit" (39). In other words, the rise of religious "nones" and of "multiple religious belongers" need not be interpreted as a movement away from the church. That said, Yong states, "This is not to baptize any empirical trend or actuality among what we call church as a purveyor of the Spirit's work, since much that goes on in the name of church does not attend to Jesus' message regarding the coming divine reign." Yet it may also be the case that much that goes on away from the church could point to God's reign. One key would be to take seriously the dynamic of Pentecost, that the Spirit falls upon all flesh. Theological education, then, would need to be configured to "serve all flesh," and to do so by working "in, through, and beyond the 'West' and the 'rest,'" and many other binaries and constructs (45-46).

Yong pivots from ecclesiology to missiology in Part 2, and finally to pedagogy in Part 3 of Renewing the Church by the Spirit. In terms of missiology, Yong emphasizes the eschatological nature of the church: it is "an interim vehicle directed toward the new creation" (51). The interim work is broadly speaking political, economic, and interpersonal. At that, the work of theological education involves "glocal citizenship" because "church and society are mutually defining: both are local and yet global in different senses" (52). Furthermore, eschatological witness "is not about a transhistorical or otherworldly spiritualized time but hastens today what is still ahead of us" (53). This is especially so with ecology. Concretely, glocal citizenship means that "the message about soul salvation cannot ignore the material and created order," and the church must "learn to interact respectfully with other philosophies and ideologies that, while also devoted to ecological preservation, derive from very different sources and wisdom traditions" (56). In light of this, Yong also notes that theological education has to be "utterly dialogical," interpreting Western perspectives alongside "the many ethnic-cultural tones of the church ecumenical" (84). As for pedagogy, one must also note that a dialogical framework is thoroughly inclusive and embodied interpersonally, meaning that pedagogy (and therefore mission and ecclesiology) needs to be shot through with intersectional awareness and justice (110). This too, is projected by the Day of Pentecost "upon all flesh," even "upon the male and female slaves" (Acts 2:17-18).

Yong's vision for theological education is to be justice-seeking. If there is any point for further dialogue, it has to do with the place of repentance given the reality that theological education and higher education in the United States more broadly is implicated in whiteness. This is not to denigrate Yong's thoroughgoing vision of justice, but rather to suggest that one could "tarry" more with the testimonies of others. One need only recall Jennings's *After Whiteness* and the testimony of many other black, womanist, and Latinx theologians, is that renunciation and conversion are needed. The flood of student testimonies through social media of the institutional racism of their universities in the aftermath of the murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, and the ongoing controversies over the war in Gaza and Palestine suggest that the church and academy need to repent for renewal to happen. To that end, one would have liked for some invocation of repentance at the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37-38), and to tarry with the difficult questions that would be posed by the critique of whiteness in theological education.

Renewing the Church By the Spirit remains an exemplary text in no small part because Yong sees opportunity where many (especially those with "mainline" identities) would be tempted to see threat or a

narrative of decline. In particular the reader is invited to think more seriously about the religious "nones" as a Spirit-ed phenomenon that can point to new dimensions of ecclesial life. Those who know Yong's other works will immediately recognize his dialogical spirit, and his vision of the dialogical Spirit guiding the church to renewal. They will also recognize the richness of his thought, to which this review could hardly hope to do justice. Though one may align with Yong's vision of renewal, one must tarry with the witness of many who show that openness to the vision for theological education after Pentecost is hardly a given. It may well be a battle against the "powers" (Ephesians 6:12), requiring repentance. Yet it is the case that the *Theological Education Between the Times* series is interested in living into dreams, promises, and hopes. The church at large needs to dare to dream by taking Yong's exhortation to tarry with this promise at Pentecost: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh . . . your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams" (Acts 2:17). Theological education can be renewed. In this nation, however, such renewal will require repentance.

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James W. Thompson. *Christ and Culture in the New Testament.* Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2023. 227 pp. $26.87 paperback; $9.99 Kindle. ISBN: 978-1-6667-3946-6.

Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture* noticed an enduring problem: the separation of Christ and culture in pre-Christian culture. How should believers relate to their surrounding cultures? Believers initially were counterculturally offensive to dominant cultures. But, in the fourth century, marriage between two strange bedfellows, i.e., church and empire, happened. It waned after the secularization process began in the Enlightenment. Christians are marginalized in 21st century America after its disenchantment with its Protestant roots. That story sets the backdrop for this book.

Given the marginalization that believers in pre-Christian and post-Christian cultures share in common, Thompson assumes that western Christians today can learn from early Christians in dealing with an emerging inhospitable culture. Niebuhr's typology for Christ and culture, in which Christ or the church transforms the culture based on liberal Christian ideal, should not be expected to work. Secularization

completely changed the culture of 21st century America that is now far removed from Niebuhr's predominantly Protestant America. Niebuhr assumed that his preferred view reflects the view of some New Testament (NT) authors. Thompson disagrees. NT Christians had more dynamic relationships with dominant cultures in classical antiquity. There were dialogical interplays between the church and the dominant cultures. The language and moral ethos of the NT tell us about the indelible vestiges of Greco-Roman cultures in the church. However, NT authors did not shy away from critiquing such cultures, when legal prescriptions threatened the identity or integrity of believers.

As people with deep concern for the preservation of identity, Jews in the Greco-Roman world should be an interesting case study (Chapter 1). Given that the earliest Christian leaders were Jews, they must have been influenced by the struggles of despised Jews to uncompromisingly maintain their identity under cruel foreign powers. Jews resisted and accommodated the pervasive Hellenic culture. The dynamisms in the dialectical relationship between Jewry and Hellenism should have modeled to earliest Christian leaders the ways to engage as a minority group with dominant cultures. Chapter 2 covers Jesus in relation to the dominant cultures of his day. Synoptic Jesus was seemingly unaware of Hellenic culture. What he stood for on cultural issues, nonetheless, clashed with it.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of Paul on the relationship between the church and dominant cultures. For Paul, believers ambivalently live between the present age and the imminent eschaton. Like the Jews, Christians need to set boundaries between the church and the world for identity and moral formations within a community of believers. Thompson highlights the in-group nature of such formations, especially as they learn to love one another as Christians. That deepened the conflict between the church and the world. Paul, however, did not think that bounded Christians must be withdrawn from the world. Niebuhr, for Thompson, was wrong to treat Paul as viewing Christ and culture in paradox. The nuances in the dynamic dialectical relationships between the church and the world are surely missed in that characterization of Paul's view.

Chapter 4 addresses ethnicity, slavery, and gender. The Pauline corpus has been historically used to justify social evils, such as slavery and sexism. But Galatians, 3:28 in particular, suggests that Paul was more countercultural on social matters than how he has been perceived by supporters of slavery and sexism. Thompson interprets Paul as not proposing eradications of differences that divide humans into Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, or men and women. Jews remain to be

Jews, without forcing Gentiles to become Jews through circumcision. Christ, not Jewry, is what they have in common. It should strike many that Paul did not go far enough in his countercultural declarations in Galatians 3:28. Paul did not suggest the abolishment of slavery, even if he counterculturally valued slaves as familial members in the household codes. For Paul, anything that determines one's social status is irrelevant to the community of believers. Paul valued women in the church, while shortchanging them in his insistence that they continue to follow standard conventional expectations.

Cultures are inescapably shaped by the current trends in politics (Chapter 5) and philosophy (Chapter 6). The earliest Christians, through their claims about their citizenship in heaven and the lordship of Jesus, invited suspicions from and signaled possible threats to the empire. Such claims must have tainted their participations in and loyalties to the government. In Chapter 5, Thompson pays significant attention to Romans 13, where Paul explicitly said some things about Christian responsibilities to the government. The increasing tension between the church and the empire must have conditioned Paul to advise Christians to submit to governmental authorities. Philosophers were instrumental to the formations of cultures in classical antiquity. Thompson at the very least considers Paul's activities as resembling the activities of philosophers. Paul must have been treated as a philosopher by some of his contemporaries. His moral philosophy has striking resemblances to Stoicism.

Thompson explores Johannine literature (Chapter 7) and other NT voices (Chapter 8). The cultural contexts of Johannine literature are different from the cultural contexts of Pauline corpus. While the gospel addresses Christ and the world that rejects Christ, the epistles address the internal conflicts in Johannine communities. Despite the fact that interpreters view love for one another in the community of believers as the core of moral prescriptions in Johannine literature, Thompson thinks that love for the world is also central in it, given the mission of the church. So, the church ought not to be withdrawn from the world. Unlike Niebuhr, Thompson does not see Christ as the transformer of culture in Johannine Gospel. Rather, Christ is the savior of the world of darkness. Chapter 8 explores the relationship between Christ and culture in Hebrews, 1 Peter, James, and Revelation. None of them prescribe complete separation from culture. Rather, they suggest some degree of interaction with the dominant culture. Christians are identified as aliens, exiles, foreigners, or strangers. Living in solidarity with one another is key for sustaining a community that insists on being distinct from the larger culture as that community interacts with it. Their new identity

as followers of Christ has implications for their relationships with the dominant cultures.

Disputed Pauline epistles (Chapter 9) reflect lack of concern for the imminent eschaton. The church became comfortable with the dominant cultures. The ethics of "good citizenship" became very important to the audiences of these epistles. That should be evident in the household codes in Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, and Titus. Thompson argues that the earliest Christians critically accommodated the conventional household codes. Extending the value of reciprocal relationships, through mutual submissions in humility and love, among Christians to more inclusive household codes is a distinctly Christian improvement. Thompson concludes by reviewing the unity and diversity in the responses from NT authors to the enduring problem of Christ and culture, and seeing how these responses from a pre-Christian culture can provide models for the church in post-Christian culture. Earliest Christians did not just have overly simplistic responses to dominant cultures. Their standard responses cannot just be reduced to the extremes in a spectrum of responses, e.g., complete assimilation or withdrawal. They involve complex balancing acts of relativizations.

This short book has admirable comprehensiveness. It should have been limited to something merely descriptive. But Thompson cautiously insists that, through some hermeneutical reflections, normative insights should be drawn. Culture develops contingently or accidentally. The responses that it provokes people to give should be untranslatable to societies that are far removed from it. Believers in pre-Christian culture were marginalized for their oddities as members of a new religion, whereas believers in post-Christian culture are marginalized due to the outdatedness and failures of their institutions. How can we even determine the more effective reappropriations of insights from earliest Christians? Imagine Martin Luther King Jr (MLK) or Bonhoeffer reappropriating Thompson's modest readings of Paul's responses to social realities, such as ethnicity, slavery, and gender. Would MLK or Bonhoeffer even be effective in uprooting the social evils of his time? A Pauline theology of culture that is more tolerant of ethnic segregation or slavery should not work for the church during the time of MLK or Bonhoeffer. Correlation between biblical insights and our current cultural predicament might lead us to legitimately conclude that some aspects of the Bible are outdated at best or false at worst, or that the current cultural standards should absolutely override relevant biblical insights. An accommodationist stance is necessary for the church to be intellectually relevant. It is unjustified to assume that the earliest Christians were mature enough to correctly determine the ways to respond to changing cultures. They

likely did not know how to respond well to them. Complete withdrawal or accommodation may be more appropriate for our time. I highly recommend it to scholars and pastors. This book should be interesting to Asian Christians. They live in predominantly non-Christian societies that can be hostile to Christians.

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Amos Yong, Mark A. Lamport, and Timothy T. N. Lin, eds. *Uncovering the Pearl: The Hidden Story of Christianity in Asia.* The Global Story of Christianity Series vol. 2. Eugene: Cascade Books, 2023. 310 pp. $40 Paperback; $60 Hardcover; $40 eBook. ISBN: 9781666728996.

The book *Uncovering the Pearl: The Hidden Story of Christianity in Asia* is volume two of "The Story of Global Christianity" series. In this volume, Asia, specifically West Asia, is rightly recognized as the historic home of Christianity (xxi). The book's fifteen authors together with editors Amos Yong and Mark Lamport, and assistant editor Timothy T. N. Lin, highlight the oft-forgotten fact that Asian Christianity is both an ancient Asian religion birthed in Palestine of West Asia, as well as a missional religion brought by Western missionaries to other parts of the continent. The movement of Christians from West Asia to other parts of the world, and from the Western world back to different Asian regions reflect the polyvocality of global Christianity and the ubiquitous entanglements of both local and global histories. One can say that the book highlights the importance of reading the multitudinous stories of the Asian Christian expansion while recognizing their entanglements with other stories, communities, and contexts to properly frame the global story of Christianity.

As such, the editors use the assumption of historical entanglement as a guiding framework for writing the entire series. Historical entanglement is a decolonizing approach to Eurocentric purviews by including regional entanglements in the writing of history. The assumption that "each region is shaped by its relationship to others" (xiv) permeates the series. Uncovering the Pearl capitalizes on said assumption due to Asia's vastness and diversity. Asia being a large continent with five geopolitical regions, three dominant cultures, and complex contextual issues, must

recognize the different yet entangled stories across its regions to write a relevant and somewhat accurate story of Asian Christianity.

The book editors delved into the monumental task with the help of fifteen established scholars whose essays tackle three themes: history, Asian context, and contextual issues. In the first section, David Thang Moe, Susangeline Patrick, and William Yoo write the history of the Christian expansion in different regions of Asia. They included the historical context of Christianity in different Asian regions. Some questions answered in this section include how Christianity began in a particular region, who brought Christianity, and what testimonies about Christian identity could be gathered.

In the second section, the authors focused on the adaptation of Christianity into the Asian context. Andrea Zaki Stephanous wrote about the West Asian story. Lalsangkima Pachuau wrote about the Indian and South Asian story. Mark Dickens wrote about the Central Asian story. Edmun Kee-Fook Chua tackled the Southeast Asian story. Kai-Li Chiu discussed the East Asian story. Timothy S. Lee focused on Northeast Asia, while Denise A. Austin included the Eastern Pacific Rim Asian story in the ensemble.

In the third section, the authors delved into complex yet much needed discussions on Christian encounters with Asian issues, especially as it affects global Christianity. Amos Yong and Timothy T. N. Lim discussed Asian Christianity's engagement with other religions. Asia is rife with religious pluralism, and Christian encounters and response to other religions are ongoing issues of which global Christians need to be aware. Felix Wilfred wrote about Asian Christianity's encounters with totalitarianism and dictatorship. In his chapter, Wilfred wrote and critically reflected on Asian Christians' experiences of totalitarianism and dictatorship (190). Septemmy E. Lakawa tackled the issue of global diaspora and mission amongst Christians in Asia. Timothy T. N. Lim framed Asian Christianity's solidarity with the marginalized through records of ongoing and still needed endeavors for social justice. While Richard Howell wrote about the phenomena of reorientation not just for Asian Christians but also for global Christians. The need for contextualization and the importance of self-theologizing, among others, are rightly discussed as Christians in Asia are slowly freed from Eurocentric perspectives in history, theology, and mission (237-238). The book ends with Brett Knowles' historical timeline of Christian expansion in Asia.

The entire volume is a masterpiece in my estimation. Reiterating the historic beginning of Christianity in West Asia elevates the importance of the Asian lens in Christian academia. Most often, Eurocentric

perspectives are the starting point of history books. Although books written by missionaries are valuable, they often fail to recognize the valuable contribution of local Christians. For instance, Lalsangkima Pachuau wrote about how among the tribes in northeast India local converts played pivotal roles in evangelism (82-83). Pachuau writes, "the service of early converts as 'evangelists' (distinguished from missionaries) across tribal groups was significant. The first person to preach the gospel among the Ao-Nagas was an Assamese. . . . Mizo evangelists crossed over to other tribes in the neighboring Manipur as pioneering preachers of the gospel" (83). Many stories of local entanglements like these have remained unrecorded and have led to the predominance of etic publications.

Fortunately, this book provides much-needed space for orienting people on the expansion of Asian Christianity from an emic perspective. Using entanglement as the framework is also apropos because the story of Asian Christianity does involve both local and global connections. Discovering, tracing, and connecting these linkages in history reveals the orchestration of God in the spread of Christianity. Such connections also highlight the importance of context in writing/interpreting history, Scripture, and theologies.

Lastly, the final chapter written by Richard Howell on the reorientation of the Christian world is a must-read. As scholars have pointed out, the epicenter of Christianity has shifted to the Global South. It is crucial for Christians in Asia (and others in the Global South) to affirm their identity and produce local theologies and polities. Howell is right in affirming the importance of "concretizing the meaning of the gospel and raising new forms of Christian consciousness that are both local and universal" (237). A global Christian family openly dialoguing and building bicultural bridges presents to the world a fuller picture of the kingdom of God on earth.

I highly recommend this book to all students of Christian history, Global Christianity, or to Asian Christians who need to reorient themselves on the value of local histories, local theologies, and local expressions of Christianity. Although the book is not as comprehensive as a reference, the information given was concise and illuminating enough for readers to grasp the complexities of the Asian Christian expansion. Indeed, *Uncovering the Pearl* fills a significant lacuna in Global Christian studies.

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Hadje Cresencio Sadje. *Grassroots Asian Theology: Doing Pentecostal Theology in the Philippine Context.* Kalamazoo, MI: Ekprosis Press, 2022. ISBN: 979-8-9855926-2-7.

In this book, Hadje Sadje proposes a fusion between two dominant theological traditions in the Philippines, Pentecostalism and Liberation theology—Filipino style. Based on Simon Chan's book, *Grassroots Asian Theology: Thinking From the Ground Up*, the writings of Korean Pentecostal scholar Wonsuk Ma, and the writings of Filipino Liberation scholar Eleazar Fernandez.

This book is the published version of his master's thesis for a university in Belgium, where he resides. In the interest of appropriate disclosure, I served as an outsider reader for the thesis but did not participate in overseeing the thesis' development. He divides his material into five chapters, although confusingly, the Contents page only mentions four. He considers the introduction the first chapter (10). The introductory chapter deals with things one would normally see in a thesis.

In chapter 1, he gives a descriptive analysis of the broad outlines of Chan's theology of ecclesial experience, contending that Chan proposes a paradigm shift in Asian theological discussions from the "elitist" realm of the scholars to the "grassroots theology" of ordinary Asian Christians. He then goes on to assess whether Chan's theological claims are appropriate for the Philippine situation. In Chapter 2, he continues to dialogue with Chan, broadly outlining the history of Pentecostalism in the Philippines and interacts with Wonsuk Ma's proposed "methodological contributions in constructing Filipino Pentecostal theology." I would note in passing here that he cited my book, Led by the Spirit: The History of the American Assemblies of God Missionaries in the Philippines. He suggests that the focus of the book is the history of the Philippines General Council of the Assemblies of God (PGCAG), but this is not the case (13). While there is a significant overlap, the actual focus of the book is on the lives and work of the American missionaries who served the PGCAG (13).

In Chapter 3, he presents a basic outline of the Filipino liberation movement, concentrating on the works of one of its major proponents, Eleazar Fernandez (13). Then, he proceeds to take these observations and interacts with Chan, focusing on theology "from below," or, in other words, the grassroots. In the final chapter, he brings everything together, offering some thoughts one how one could do Filipino theology in its own context.

Turning now to the chapters themselves, the first chapter is entitled Simon Chan's Grassroots Asian Theology. He picks up on Chan's theme

of moving away from the elitest theology of the scholars, to the theology on the ground, which meshes well with the focus of liberation theology (20). Here, he cites Chan as castigating liberation theologians for ignoring the voices of laity (23), the very ones that liberation theologians claim to represent. After significant interaction with Chan, however, he claims that, despite his best effort, Chan fails to construct an integrative model for contextualized Asian theologies (29-30).

Nevertheless, Sadje does goes on to use Chan's three-point paradigm for doing theology in Asia: corporate endeavor, ecumenism, and social engagement (31-2). By corporate endeavor, he means the involvement of the laity in doing theology. By ecumenical, he notes that Chan uses this term somewhat differently than normal, defining it as being sensitive to sociopolitical and ethnographic contexts. By social engagement, he refers to dealing with issues like poverty, modern slavery, and other human rights violations, etc. I find it disappointing that, in this paradigm, he makes no call for interaction with the biblical text in doing theology.

Chapter 2 is entitled Ecclesial Experience Interacting with Filipino Pentecostalism. In this chapter, Sadje interacts with the work of Wonsuk Ma, an Assemblies of God Korean missionary to the Philippines from 1979 to 2006 and now a global scholar on Pentecostalism, as well as other Filipino Pentecostal scholars such as Joel Tejedo and Joseph Suico (Assemblies of God) and Doreen Alcoran Benavidez (Church of God—Cleveland, Tennessee), limiting his historical review only to classical Pentecostals. Curiously, he makes little mention of the Catholic Charismatic Movement, the largest branch of Pentecostalism in the Philippines, while at the same time noting the significant contribution of Catholic scholars to liberation theology (60).

Sadje notes that both Tejedo and Benavidez call for significant engagement with the biblical text (40-1) and the work of the Holy Spirit in dealing with social issues (42). Then, he turns his attention to Ma's work, which Sadje considers an "important contribution" (43-4). He argues that Ma calls for taking a different approach "founded on Asian realities" that call for serious theological reflection with a high view of Scripture. According to Sadje, Ma, in concert with Chan, calls for significant lay involvement "catalyzed by theologians who interact with them" (44).

Chapter 3 is entitled Ecclesial Experience Interacting with Filipino Elite Theologies. He opens this chapter with some discussion of Gustavo Gutiérrez's seminal writings in Latin America and the aforementioned Eleazar Fernandez, a scholar ordained with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), along with other indigenous scholars. Liberation theology began to emerge in the 1970s when the Philippines

was under martial law (59). Sadje cites Fernandez in stating that both Catholic and Protestant churches played a critical role in opposing the Marcos regime (50-1).

For Sadje, Filipino liberation theology "has developed into different forms and expressions" (62) including, but not limited to, traditional religious practices, and language and cultural structures, "in order to discern the Good News already embedded in it," as well as engaging in Marxist themes (Ibid.) He goes on to opine that early Filipino liberation theologians have no comprehensive "systematic and biblio-theological underpinning, although that has changed with people like Fernanadez (64).

Fernandez, Sadje contends, wrote his first book to participate in the theology of liberation, assess its growth, content, and methodology, "thematize its salient points," "sharpen its critical apparatus and perspective," engage in "in a constructive hermeneutical activity" and to place all of this within the "Third World context of theological reflection" (64). Sadje then concludes this chapter with a comparison between Fernandez and Chan (70).

Chapter 4 is entitled Filipino Theologies in the Philippine Context. This chapter is divided into three parts: (1) challenges to the theologian's task, (2) what might be useful in to a grassroots theology and, (3) his chapter conclusion (75-76).

In the first part, Sadje demonstrates excellent awareness of other significant scholars in the field, such as Melba P. Maggay and Jose De Mesa, among others, representing a divergence of opinions on how to go about the theological task (76-7). His encouragement for Filipino Pentecostal scholars and expatriates like me who also write in the field, to make use of these scholars' work, is well taken (79).

Regarding the second part about what might be useful to the theologian's task, he brings together a collage of issues that includes an overemphasis on political issues and interreligious engagement, which has not been mentioned before in the book. The third part is simply labelled "conclusion," implying the end of the book. This is misleading and would have been better titled "chapter summary." Here, he simply presents a synthesis of what has been stated about the others' work. Sadly, there is little evidence here of his own thinking and no call for engagement with the Bible itself.

My overall thoughts on Sadje's book are generally positive. He does an outstanding job of describing the issues in the Philippine contexts and the authors, nearly all Filipinos aside from Chan and Ma that work within this context. The genius of his contribution is that he synthesizes the

work of others in an organized, cohesive manner that is easy to follow. His extensive list of references provides excellent resources to others.

There are, however, two lacunae in the book that need to be mentioned, the first being quite serious. That is, there is little call to serious biblical exegesis and application to the Philippine context. While one might not expect him to actually do this within the scope of his book, the lack of mentioning this in the task of the theologian or hermeneutical community is extremely disappointing. Relevant macro-theological issues like the kingdom of God are not even mentioned. The second is that while he does an outstanding job of synthesizing the work of others in his narrative, I find little evidence of his own original thinking. One would hope that this will come out in his future publications.

Finally, the book was published by a little-known publisher in the States whose distribution system in the Philippines is unknown and possibly non-existent, making it unlikely that those who would most benefit from the book will have easy access to it. All in all, however, I do commend the book as a welcome contribution to theological reflection in the Philippines.

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(Continued from front inside cover)

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